

Vygotsky and Marxism

Danling Fu

There has been great interest in Vygotsky and in how his views affect the understanding of learning and teaching since the early 80's in the United States. Today, this interest continues to grow and Vygotsky's views continue to affect the improvement and reform of contemporary education in the United States. New interest in his theories has been sparked too in Russia after his work has been decreed as reactionary bourgeois pseudoscience for sixty years. Also after Vygotsky has been labeled as an anti-Marxist bourgeois psychologist for decades in his country, he is recognized as a devout Marxist. Russian Vygotskian expert, Toulmin (1981) wrote:

Vygotsky was happy to call himself a Marxist. The historical-materialist approach ensured the success of his scientific investigations; this was the philosophy that armed him, gave him the basis for integrating the sciences of developmental psychology, clinical neurology, cultural anthropology, the psychology of art. That is what we, psychologists of the West, must now study seriously. (p. 79)

However, he is rarely connected with Marxism in the United States, as Benjamin Lee stated, "American researchers have focused on his work on language and thought and neglected his Marxist and functionalist side" (1985, p. 66), even though his theory on individual consciousness development and his social and cultural constructivist approach are well received by American educators. This neglect may reveal a deliberate disconnection of Vygotsky from Marxism among American scholars because most people in the United States associate Marxism either with Communism or the concept of class struggle, a concept rather threatening to many Americans. Also, on the surface, Vygotsky's work on the development of individual mind was hardly recognized indebted to Marxist theory as, according to Haldane (1969), "Marxism has extremely little positive to say about the individual mind. It is concerned mainly with the social relationships of the individual and the general materialistic point of view" (p. 157). As a result, in his own country, only until recently, Vygotsky had been seen as a target of Soviet Marxists.

Vygotsky was a Marxist, though the content of his study is remote from the content of Marx' and Engels' studies. The former studied the internal structure of human mind; the latter focused on the external structure of the human society. Marxism, to Vygotsky, was not simply a weapon of ideology, as it was to many mechanic Marxists, but a theory, or a scientific approach. He did not treat the Marxist methodology as a

mathematical formula or recipe which guided him rigidly in his psychological analysis. Instead, he digested it, in his word, "internalized" it and transformed it into his own principle which dominated his way of thinking and directed his study of human psychological development. As he said "I don't want to discover the nature of mind by patching together a lot of quotations. I want to find out how science has to be built, to approach the study of the mind having learned the whole of Marx's method" (*Mind in Society*, p. 8). Vygotsky's thinking and approach are Marxist, as claimed by Wertsch, "in more subtle but no less fundamental ways," and his debt to Marx "runs deeper than is commonly recognized" (1985, p. 5).

To cut off Vygotsky from Marx is to look at him fragmentally and to separate his work from its theoretical basis. The very act is anti-dialectical materialism, the fundamental principle guiding Vygotsky's research and shaping his analysis. A discussion of Vygotsky in the context of Marxism will help us reach an understanding of the theoretic framework of Vygotsky's thinking. This understanding will lead us to a more profound interpretation of Vygotsky's theory and approach. Hopefully this discussion will also help readers understand Marxist theory and methodology in some way. In this article, based on two of Vygotsky's most known works among American educators: *Thought and Language* and *Mind in Society* (they are referred as *Thought* and *Mind* in the text), I will examine how Vygotsky applied Marxist principles to his study of human psychological development and present in what way he was a Marxist. In doing so, first of all, we have to review Marxist principles.

Dialectical Materialism

The most fundamental doctrine of Marxist philosophy is dialectical materialism, concerned with "the most general laws of change and development in nature, society and thought" (Jozef, 1981, p. 147). It is "materialism," because dialectical materialism postulates that matter or material reality is primary and its mental reflection is secondary or derivative. Marx wrote, in the Preface to the second edition of *Capital* (translated, 1967) that "the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought" (p. 253).

Dialectical materialism sees things in relations, analyzes them and then reintegrates them into total movement.

