

DOSSIER “Human development, drama and perezhivania:
Vygotsky and the question of the psychology of the actor’s creation”^{1 2}

Directed self-criticism with artist-workers: a methodological proposal based on cultural-historical psychology^{3 4 5}

Autocrítica dirigida com artistas-trabalhadores(as): uma proposta metodológica a partir da Psicologia Histórico-Cultural

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Abstract

In this article, we present a research and intervention methodology based on Historical-Cultural Psychology, called Directed Self-Criticism. A priori, it is aimed at the artistic territory, starting from the artist's confrontation with their own work(s), which identifies processes of alienation-emanicipation that interfere with the artist-worker's living in the context of the capitalist system. We elucidate its foundations and applicability, based on the systemic unity of Living (Perejivanie) and we delimit the method's interventional character, as it enables a subject to become more aware of various aspects of their artistic working life, to develop strategies for coping with limitations and to find creative material for their works.

Keywords: Directed Self-Criticism, Historical-Cultural Psychology, Living (Perejivanie), alienation-emanicipation, artist-worker

Resumo

Neste artigo apresentamos uma metodologia de pesquisa e intervenção baseada na Psicologia Histórico-Cultural, denominada Autocrítica dirigida. Destina-se, a priori, ao território artístico, partindo da confrontação do artista frente a(s) sua(s) própria(s) obra(s). Nela identifica-se processos de alienação-emanipação que interferem na Vivência do(a) artista-trabalhador(a) no contexto do sistema capitalista. Elucidamos os fundamentos e aplicabilidade, a partir da unidade sistêmica da Vivência (Perejivânie) e delimitamos o caráter interventivo do método por possibilitar um sujeito mais consciente sob vários aspectos de sua vida laboral artística, no desenvolvimento de estratégias de enfrentamento às limitações e no encontro de matéria criativa para suas obras.

Palavras-chave: Autocrítica dirigida, Psicologia Histórico-Cultural, Vivência (Perejivânie), alienação-emanipação, artista-trabalhador(a)

In this article, we start from the recognition of art as work, around the professional dilemmas that include the survival of the artist-worker and the activity, amidst the logic of a system that challenges the usefulness of cultural goods and conditions individuals to the exploitation of labor power. With the development of the productive forces and the relations resulting from them, towards economic interests, consequently, is generated "the metamorphosis of labor, [...] increasingly explicit between use-value and exchange-value, transforming concrete labor on a given object into abstract labor that creates value, which culminates in the reality of socially necessary labor" (Lukács, 2012, p. 315). This aspect becomes decisive today, in which the accumulation of wealth is formalized through private property, its

relations with the division of labor and commodification, the hallmarks of capitalist production. Guided by this logic, society is structured under possible mismatches that favor some to the detriment of others, be they people or products.

During such dilemmas, the artist-worker experiences the interference of the system's contradictions, which tend to fragment work, separating the subject from the process and its product, so that it becomes plastered and mechanical, in short, alienated (Marx, 2004). In this case, alienation consists of a state of consciousness about reality and has historical determinants because it is linked to the very development of capitalism, being an instance defined in multiple socioeconomic orders culminating in the complexity of the social division of labor (Lukács, 2013). Marx (1932/2004, p. 24-25) points out that:

The worker has become a commodity and it is fortunate for them that they're able to reach the man who is interested in them [...] they don't just have to fight for their physical means of life, they have to fight for the acquisition of work, that is, for the possibility, the means of being able to carry out his activity.

In art, this becomes emblematic, because contradictions are in evidence in the following portrait: artistic activity, characterized by self-expression and cultural object, is seen in the impetus of alienated-exploited work. Obstacles that compromise the effective realization of the activity can have consequences for the continuity and permanence of artists in the profession, which may be related to creativity and/or more complex psychosocial instances of the subject-work relationship (Lukács, 2012; Mészáros, 2009). At a macro level, these consequences affect the entire socio-cultural order, since an alienated product can contribute to the maintenance of ideologies, reaching and forming equally alienated consciences (Mészáros, 2009).

In an increasingly capitalized society, so-called "creative" art, that which follows the artist's principles and ideals, doesn't always match up with society's consumer interests, something that can reverberate in the dissolution of one to the detriment of the other, or in the attempt to maintain the two antagonistic realities. Artists are a class that tends to be self-employed, produce art on commission, depend on governmental notices and aid to carry out their activities and suffer from cultural geographical barriers that centralize the best job opportunities in the artistic sector in regions —such as large metropolises (Buscariolli et al., 2016; Menger, 2005).

We also must consider that in a utilitarian context, artistic productions become precarious work to the point where the artists themselves have to take on other jobs to support themselves and their creative activity, and in many cases, these have nothing to do with artistic work. Among the consequences of double and even triple working hours in other jobs is a decrease in investment in the artistic activity itself, or its total suppression. Vàsquez (1978, p.93) contributes to this understanding by saying that:

A kind of alienation is produced, as the essence of the artistic work is denatured. The artist doesn't fully recognize themselves in their product, because everything he creates as a response to an external need is foreign, alien to them. This strangeness is total when [...] this activity ceases to be an end and becomes a means of subsistence.

Alienation is a complex concept in Marxist theories, widely problematized by various thinkers, ranging from the ideas of Marx (1932/2004), Lukács (2013), and commentators who study the subject directly or indirectly (Alcântara, 2014; Lessa, 1992; Ranieri, 2001). In the direct relationship between alienation and art, István Mészáros (2009) reveals that its occurrence is expressed: I) in the artist themselves; II) in the subject/theme of their work; III) in the public. These aspects form the dialectical triad of artist-work-society, essential for the consummation and existence of the artistic phenomenon, which suggests that its dissolution or compromise exposes the effects of alienation.

This raises the following epistemic-methodological question: how can we identify and understand the processes of consciousness in the living of the artist-worker, so that the risks of an alienated activity do not compromise the effectiveness and development of creative processes? Would it be possible to understand this issue using conventional research methods?

A brief search for references on this subject found a range of studies on artists as workers, including those that tend to explain their reality by dealing with social, economic, and political aspects and the cultural context (Buscariolli et al., 2016; Silva, 2018), mostly in the areas of social sciences, public policy, and cultural production. These are coherent research proposals, given that art is configured as a relationship built from the individual to the social and vice versa, in other words, Vygotsky (1925/1999b, p. 9) says that "art can only be the object of scientific study when it is considered to be one of the vital functions of society, in a permanent relationship with all other fields of social life and in its concrete historical conditioning".

Thus, in this field of research, we find several publications that tend to make use of conventional methodological resources, such as interviews and observation. However, "the 'question-answer' logic behind the methodological tools traditionally used by psychology does not work for the study of subjectivity or for the study of other social issues such as social discourses and social representations" (González-Rey & Mitjans Martínez, 2017, p. 204).

This perspective was highlighted by Lev Vygotsky⁶ (2004b)—a Russian psychologist—in "The Historical Significance of the Crisis in Psychology". In this writing, he reports on the main problems of psychological research of his time, which still exist today: practices that displace the subject from their context, isolates them in their subjectivity; or even those that reduce the subject to biological determinations, based on stimulus-response—promoting dichotomies, abstract or reductionist explanations of human phenomena. Vygotsky's methodological/epistemic proposal to the problem of psychology is manifested mainly in the defense of a historical and cultural subject (Zanella et al., 2007).

Thus, for Cultural-Historical Psychology, an approach developed by Lev Vygotsky, and which shares Marxist ideals, the subject is presented as both an agent and a product of society, and this dialectic underpins the importance of developing the inter-psyche aspects involved in this relationship. In short, by being interested in the processes intrinsic to phenomena and not in their apparent manifestation, the approach seeks to reach the being in its totality and concreteness, aware of itself and its environment (Vygotski, 2004b). In defense of this project, Vygotski said that psychological research should be interested in the development of new relationships between psychological functions and systems, especially in methodologies that are not disconnected from social practices (Somekh & Nissen, 2011).

We therefore understand that an artifice for accessing reality, in its historical and concrete constitution, can only come from the materiality resulting from the human action of work, which acts and is transformed by the environment, dialectically (Marx, 1932/2004). In our field of research, the work of art is constituted as this materiality⁷, and in the Marxist

⁶ For the sake of translation, the author's name is spelled differently: Vygotski, Vygotski, Vygotsky. In this article we have adopted the Brazilian translation in Vygotski, respecting the variations adopted by the books referenced in brackets.

⁷ By maintaining the Marxist basis as the foundation of the proposed discussions, the concept of materiality, and its variations, applied to the artistic context is defended when referring to the work of art. According to Bottomore's Dictionary of Marxist Thought (2001, p.254), "Materialism states that everything that exists is only matter, or at least depends on matter". It is recognized that this concept has various connotations, coupled with terminological

historical-dialectical perspective, it is the objectification carried out by the human being when it is configured as praxis. Thus, the emerging question is of an individual who asserts themselves in the world, in a materially mediated relationship, and shows marks of his development or his alienation, a process that is no different from what happens between the artist and the work of art (Mendes et al., 2017). Vigotski (2004b, p.47) complements us by saying that:

The development of the problem and the method go hand in hand, although not in parallel. The search for a method becomes one of the most important tasks in research. The method, in this case, is both premise and product, tool and result of the investigation.

Therefore, in view of the problem exposed, we present in this article the method initially called Self-Criticism (Autocrítica) (Lima, 2016), which has the primary intention of situating artist-work-society as a unit, from which the particularities of the craft (aesthetics and technique) and/or psychosocial crossings can be problematized in a dialectical way, in coherence with the ideals of Historical-Cultural Psychology (Vigotski, 1915-16/1999a, 1924/1999b; 1931-33/2004a). In view of the articulation established between researcher and participant to conduct the procedure, which will be systematically diluted in the following topics of this article, we will refer to the method as Directed Self-Criticism.