Bukharin (translation, 1961) states in his discussion on dialectical materialism:

The world being in constant motion, we must consider phenomena in their mutual relations, and not as isolated cases. All portions of the universe are actually related to each other and exert an influence on each other. The slightest motion, the slightest alteration in one place, simultaneously changes everything else. The change may be great or small—that is another matter—at any rate, there is a change. (p. 269)

Dialectical materialism asserts that matter is in a process of constant moving and changing, so are its reflected mind, thought and consciousness. In the first place, the dialectic method of interpretation demands that all phenomena be considered in their indissoluble relations: in the second place, that they be considered in their state of motion. Dialectical materialism as applied to human history is called historical materialism, which is interested in development of the process of BECOMING but not in the object of BEING, and especially concerned with the original sources of the development, as Marx declares in his *Capital* (translated, 1967) that "The object of our method of inquiry is to take possession of matter in its detail, to analyze its various forms of development and to discover its inner law" (p. 56).

The materialist dialect is an analysis of the movement of this content, and a reconstruction of the total movement. It is a method of analysis for each degree and for each concrete totality - for each original historical situation. At the same time it is a synthetic method that sets itself the task of comprehending the total movement. It does not lead to axioms, constancies or permanencies, or to mere analogies, but to laws of development.

Vygotsky's Marxist Methodology Of Research

Vygotsky affirmed that "To study something historically means to study it in the process of change; that is the dialectical method's basic demand" (*Mind*, p. 65). To understand Vygotsky's analysis, first of all, we have to understand how he approached his study. He constantly saw things in relationships and showed great interest in the essence of the relations and their complex dynamic natures. In his discussions about the relationship between the scientific concept and the spontaneous concept in *Thought and Language*, we see one relation lead to another, and they all directly or indirectly relate to each other or influence each other (p. 197). For him, those relations are not static as they are not the products of the processes but are the processes themselves.

It is through his method of psychological analysis that Vygotsky demonstrated himself to be a Marxist. In "The

Problems and the Approach" in *Thought and Language* and "Problems of Method" in *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky clearly revealed himself as a dialectical materialist in his search for new methods of psycho-experimentation and analysis, which he believed was "one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding the uniquely human forms of psychological activity. In this case, the method is simultaneously prerequisite and product, the tool and the result of the study" (*Mind*, p. 65). In criticizing the current methods of stimulus-response, which, he believed, analyze stable and fixed objects, he advocated that psychological analysis of objects should be contrasted with the analysis of processes, which requires a dynamic display of the main points making up the processes' history. He believed that "Any psychological process, whether the development of thought or voluntary behavior, is a process undergoing changes right before one's eyes" (*Mind*, p. 61). Therefore he declared that "we need to concentrate not on the product of development but on the very process by which higher forms are established" (*Mind*, p. 64) as he thought that the only way to study the highest stages in the development of attention is to understand it in all its idiosyncrasies and differences. In short, we need to understand its origin.

In the end of the chapter "Problems of Method," Vygotsky summarized his discussion by identifying three kinds of analyses which he believed are materialist dialectical approaches: process analysis, analysis that reveals real, causal or dynamic relations, and developmental analysis that returns to the source and reconstructs all the points in the development of a given structure. From these three approaches of analysis, we can see he focused his attention on changing and believed that the relationship between elements is the inner law which causes the changing, and was interested in the history of the development from its source to the possible future. Unlike many of his colleagues, he refused to establish Marxist psychology. In his discussion about the problems of methods, he declared that "the dialectical method is quite different in biology, history and psychology, and therefore, there are no Marxist magic formulas for solving the problems of psychology." He emphasized that "[I]mmediate application of the theory of dialectical materialism to the problems of science, and particularly to biology and psychology, is impossible, as it is impossible to apply it instantly to history and sociology." He strongly opposed "the method of casually picking and choosing quotations from the classics of Marxism" (*Thought*, xxiii) and concluded that "the only legitimate way for Marxism to become useful for psychology was its possible contribution to general methodology" (*Thought*, xxiii). For the rest of his life, as Kozulin comments on Vygotsky in his introduction to *Thought and Language*, "Vygotsky desperately sought this new methodology (general methodology) that would make psychology

scientific, . . . and that would make use of the Marxist method without degenerating into 'Marxist psychology'" (xxiii). The very attitude Vygotsky held in his searching for the method demonstrated him as a dialectical materialist, or a Marxist.