This method was developed in its entirety in the context of doctoral research entitled "Autocrítica do artista: alienação e vivência da arte como trabalho", authored by Erickaline Lima (2022), which presents the study of alienation and emancipation in the reality of artist-workers, recognizing the contradictions of the current productive system and how they establish what we identify, through directed self-criticism, as processes of alienation that limit and reduce objectification—the subject's action on the environment; and it also highlights the processes of emancipation that express from the initial alienating state to other instances of the subject's action.

Based on this ideal, we bring the method closer to the systemic unit called living—from the Russian, *Perejivanie*⁸—which interconnects subject and environment, considering its

discussions within Marxism itself. The work of art consists of a matter/materiality of mediation that is consolidated in the relationship between subject and world, as also pointed out by L. Vigotski in *Psychology of Art* (1991b).

⁸ The Russian term *Perejivanie* can have different variations depending on the translation used. In this article we mention the most common form adopted in Brazilian works. Russian verbs are grouped into pairs with practically identical meanings, differing in their aspect: perfective or imperfective. One of these pairs would be (*perejit*) and (*perejivát*), both originating from the verb (*jit*). In its broad sense, both "jit" and "perejit" mean to live" (Toassa, 2010, 759).

influence on the development process (Blunden, 2016) - not by chance directly related by Vigotski (1925/1999b) to aesthetic experience. The polysemy of the concept of Living is consistent with its complexity and shows that it has been the subject of discussion by scholars in the field -of Historical-Cultural Psychology in recent years, as pointed out in the studies by Andrade and Campos (2019). It is also clear that the systemic unit living tends to be frequently related to experience, as if they were synonyms and represented the same condition. However, the word experience comes from the Russian opit, something that highlights a distinction that means immediate experience, so it's not the same thing. According to Toassa (2019, p. 113), the concepts are:

Tensioned poles of a dialectical relationship: livings can exist as isolated fragments in consciousness—the most complex psychic synthesis we know—floating along the subject's life path without being attributed meaning or fully integrated into accumulated experience.

It is also considered that living can encompass both immediate and accumulated experience, as both synthesize the condition of the subject in action, in the sense of mobilizing references, but living is not reduced to the types and forms of experience. When we refer to the artistic experience, for example, we consider it as part of the process that constitutes the living, which in turn interconnects the various psychological nuances involved in the attribution of meaning (Vigotski, 1926/2006), which is why the living is a systemic unit of analysis. The scope for understanding the concept becomes greater if we consider that Vigotski was unable to conclude his considerations on it due to his premature death, making it a breeding ground for conjecture and confirmation.

Veresov (2017) reports on the two circumstances that can be conducted in/by The Living (*Perejivaniè*) which would be: 1) as a psychological phenomenon that can empirically be observed and studied; 2) And, as a theoretical concept, a lens of analysis. These aspects confirm the possibility of promoting Living as a psychological phenomenon during the Directed Self-Criticism method, understanding the underlying processes and experiences, as well as a posteriori considering it as an analytical tool.

These aspects are central to understand Self-Criticism in the artistic field, in terms of its foundations and application, which are described in detail later in this article. In short, we recognize in the professional artist a subject who, mediated by the materiality of the work of art, acts in the world, leading the practice, themselves and other individuals in a course of

development that can be mutual and authentic. This is why there is a need to (re)establish the dialectic between subject and environment, in our case made explicit in the triad artist-worker-society, so that "by adapting the means of mediation and the modes of organization involved in carrying out certain actions as a social plan [...] the individual develops not only new means of carrying out specific actions, but also qualitatively new types of psychological functions" (Minick, 1987, p.34).

By raising these questions, we can see the applicability of Self-Criticism in interventional research (Teixeira & Megid Neto, 2017). The process mentioned is configured as a living (*perejivanie*) in the sense expressed by Vigotski (1915-1916/1999a; 1925/1999b), as an instrument that can, in its course, promote and assist conscious and creative action. Through the method, we create a situation that makes the participating artist envision the continuity of the activity, by distinguishing possible creative elements that can be explored in new works and/or recognizing the hardships of their professional career and, eventually, coping strategies.

The issues surrounding the living of the artist-worker, in the conflict between alienation-*emancipation* and the overall development of their activity, suggest appropriate ways for these concepts to be identified and analyzed in their respective realities. In light of this, we have set out the context in which the Directed Self-Criticism method was conceived, and it is important to emphasize that we do not mean that the artist is devoid of the self-critical dimension in their activity, nor that we are going to teach the artist how to create or guide them in the construction of their work. When we introduce self-criticism as a methodological procedure, i.e., directed, we are considering the effects of the intervention on the artist and the elements extracted that can be analyzed, based on certain criteria discerned by the researcher.

Foundations of Directed Self-Criticism: epistemological and methodological convergences

Directed self-criticism is made up of various ordering factors that play a part in its foundations; later in this topic, we will highlight the epistemic-methodological precepts. Among them, the relationship with Art Criticism stands out, an analytical activity that until then was exclusive to the spectator and dependent on the artistic work produced by the artist. Criticism, when constituted on the artistic phenomenon lived, is affirmed in the sharing of the

experience—generally in the form of a discursive text directed at the other. It contains impressions about the aesthetic experience, involving objective and subjective aspects.

From Vigotski, it is also possible to discern the importance of this activity for artistic knowledge, since his first writings were on the literary-theatrical universe, with critical analyses of the works (Marques, 2015). The best known of these is his analysis *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark* (1915-16/1999a), a reference to the work of William Shakespeare. Vigotski's analysis was based on the work itself, without resorting to other means to understand it, in the sense that the work is enough. This consideration brings us back to the power of the work over the subject, guaranteeing subsidies for understanding, whether of the synesthesia provoked, or of oneself in relation to the world.

To this end, Walter Benjamin (1999, p. 74) helps our understanding when he says that "Criticism is, then, like an experiment on the work of art, through which its reflection is awakened, and it is brought to consciousness and knowledge of itself." Thus, we have a process of systematizing the synesthesia provoked by the work, whatever its nature (scenic, musical, pictorial, literary, etc.) and the openness to think about this same process regardless of the condition that is occupied in the appreciation, whether as author or spectator of the work. In order to broaden these presuppositions of art criticism, we asked ourselves what this process would be like if it also included the artist in relation to his creation.

Although Directed Self-Criticism has the same principles, it differs from the conventional practice of art criticism due to its self-referential characteristic which implies that it is triggered at certain moments in the work process. However, we can't generalize by saying that every artist is essentially self-critical. As we have seen, the current of alienation is the only form of consciousness that we can assume exists in human social reality, whatever the condition (Lukács, 2012). And the eventual emancipation from these ties can be fostered, even if not permanently, but as a process of emancipation, it is configured as a displacement of the subject from the state of latency, common to alienation.

Regarding consciousness, Toassa (2006) highlights three basic aspects in Vigotski's studies that can be easily related to understanding the processes of alienation-emancipation, which are: the awareness of reality (external and internal); the attribute to designate the condition of certain psychological processes; and, as a psychological system—in relation to the environment and to the subject himself by connecting other structures in his activity. We can

consider, following these aspects, consciousness as a condition that requires an understanding and mastery of the context; it can be studied because it connects with concrete reality and, finally, it consists of a complex system that can be fostered. All instances can be compromised by alienation, as well as acquired in emancipatory territory.

The systematization of Directed Self-Criticism will be presented below, in its stages, as an instrument of research and intervention on the artist-worker, placing them as the main reflective agent of the process, in a shared space-time, a premise that can lead to eventual transformations in the participants. As it has a methodological framework based on cultural-historical psychology, it sees the subject in the context in which they are circumscribed, that is, in the social historical field taken up by references that act dialectically (Vigotsky, 2004b).

In addition, it is fundamental for the constitution of a methodology to be coherent with the object of study, something that exposes the self-reflective process and the unity of artist-work-society. As an approximation of our interests, we highlight the research of Sullivan & McCarthy (2007) who refer to the condition of self-knowledge of the artist supported by their own work. According to the authors, from this dialogical relationship it is possible to discern feelings, responsibility for actions, recognition of possibilities and potential for future action.

Along these lines, we also highlight the article by Mello (2012), which expressly discusses the artist-work relationship. The author recognizes that studies involving Art and Psychology are essential to facilitate flow and creativity. In this research, we are struck by the focus on the development of the artistic work through the artist's perception, which has important effects on the recognition of psychology as a potential area of study for these professionals.

We became aware of what Vigotski (2004b) was going to discuss in some of his writings, in the search for a method in Psychology that prioritizes the totality of the subject, understanding him as a being formed and forming social relations, dialectically mediated by the signs with which he interacts for the development of higher psychological functions (Pino, 2005; Smolka, 1993; Zanella, 2005). For this reason, the interests of Self-Criticism are based on this ideal, directed at the dialectical connection between the triad of artist-worker-society, in which relationships with the work carried out are unified on a space-time plane of their own, provoking connections between the internal and the external, the experienced (reality) and the non-experienced (projection).

Based on these ideals, the proposal falls within the context of research of an interventional nature, the intention of the researcher choosing as methodological paths the articulation between research and the production of knowledge, with action and/or interventional processes (Teixeira & Megid Neto, 2017). Within the scope of the application research, we intend not only to understand the investigative territory but to make use of a resource granted to the participating subject who, by appropriating it, acts on reality (Vigotski, 1931-33/2004a).

To the same end, in terms of work, the continuous action of making art encourages the subject to contribute to the development of the field itself in a broader sense, since an artist's work of art can serve as a creative influence for other professionals in the field. For the working artist, the materiality of the work is essential for professional self-recognition, because with each piece made, new aspects of their work become conscious, aspects that culminate in a living artistic experience, an object of transformation for that subject. This possibility ratifies the fact that "[...] true art always implies something that transforms, that surpasses ordinary feeling, and that fear, that same pain, that same restlessness, when aroused by art, imply something more above what is contained in them" (Vigotski, 1925/1999b, p. 307).