Vygotsky's Dialectical Materialism in His Psychological Analysis

Guided by the Marxist dialectical materialist theory, Vygotsky directed his attention to the process of human psychological development and drew his interest in finding out the inner law which caused the changing and evolution through analysis of the relation between biological or natural function and cultural function. In *Thought and Language* and *Mind in Society* he defined his psychological analysis "developmental" and "historical-cultural," as he looked at the changing processes and was especially interested in the inner law of the development. He focused on "the historically shaped and culturally transmitted psychology of human beings" (*Mind*, p. 122). He also called his psychoanalysis "instrumental," as he believed that psychology should not be an end but a means to "telescope[s] changes" (*Mind*, p. 123). Each chapter in *Thought and Language* and *Mind in Society* deals with some aspects of developmental change as Vygotsky conceived as the development, or transformation from natural or "lower" functions to cultural or "higher" functions.

In Vygotsky's investigation of the transformation of lower functions to higher functions in human psychology, he considered each form in its growth and in it a necessary disappearance in its relations with others. His study draws its attention to the internal process of change. Take for example his analysis of relationship between egocentric speech and inner speech, one of the main discussions in his *Thought and Language*. Rejecting Piaget's assumption which considers that egocentric speech and social speech are two separate stages in human psychological development, Vygotsky showed with his experiments that egocentric speech is the transition from social speech (interpersonal) to inner speech (intrapersonal). Egocentric speech does not die out, or is not simply replaced by social speech, as Piaget assumed, but is transformed or developed into inner speech. The difference between Piaget's and Vygotsky's analyses is the former studied the elements in separation and focused on the products of the development, while the latter looked at them in relations and drew attention to the process of changing. What separates Vygotsky from other psychologists is his dialectical materialist view.

The three fundamental principles of dialectical materialism, asserted by Marx in his *Capital*, are the unity of opposites, the passage of quantity to quality, and the negation of the negation. With this inner law of change, Marx and Engels analyzed the change of social structures or the development from the capitalist system to the socialist one. The process of

transformation of capitalist society into socialist one, as Marx conceived, is, first of all, the self-destruction of capitalism which is caused by its internal conflicts of relations between production and means of production, between labor and productivity, and between use-value and exchange-value. In the transformation of capitalism to socialism, first of all it is the capital that is negating itself—"The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production" (Marx, *Capital*, I, translated, 1967, p. 279). The self-negation is followed by reconstruction and reorganization of the economic structure and relationship, which causes a new form of economic and social structure to appear—the coming of socialism. Socialism, Marx conceived, is a higher stage than capitalism in the social development.

Vygotsky approached the analysis of the relation between the lower functions and higher functions with the principles of dialectical materialism pragmatically but not mechanically. He asserted that the transformation of lower functions to higher functions involves the destruction, reconstruction and transition of the former structure (elementary) to the structure of higher type. And "[h]igher psychological functions are not superimposed as second story over the elementary processes: they represent new psychological systems" (*Mind*, p. 124). The process of transformation, as he saw, involves the process of quantity to quality: first deconstruction, then reconstruction and transition to a new structure of higher type. These two levels are not simply two stages of development or one replaces the other but one transforms into another through internal conflicts, and structurally deconstruction and reorganization.

When we parallel Vygotsky's approach to his analysis of the transformation of lower functions to higher functions with Marx's approach to his analysis of the transformation of capitalist system to socialist system, we find that both of them consider the change in relations between elements is the inner law of the transformation, and the transformation involves the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of the former structure, which brings out the formation of a qualitatively new form. Marx presented specifically how the relations change within each form, that is, how capitalism deconstructs itself and how the relations of the social and economic elements are reconstructed and reorganized into a new form—socialism. However, Vygotsky only presented a framework of the transformation of lower functions to higher functions: from social interaction to internalization. He did not show how the internalization actually happens, that is, how the relations of the elements in lower functions are deconstructed and reconstructed and reorganized into the new form of higher functions. Vygotsky was aware of the importance of the study of the internalization, but his short life span didn't give him a chance to fulfill his wish. The chapter on "Interaction between Learning and Development" in *Mind*

in Society reveals his awareness of the need of a study of this internal process:

An aim of the psychological analysis of development is to describe the internal relations of the intellectual processes awakened by school learning....If successful, it should reveal to the teacher how developmental processes stimulated by the course of school learning are carried through inside the head of each individual child. The revelation of this internal, subterranean developmental network of school subjects is a task of primary importance for psychological and educational analysis. (p. 91)

I believe that if Vygotsky had lived longer, he would have undertaken this task. His analysis of how internalization happens would have been based on the three principles of dialectical materialism because the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction must involve the operation of conflicts, negation and a transition of quantity to quality.

The Dialectical Relationship Between Thought and Language

With the dialectical approach, Vygotsky studied the relationship between thought and speech, and between a child's (actual) development and learning. In the chapter on "Thought and Word," in *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky opposed the approach which treated thought and speech as two isolated elements and analyzed them separately. He held that this method of analysis was not true analysis but only helpful in solving concrete problems. As a historical materialist, Vygotsky saw thought and speech as a unit, "A word without meaning is an empty sound; meaning, therefore, is a criterion of 'word,' its indispensable as a phenomenon of speech. But from the point of view of psychology, the meaning of every word is a generalization or a concept" (p. 212). To illustrate his idea of the unit of thought and speech, he used the term "word meanings," which, in his view, are dynamic rather than static formations. "They change as the child develops; they change also with the various ways in which thought functions" (p. 217). He was opposed to the assumption of his contemporary psychologists that the development of a word's meaning is finished as soon as it emerges and believed that they ignored the inner relationship between thought and language. To discover the inner relationship between thought and language, Vygotsky and his colleagues studied the relations between inner speech and external speech, between egocentric speech and inner speech, and between word meaning and word sense. The studies showed that, "The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought." Vygotsky claimed: "Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" (p. 218).

It is how Vygotsky approached his study instead of what he studied that demonstrated him as a dialectical or historical materialist. He focused his attention on the process of development and the interrelation of the elements in psychology. Cornforth (1963) in his discussion about dialectical materialism states that, "The aim of the dialectical method is to enable us logically and consistently to express the real interconnections and motion of things" (p. 482). He went on to say in the next paragraph, "People with a metaphysical approach try to express changing things in fixed categories, and try to express the relations of things in categories suited only to considering things in separation" (p. 482). According to Cornforth's definition, Vygotsky's method is a dialectic one.

Vygotsky's Dialectical View on the Relationship Between the Child's Development and Learning

In his discussion on the relationship between the child's actual development and learning, Vygotsky began his discussions by criticizing the weaknesses of other methods of psychological analysis. He accused Piaget and James of failure to see the interaction between human development and learning. To Piaget, development was always a prerequisite for learning; which learning "forms a superstructure over development, leaving the latter essentially unaltered" (*Mind*, p. 80). To James, the learning process was reduced to habit formation and identified with development. And Koffka, as Vygotsky saw, tried to overcome the extremes of Piaget and James by simply combining the two. To Koffka, the two processes of development and learning were mutually dependent and interactive.

Different from them, Vygotsky thought that "the nature of the interaction is left virtually unexplored in Koffka's work" (*Mind*, p. 81). The rejection and analysis of the three theoretic positions of Piaget, James and Koffka lead Vygotsky to a more adequate view of the relation between learning and development. Vygotsky believed that learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life. In the discussion of this interrelationship, he introduced his concept of the zone of proximal development.

His notion of the zone of proximal development allows us to "take account of not only the cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed but also those processes that are currently in a state of formation" (*Mind*, p. 87). This suggests that Vygotsky did not just keep his eyes on what the development had achieved, or the product of the development, but on the process of forming, or the dynamic developmental state. In contrast to other theories in which learning lags behind the process of development, he assumed that learning aims for a new stage of the development process.

In the analysis of the relation between the actual development and the zone of proximal development, he noted that the former "characterizes mental development retrospectively," while the latter "characterizes mental development prospectively" (*Mind*, p. 87). The learning creates the zone of proximal development. The fundamental elements introduced by school learning into the children's development not only awakens the internal relations of the intellectual processes, but also changes the way of the child's natural learning. Usually a child learns concrete objects or actions before he learns abstract concepts in his real life experience. In Vygotsky's terms, children learn spontaneous concepts before scientific ones. But it is formal school learning that reverses this role in the child's thinking. He learns abstract concepts or scientific concepts in school learning, and his understanding of scientific concepts, in turn, helps him understand his spontaneous concepts better. This reverse in learning or in thinking plays a significant part in the revolutionary transformations in the child's development.