The consciousness that is provoked is essentially configured as a connection and relationship between activities, which in this discussion we will expand as part of the territory of living towards becoming and understanding. Expanding the horizons of this work by inserting the construct of experience—from the Russian *perejivanie*—as a unit of consciousness, ensures that there is ample space to interconnect the subject to possibilities, so that the function of consciousness is to apprehend psychological processes and highlight what is configured as meaning (González Rey, 2018).

In this case, the experience presents itself to us as the main point of convergence in our discussion, consolidating itself as a systemic unit in different axes: in the method of Directed Self-Criticism; in the crossing of the processes of alienation-emancipation; and in artistic work. In other words, it not only encompasses our methodology, in its process and results, but also the problem we have highlighted about the artist-worker and their works. In short, researchers who have studied this emblematic unit see it as something that highlights the dialectic between the social environment and the individual, in terms of what is experienced (Gonzalez-Rey, 2016; Liberali & Fuga, 2018; Veresov, 2016). Vigotski (2010, p. 686) points out that a:

The experience is a unity in which, on the one hand, the environment, what is experienced, is represented in an indivisible way—the experience is always linked to what is located outside the person—and, on the other hand, how I live it is represented, in other words, all the particularities of the personality and all the particularities of the environment are presented in the living, both what is taken from the environment, all the elements that have a relationship with a given personality, and what is taken from the personality, all the traits of its character, constitutive traits that have a relationship with a given event.

The unity found in the living is made up of personal and situational characteristics—personality and environment in the internal relationship with reality (Veresov, 2017). This implies that, based on Vigotski (1926/2006), living is always aroused in relation to something, which is manifested as a real dynamic unity of consciousness—thus, consciousness is formed by and forms living (*Perejivanie*). The relationship between this unity and the aesthetic experience is an imminent possibility if we start from these considerations, since both in the act of constructing the work of art and in its fruition, experiential aspects of the subject are mobilized. To get an idea of the relationship between living and art, we mention the Russian theatrical artist Constantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), a contemporary and fellow countryman of Vigotski. In his studies on theater, Stanislavski brought it in to help actors create their characters (Capucci, 2017).

Specifically, in his writing *The Actor's Work on Oneself* (1938/1980), Stanislavski unveils a process in which the actor sets out to find material for creation, based on his perception of himself, reaching a psychophysical awareness that is favorable for stage creation. In this theatrical theorist's theory, the importance of living for the artist is emphasized, with the emotional material contained in personal experiences being the main leitmotif of their work, in the rescue of references about lived emotional content (Copeliovitch, 2016). Something that presumes how experiential aspects can become creative material, and in some cases, as the theatrical artist defends in his aesthetics, the main source.

Nevertheless, in *Psychology of Art* (1925/1999b), Vigotski found in the artistic field the basis for his first considerations about living (*Perejivanie*), which is based on what art can evoke in the subject, at the level of aesthetic reaction, bringing important elements to think about creativity and emotions (González Rey & Martínez, 2017). According to Ferholt and Nilsson (2016), in addition to the dynamism of emotion and cognition for the purpose of the living, the

subject is confronted with their autobiographical memory when reliving them, something that suggests that facts brought to light in another sense of life can help in the process of awareness.

Vigotski also mentions Stanislavski's system of creation in his text *On the question of the psychology of creation by the actor* (1932/2021). The text highlights the actor's paradox, in which he questions whether or not the actor is involved in the feelings projected onto the character. The discussion makes it clear how living is consolidated within art, in this case when the actor works on feelings and to what extent they experience the role. This aspect in art emerges as an important elucidative premise for connecting the subject's reality to creative actions. Whether as an artist or a spectator, art will be a territory in which it is possible to understand one's own living and have new ones (González Rey, 2018).

As we have seen, the problem that emerges when we insert the living as a systemic unit constitutes a territory where various ordering factors converge, which is why it is possible to promote a dialog between the living and what we initially explained as processes of alienation-*emancipation* in the reality of the working artist. Both are forms of consciousness that are dialectically constructed in social life and can limit the actions of subjects and make them unconcerned about their labor and what results from it (the work of art)—something that represents a certain threat to the essential characteristics of artistic activity. It is important to emphasize that total emancipation from the processes of alienation is questionable since its occurrence would require the dissolution of the structures of the productivist system. However, there are mechanisms that mobilize the subject and place them in another position in relation to the alienation that dominates them, which we call *processes of emancipation*.

In view of this, artists are not immune to the effects of the capitalist system, of mechanized attitudes that fragment and dissipate the subject's relationship with himself, with their activity and with the world (Marx, 1932/2004). This reveals the following fact: the living of the artist-worker is subject to interference from the different nuances of alienation, but it is through their living at work that any processes of emancipation will also occur.

Art becomes provocative and stressful for the subject because it is not just an identification of the issues of the artist who created it, but a reaction that is the subject's own in the face of overcoming what is given to them as reality. We maintain that living is not a passive contemplation of events but expresses "the active work that people do to overcome psychological states of impossibility" (Clarà, 2016, p. 2).