Vygotsky saw the relations between development and learning processes to be highly complex and dynamic. They are not mutually exclusive as Piaget assumed, nor mutually dependent as James proposed, neither interactive in the same pattern as Koffka saw. The strength of Vygotsky's approach is in seeing things in unity, in their inner relationship, and their changing process. It is his historical materialist approach that distinguishes him from other psychologists like Piaget, James and Koffka.

Interrelationship of Language, School Learning and Human Development

As a linguist, in addition to many other fields in which he engaged in, Vygotsky showed his special interest in language, or the relation between language and human development. In *Thought and Language* and *Mind in Society*, he describes language as a psychological tool that has a fundamental effect on the human development. Marxism asserts that it is the use of tools that made humans different from other species, that transformed human into what s/he is today, and that enabled him or her to master nature. In psychological development, Vygotsky affirmed that it is the use of language or the psychological tool that connects a human with his/her external world, that helps a human develop from the biological level to the conscious level and that enables him/her to master his/her own action. For Marx the use of tools made a revolutionary change in human development: the change of human physically, the change of human's relationship with nature, and change of human's living style. For Vygotsky, the use of language also brings a revolutionary change in human psychological development: the change of individual's relationship with others, the change

of one's relationship with self and the change of one's way of thinking. "If one changes the tools of thinking available to a child, his/her mind will have a radically different structure" (*Mind*, p. 126). The use of tools and language brings humans to a higher level of intelligence and consciousness and leads to the change of themselves and the world.

Vygotsky asserted that both the use of language and school learning contribute to the revolutionary change in human development. Another characteristic of the use of language and school learning is that they both happen at the social level or interpersonal level first, and then at internal, or intrapersonal level. As a materialist, Vygotsky saw human as a product of nature and culture. Referring to psychological tools as instruments for the construction of higher functions, Vygotsky wrote, "In the instrumental act, humans master themselves from the outside—through psychological tools." As to the structural role of interpersonal relations, he claimed that intrapersonal processes are just transformed interpersonal relations: "Each function in the child's cultural development appears twice; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapersonal) . . ." and "All the 'building blocks' of higher behavior seem absolutely materialistic, and 'lower' natural mental functions are structured and organized according to specifically human social goals and means of conduct" (*Thought*, xxvi).

In psychology, social interaction is external activity, which Vygotsky believed is not only conditionally connected with the external environment but also makes internal activity possible. They internalize and reconstruct the operation which initially represents an external activity. "Functional systems are rooted in the most basic adaptive responses of the organism, such as unconditioned and conditioned reflexes" (*Mind*, p. 124).

Marxism asserts that when matter changes, it is the external factors that stimulate the action and the internal factors that reorganize and reconstruct the operation. It is like water changing into ice or steam. Cold or hot temperature is the external condition for change but the real change happens within water itself. When the temperature reaches freezing or boiling point, the structure of the chemicals of water reconstructs into a new form. It is a transformation of quantity to quality, which, dialectical materialism believes, is one of the fundamental laws in the motion of matter.

About this, Lenin (1909) said that "it alone offers the key to understanding 'leap,' to the 'interruption of gradual succession,' to the 'transformation into the opposite,' to the destruction of the old and the appearance of the new" (p. 175). Vygotsky affirmed that internalization and reconstruction are the transformation of an external activity, knowledge or abilities into internal ones, which involves the passage of quantity to quality. He said that it was "not a simple sum of

elementary process as associationistic psychology saw, but a qualitatively new form that appears in the process of transformation" (*Mind*, p. 65). His notion of the zone of proximal development has the same theory that human learning "presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (*Mind*, p. 88). And the real changes stimulated by the course of school learning are "carried through inside the head of each individual child" (*Mind*, p. 91). In summary, Vygotsky's debt to Marxism was profoundly demonstrated through his approach to his analysis of human psychological development. He directed his attention to changing process, saw things in relationships and analyzed the human psychological development with the three fundamental principles of dialectical materialism: the unity of opposites, the passage of quantity to quality, and the negation of the negation.