This brings us to the dimension of the work of art as a matter of mediation. According to Vigotski (1925/1999b), the effects of this mediation expand to take on the prerogative of a social technique of feeling, of expression, concretization and overcoming—in his words: "art collects its material from life but produces above this material something that is not yet in the properties of this material" (Vigotski, 1999a, p. 308). This psychic reorganization is the result of the aesthetic reaction provoked in the subject's relationship with the work, which for the author is not a mere passive attitude towards the object, as it causes a clash of contradictory feelings that drives the subject to action (Schühli, 2011).

In view of the above, we have a basis for considering Directed Self-Criticism not only as a device for collecting qualitative data that can highlight traces of moments of artistic creation, elements of meaning and significance, among others. But also, the interventional effects of this proposal are considered, affirmed as a means that shows the artist material possibilities for new creations, resources that can be found in their own works. In Vigotski (1931-33/2004, p. 14) we find a basis for this idea:

They will be able to imagine what they have never seen, they will be able, on the basis of the other person's description, to represent for themselves the description of what did not exist in their own personal experience, which is not limited by the strict boundaries of their own experience, but can also go beyond its boundaries, assimilating, with the help of imagination, the historical and social experience of others. In this way, imagination is a necessary condition for almost all of man's intellectual activity (Vigotski, 2004a, p. 14).

In this excerpt, Vigotski tells us another preponderant factor: imagination is an important part of any artistic creation, from which we project possibilities before we even test them—this resource is, of all people, the one most used by art professionals. For this reason, we believe that the self-critical procedure can awaken the subject's creative thinking, in a process that can be perfected in the act of creation itself.

Given the permanent incidence of alienation processes, a procedure that evokes an analytical return on practice proves salutary. This return will make it possible, among other things, to review elements that were discarded at a given moment in a process, but which make sense to recover as possibilities for work. Now, if the artist is only called such because of their primary function of making/producing art, the absence of this condition due to a lack of creativity or ideas to work with, becomes fatal to the continuity of their work.

We are dealing with the interconnected processes of imagination and creativity, thought-affect, in the co-construction of the work of art. Based on the fundamentals presented on Directed Self-Criticism, we have established the following assumptions: I) Through its realization, we can identify how the processes of alienation-emanicipation are mobilized in the living of work; II) The methodological framework itself becomes a living, as it fosters the dialectic between artist-work-society.

The main aim of getting artists to experience Directed Self-Criticism is also based on the prerogative that they recognize a possible path for moving creativity, in which by retracing the historical-material path of their activity, they will perceive the continuity and permanence of art in the world.

Systematization and applicability of Directed Self-Criticism

So far, we have captured the theoretical substrates and related them to the generic aspects of art as work, bearing in mind that self-criticism in its fundamentals is directed at the context itself, regardless of the artistic language. It's worth emphasizing that this doesn't mean we disregard the vastness of the field in its specificities, in which the various languages share, such as: Plastic arts (painting, sculpture, photography, etc.); Music; Literature (poetry, poems, short stories, novels); Dance; and Theatre - among the best known and most traditional. In this topic, with the systematization of the stages, we will see how the specificities reverberate in the conduct of the method. It is therefore important to emphasize that the characteristics of artistic productions, for example: whether ephemeral or concrete, whether individual or collective—among others—also determine working conditions and must therefore be considered.

Directed Self-Criticism⁹, in operational terms, is demonstrated in its individual procedure and comprises two complementary stages: 1) Brief semi-structured interview; 2) artist-work(s) confrontation. For the methodology to be effective, it is essential that the participant is instructed in the details of the procedure in its stages, as they will have to select the materials for the second stage in advance.

⁹ Any research using the methodology of Directed Self-Criticism must be submitted to the ethics committee of the institutions, and with this, ask participants to sign consent forms and/or other declarations.

The brief interview stage is crucial not only for getting to know the artist who will be conducting the Directed Self-Criticism, but also for forming the necessary bond between researcher and participant. In this way, the following will be promoted: I) The current material and social condition: Age, artistic field(s), working time; gender; race, marital status—among others. II) Drawing up questions that involve the artist's relationship with art¹⁰: the start of their career; professional development, situations of continuity or rupture, outstanding works, in other words, aspects that are crucial to understanding the unfolding of the living of artistic work. At this point, the artist organizes their thoughts around their living in order to answer the questions. The aim is to mobilize thinking so that in the next stage, which consists of the artist-work confrontation, there is a deepening or addition of other points not yet shared.

These forms express consciousness in its internal and external articulation, in the terms described by Vigotski (1926/2006), since this operation is recreated imagistically and transposed into words, in the action of perceiving aspects of reality in different ways. About that:

Every deeper penetration into reality requires a freer attitude of consciousness towards the elements of that reality, a move away from the apparent external aspect of reality given immediately in primary perception, the possibility of increasingly complex processes, with the help of which the cognition of reality is complicated and enriched. (Vigotski, 2009, p.129)

For the artist-work confrontation stage, it is essential to instruct the participating artist in advance to bring the materials, advising on the possibility of diversifying the elements that will be brought, so that they don't necessarily stick to a specific type—for example: only props for a character's costume or only photos — so that this choice is made with the conscious intention of sticking to one type or one single work, and not because of a lack of information about what was or wasn't possible to bring. The selection of this material will be made exclusively by the participant, not only because most of the material comes from a personal collection, but also because it implies initial contact, in which the meanings that influence the choices are embedded. Thus, the selection of artistic material, even if not directly monitored by the researcher, is a determining factor in the reconstitution of the subject's living, where there is a pre-elaboration of the affections and situations manifested as a result of the artistic object

¹⁰ We will not present questions so as not to limit the scope of this stage, as it is shaped by the study perspectives of the researchers interested in using the method.

and/or traces that will later be organized for the self-critical procedure, in its confrontation stage.

Along these lines, it is equally important to inform the audience that it is possible to bring different elements corresponding to the same work and/or different elements between works, and it is important to point out that there is no limit on the number of works/elements/materials to be brought to the session. The effectiveness of the clarifications about this moment will ensure that the final procedure, the artist-work confrontation, takes place in total relation to the artist's Living. The parts and the whole interact in the process of constructing meaning, complementing each other, or highlighting the differences, changes, and difficulties—which will possibly appear in the participant's speech.

Both stages foster the personal dimension of consciousness where inter-psyche interactions are refracted, like a "prism"¹¹. This part of the action of human consciousness, for which Vigotski uses the metaphor of the prism, is portrayed in the following optical phenomenon: when white light passes through a prism, the light disperses into different colors, representing the possibilities of meaning that pass through the subject's consciousness. This directly characterizes the territory of living, because in this place, consciousness tends to organize the elements of meaning (Veresov, 2017). This metaphor helps us to understand that the preparation of the interview answers, the selection of material from the collection and the confrontation with the work(s) expose the social situation of development.

in the recognition that the analysis of experiences has a methodological role in the field of investigating the developmental phenomena of consciousness/personality and, in this sense, it is a "prism" that refracts partial/total aspects of the environment (and not a mirror whose function is to reflect it) (Toassa, 2019, p.128).

With this in mind, it will be possible to problematize the meanings that guided the actions of the artist participating in the Directed Self-Criticism process, because if there are reasons that led to the choice of a material (A) rather than a material (B) about that work, these are in themselves elements of meaning—it is important that at some point this question is raised by the researcher. Given this prerogative, the researcher is free to ask questions during the process of directed self-criticism, because the artist may need to organize their thoughts and not

¹¹ A geometric shape formed by straight line segments and their ends forming a polygon.

find the means to do so on their own. In addition, the artist may miss some elements that they didn't bring to the meeting; if this happens, you can allow them to talk about this element and its importance.

If we start from the assumption that not everything that is experienced is put into a work of art, we concluded that every work of art or creative process initiated by the artist is a living, because they select, define criteria, intentions, understanding within a certain spectrum of possibilities refracted by consciousness. This fact brings us back to the questioning of the states of creative impossibility that can be provoked by processes of alienation (Lukács, 2012), reducing, and limiting the scope of livings, i.e., preventing the refraction of light from the "prism".

From then on, the living will be transposed into words (narrative construction), in which the senses and meanings of the whole process of Directed Self-Criticism are shared, the selection of materials to the detriment of others, and about the confrontation experience itself.

The living can be expressed in confessions, long personal conversations, or actions: writing a letter; or going to the theater, to a store. They may also not reach detectable expression; they may break down into anguish, and present themselves as a symptom of serious, disruptive crises in psychic life. (Toassa, 2019, p.126)

The methodology encourages the meeting, preferably taking place in the artist's workplace: studio, rehearsal room, studios—among others. In the environment itself, the artist would be in a new process of re-signification, ready for practical action because of the aesthetic reaction provoked. By activating these livings through a method such as Directed Self-Criticism, we allow the artist to become aware of the development of their activity in a broad historical-cultural path. To travel this path is to become aware of the congruencies and incongruities that inhabit everyday work, beyond the aesthetic aspects—which are important for the development of artistic activity—but also in the scope of other particularities of being an artist in the world. As explained by Vigotski (1915-16/1999b, p.320), "Art is rather an organization of our behavior with a view to the future, an orientation towards the future, a demand that may never come true, but which leads us to aspire above our life to what lies behind it".

We provoke expression, apprehension, and the attribution of meanings, which can trigger new livings in a cycle of continuous development. This dialectical approach understands the subject's development process because it considers its phases and changes, the managed

situation that re-establishes the artist-worker-society relationship, making it possible to provide an explanatory analysis of dynamic and/or causal relationships (Vigotski, 2009).