Pragmatism and Marxism

When I discussed Vygotsky in the context of Marxism, I found a striking similarity between his Marxist approaches of psychological analysis and pragmatism. Was Vygotsky a Marxist or pragmatist? As do Marxists, he saw things in relationships but not in isolation and analyzed the process of becoming instead of the products of being. He focused his attention on the inner law of changing as he believed that matter and human consciousness were in a process of constant moving and changing. But pragmatists hold exact the same beliefs. They conceive evolution of a universe being not finished, but, in James' term, "in the making," or "in the process of becoming." In Roth's discussion of Dewey's pragmatic view, Roth (1962) says:

Dewey viewed the world as ongoing and developing, he did not view things in isolation. The basic characteristic of things of nature is interaction. This is to say that things do not merely act; they react or interact and in this interaction the onward movement of nature is carried out. (p. 194)

The similarity between Dewey and Vygotsky shown above is attributed to the similarity between pragmatism and Marxism in a certain way. Dewey was viewed as a Marxist by some American Marxists at the late 40's—"The most outstanding figure in the world today in whom the best elements of Marx's thought are present is John Dewey . . ." (Novack, 1975, p. 273), and Lenin was presented "as an unavowed disciple of Dewey in practice" (Novack, 1975, p. 296). Actually pragmatism and Marxism are fundamentally different. Only by showing the differences between the two philosophies, can we tell whether Vygotsky was a pragmatist or Marxist.

The Relationship Between Matter and Mind

The fundamental distinction between Marxism and pragmatism is that they differ in their view of the relationship between matter and mind. Marxists believe that the physical world is the prime reality, and mind is the reflected reality of the physical world. Matter can exist apart from mind but mind cannot exist without matter. Pragmatism holds that matter and mind have an interdependent relationship. Dewey (1958) said in his *Experience and Nature* that matter expresses "a character of natural events and changes as they change; their character of regular and stable order;" mind is "the order of their meanings in their logical connections and dependencies" (p. 58). To pragmatists, matter is viewed as not regular but highly irregular, not orderly but chaotic, depending on the level of approach to its manifestation (Novack, 1975). Marxism affirms that matter causes mind, as Engels (1888) said, "Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of nature" (p. 198). Pragmatism, being against any causal connection between matter and mind, believes that matter "covers lesser, more external fields of interaction; the mind deals with wider, more complex, more inward characteristics of events" (Novack, 1975, p. 288).

Vygotsky's agreement with the Marxist view of the causal connection between matter and mind is clearly shown by his notion of the two stages of psycho-development (first at the social level, then at the internal level)—"All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between human individuals" (*Mind*, p. 57), and his notion of the zone of proximal development (learning as a social activity)—"human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (*Mind*, p. 88). Social activity is the external activity which causes or stimulates the internal action. Vygotsky believed that the psychology of human beings is historically shaped and culturally transmitted. Though both Marxism and pragmatism assert that human development is the process of interaction between external and internal operations, the former holds that an individual grows into the established culture, while the latter thinks that an individual fulfills himself through interaction with his environment. Vygotsky agreed with Marxism as he believed that "Children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (*Mind*, p. 88).

The Relationship Between Individual and the World

One of the reasons that Vygotsky was labeled as anti-Marxist in his own country is his emphasis on the

internalization or individualization of external activities and knowledge, which is another distinction between Marxism and pragmatism. Marxism pays very little attention to individuals, as it views individuals as simply products of society, culture and nature unless they are taken as a collective force—class, then they function differently in relationship with their society and nature. On the contrary, pragmatism places great emphasis on individuals. The dominant theme of Dewey's philosophy is that human self-realization is achieved through interaction with nature. In his *Individualism Old and New*, Dewey (1930) said:

Individuality is at first spontaneous and unshaped; it is a potentiality, a capacity of development. Even so, it is a unique manner of acting in and with a world of objects and persons . . . Since individuality is a distinctive way of feeling the impacts of the world and of showing a preferential bias in response to these impacts, it develops into shape and form only through interaction with actual conditions; it is no more complete in itself than is a painter's tube of paint without relations to a canvas. (p. 89)

Dewey viewed human development as the fulfillment of human personality or self-realization. And the individual's relation with the world is to find and fulfill oneself through the interaction with the world. In turn, the self-realization and self-fulfillment will help the world be fulfilled. Vygotsky's emphasis on the importance of internalization and individualization in human psycho-development is different from Dewey's. Internalization and individualization, to Vygotsky, is the qualitative change stimulated by the external condition happening within a substance itself, which Marxism holds as one of the fundamental laws in the motion of matter.