The complexity of the work of art also leads us to another important feature of the procedure, its suitability to the artistic language practiced by the participant. For example, for the Performing Arts it is possible to include excerpts from a scene—some choreographic movement or a character's speech—which can be exposed and staged during the self-critical process, at the participant's discretion; or, for activities that directly involve music, excerpts from compositions or instruments can be performed during the process. Such actions facilitate the recognition of new creative possibilities and perceptions about what has been experienced, which can be presented as new data to the accompanying researcher.

By being aware of which artistic field the participant works in professionally—be it performing arts, visual arts, music, literature or others—the researcher is able to understand the relationships at play in the confrontation stage. Some differences emerge, for example: visual artists and writers have easy access to the work of art, in its concrete totality, and can more easily bring it into confrontation, although it is not obligatory to limit oneself to it. Unlike participants in the performing arts, because their practice is characterized by ephemerality, they deal with the traces of the works (photos, videos, props...) to reconstruct memories of what was lived.

In this context, the materials can vary significantly and even mix different artistic languages. The creative process tends to be chaotic, non-linear, and made up of diverse references, something that will also be reflected in the materials selected by the artist for the confrontation stage.

The procedure can be extended to other questions that interest the researcher, with the following axes in mind: I) aesthetic and technical aspects; II) the meaning of the career and staying in the profession; III) identifying and planning future projects; IV) the worker's creative identity; V) challenges and discoveries in relation to the daily practice of their work; VI) crossings that occur outside the field of work and interfere in the creative processes. Pathways that construction of this research territory in terms of: a) the importance of the work of art for understanding what it means to be an artist-worker; b) the aspects that praise, validate or corrupt the artist-worker-society relationship; c) the work of art as a hermeneutic, ontological and dialogical subject. In other words, the possibilities that arise from interventional practice are

vast, so the most exact definition that justifies the use of this resource will depend on the researcher's interests.

All these points are part of what we define as the artist's living, as a psychological phenomenon and as a tool for analysis (Veresov, 2017), where human development is embedded, as the subject is inseparable from the social (Vigotski, 1926/2006). We would also like to point out, by means of the notes we listed in the previous paragraph, that we are not limiting ourselves to the creative aspects of the artist's work; the procedure expands to include the environment and other psychosocial issues that define the professional. Based on these analytical possibilities, we reflect on the moments in the self-critical process when these aspects can emerge. The analysis procedures are at the researcher's discretion, based on their research interests and the theoretical framework adopted, allowing greater freedom to appropriate what emerges as collected material.

Concluding Remarks

The artist-worker is not only confronted with the technical and aesthetic demands of their craft but is also crossed by external mechanisms based on capitalist logic that tend to distort the living of this worker, alienating them from themselves, their product and their relationship with other subjects (Marx, 1932/2004). Because he is not immune to the process of commodification, the artist-worker becomes a producer of goods, subordinated to certain demands of the system and the relationship with those who consume the product of their activity, called art. "The depersonalization of this relationship inevitably leads to the disappearance of aesthetic value, whose place is taken by pseudo-values of the bestseller type" (Mészáros, 2009, p. 186). This logic considers the works or artists that have achieved the most sales/publicity to be important, and not necessarily the quality of the work's aesthetic composition.

That's why we've shown how alienation processes can directly interfere in the development of the artist-worker, and can extract their real creative interests from them in order to give vent to other people's interests, which is crucial when we talk about art. In order to get out of this mechanized and uncritical state, which is characteristic of capitalist existence, it is necessary to (re)establish awareness of the actions carried out and to regain an understanding of concrete reality in order to intervene in it, which will allow any processes of emancipation to

be unleashed. Such a return is not generated in any way, it takes means and events for the subject to awaken, that is, the living itself.

Throughout this article, we explain the foundations and applicability of the method of Directed Self-Criticism, for research and intervention, which emerged in the artistic field because its procedural basis derives from Art Criticism. From then on, we developed a strong epistemic-methodological relationship with Lev Vigotski's Cultural-Historical Psychology, following a path based on important concepts that constitute an understanding of the systemic unity of Living (*Perejivanie*).

By highlighting this problem in the context of the artist-worker, we understand the artistic object as a matter of mediation, as it continues the plan of objectification of reality. Art making is therefore an activity that moves the human dialectic—both for those who carry out the action and for those who meet it (Vigotski, 1915-16/1999a). A two-way street that contributes to the constitution of consciousness and, consequently, to a new arrangement of higher psychological functions (Barroco & Surperti, 2014; Toassa, 2006). Through the self-critical procedure, given that it begins in art and returns to it, a path is opened up for the artist to perceive, in a new condition, elements of their history/trajectory and to continue with it—this can be a mechanism that fosters eventual processes of emancipation.

The conclusion is that art is not a mere doing/producing, but a doing that requires an awareness of action—from idea to form. The dialectical connection between artist-work-society is gradually re-established, so that the subject encounters not only the diversity of materials, but also the whole that makes up their trajectory—in other words, their artistic repertoire.

Finally, we hope that Self-Criticism, understood through the theoretical presuppositions of Historical-Cultural Psychology, will serve as a reference for future interventions in the artistic context or in other realities of work, so that we can recognize new potentialities of the methodology and reap the rewards of its results.

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