The Process of Changing

Another difference between Marxism and pragmatism lies in their interpretations of the processes of change in man and nature. Though they both agree that the world is in the process of changing or becoming, Marxism affirms that the change is a transformation from one form to another, and the processes of transformation involve deconstruction, reconstruction and reorganization of the old system or relations, which bring out the appearance of a new form. Pragmatism asserts that the processes of change are processes of fulfillment and completion through compromising, adaptation, and adjustment. The change, to pragmatists, is not a transformation but an ongoing process toward fulfillment of individuals and the world. The process of moving and changing is a process of maintaining the moving equilibrium between an individual and his environment.

The difference between Marxism and pragmatism in their interpretation of the process of change leads to another

distinction between them, that is, their view of human development. Marxism holds that any development is hierarchical, in a systematic way from lower level to higher level. Human society develops from primitive to slave, to feudal, to capitalist, to socialist, and completes the development in communist society, which, Marx believes, is the highest form of human society. Pragmatists believe in multiplicity and pluralism. They think that society and nature are essentially indeterminate, so is Man. They are constantly in the process of moving toward their fulfillment, not in stages or in a systematic way, but in degrees or in the tendency toward integration. About Dewey, Roth (1962) said that,

He was reluctant to single out any good as the *summum bonum*, the highest good, to which all others are subordinate. His only reservation was with regard to growth. Living, which means intellectual and moral growth, is the dominant vocation of all humans at all times. (p. 245)

Obviously Vygotsky belonged to the Marxist camp in this aspect. This fact can be shown by the central theme in his work: the transformation of lower functions to higher functions in human psychological development. As we discussed before, Vygotsky analyzed this transformation as a process of deconstruction, reconstruction and reorganization of one form, the lower form which results in the appearance of a new form, a higher form. The terms "lower level" and "higher level" used by Vygotsky suggest that he was a believer in a hierarchy in development.

Vygotsky—an Unorthodox Marxist

I believe that it is because of his unorthodox approach to Marxism that Vygotsky is so attractive to many American intellectuals and was rejected by Russian Marxists for many decades. In *Psychology in Utopia*, Kozulin (1984) comments on Vygotsky that,

He took the writings of Marx absolutely seriously as a philosophy and also as a concrete epistemology for the political economy of the nineteenth century. At the same time he gave no sign of submission to Marxism as an ideology. He took the most sober and, at least under Soviet circumstances, most difficult position: he treated Marx as a theoretician, without prejudice, on a par with his treatment of Hegel, Freud, and Durkheim. (p. 67)

Vygotsky was a real Marxist. As a person growing up in a "Marxist" country, I know many people in the Marxist countries tend to pile up the jargons of Marxism in their speeches and writings, which makes them sound Marxist, but they do not really know what Marxist principles are. Actually they treat Marxism as a form, like rhetorical clothes, and make their content match the form as if making their

bodies match their clothes. Refusing to adopt Marxist theory mechanically in his study, Vygotsky internalized Marxist theory and approach to study human mind and read the world. He was so natural as a Marxist, that even many people from the countries in which Marxism is dominant cannot recognize him as Marxist. Perhaps also for this very reason that many American intellectuals can accept him. He was a Marxist scientist instead of a follower or a propagandist of Marxism. And this same reason he was rejected by Russian Marxists for many decades. Kozulin (1984) says that "The ban imposed on its publication and the general reluctance to reprint Vygotsky's works are due to the narrow-mindedness of Soviet ideological bureaucrats, who have been frightened by his unorthodox approach to Marxism" (p. 78). Bruner (1986) thinks that "He was never hamstrung by the theoretical system in which he located himself—and he probably suffered in consequence" (p. 156). I assume that besides the reasons Kozulin and Bruner mentioned, it is his profession—the study of the mind that doomed him as a Marxist. It is the field which Marx had so little to do with, and which, the radical Marxists believe, belongs to the middle class or bourgeoisie, not the working class or proletarians. Genius will always be discovered by the world, and now Vygotsky, a "Sleeping Giant," is re-recognized by his own people and the people of the world.

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