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# The study of emotions in Vygotskij: The theory of emotions

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This paper explains the stages of the writing in Italian is a work of Vygotsky published in Moscow only recently (1984), fifty years after his death, and which until now has not been translated in Italy: Theory of emotions. This is an unfinished manuscript written between 1931 and 1933, published as a complete work of twenty chapters grouped under the title Theory of emotions: historical-psychological. The thesis introduces the study of emotions and is briefly reviewed the evolution of theories of emotion, to explain the context in which it appears the work of Vygotsky and education suggest a hypothesis of emotional development. You try to clarify the novelty of vygotskijana the study of emotions and retrieve more references to emotions that Vygotsky did in his other works. You will also find information available on the work presented and its spread outside of Russia. It provides, finally, an account of the development of the work and the methodological approach followed in the present edition. The text presented here is also characterized by the fact that they bring in their entirety the notes in the Russian text, which is in Volume VI of Works 1982-1984, Ed Educational, Moscow, 1984, edited by MG Jaroshevskij, into which is placed on pp. 92-317. The work is within the context of the experiences of cooperation and exchange that the Master of Science in Education and Science of Education and Training has started with the Psycho-Pedagogical University of Moscow (MGPPU), a collaboration that has resulted, among other things, the Convention for the establishment of a new degree course in double degree in SCIENCE EDUCATION between MGPPU and University La Sapienza, with legal recognition both in Russia and in Italy, signed by the Rector in 2010.

**Key words:** Psychology, Emotion, Theory of emotion, Higher mental functions, Vygotskij, Descartes, Spinoza, James-Lange Peripheral Conception.

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Emotions are still a fertile ground for discussion and generous source of food for thought and scientific research despite numerous studies and many theories proposed by philosophers and scientists for millennia.

This work comes from a deep conviction that began to appear in my mind many years ago, so shy and poorly defined in a conscious way, thinking about the relaxing pleasures of a beautiful sunny day, the physical pain of a teenage shyness exhausting, the need to run to the bathroom for a powerful emotion, the desire to cry and scream without knowing why, the power of rage that allows unimaginable achievements, happiness, eating a fruit cultivated with his own hands,

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tenderness that is rampant in the watch a puppy or a bud blooming. These are just a small part of the infinite emotions we feel from the earliest moments of life and I think that always accompany us. I do not think there is a single moment in our existence with no emotions, either - even more so - when we sleep.

For personal and professional reasons I had the opportunity to closely observe the people I met in my lifetime. This observation was initially spontaneous and then more careful and methodical, punctuated by increasing knowledge, experience accumulated for years through training in communication, management activities of the working groups, sales training, time management and many others who had always the knowledge of the human being as leitmotif.

I could see, through personal experience, how often we react to pain caused by external stimuli and self-generated by overly energetic sensations. For self-generated stimuli I mean, for example, mental processes in which competitiveness and frustration caused by the feeling of inadequacy to models, people and situations, and powerful emotional mechanisms destabilizing or on the opposite strongly self-motivating.

The anger and sorrow, for example, switch from emotion state to the somatic state through a series of contractions that reach the physical pain and the "brain" trying to build an action or series of actions to gain tranquility and escape from that state of malaise.

It happens in a "positive" way too: the happiness of a good news, spending time with loved ones, picking fruit, playing with a child, playing a sport, gives a state of pervasive wellness. I think it's very useful and interesting trying to understand and to feel deeply and carefully what happens when we stir emotion or when the body tells us something through a physical sensation.

It's my conviction that emotions constantly accompany the people life. I felt very important to start my investigations in this particular field of study. I started from the considerations found in the writings of Vygotskij and through as written in his Theory of the emotions, and from authors and researchers to which he refers explicitly.

It is appropriate to emphasize the importance of the study of emotions in educational as well as psychological and linger, albeit briefly, on the evolution of theories of emotion to try to explain the context where the vast and complex work of Vygotskij takes place. It would be very interesting to try to clarify the new vygotkijan view in the study of emotions developed in his Theory of the emotions without neglecting further references to the emotions that Vygotskij did in many other works.

Having followed the teacher Serena Veggetti during her very interesting classes, I realized that reading the Vygotskij's study of emotions directly from Russian language would be a very complex job. Professor Veggetti and I decided to produce an Italian version of this important and complex vygotkijan work not yet presented to the Italian reader. I had the opportunity to know even better the work in the original language, an unfinished manuscript written between 1931 and 1933, published in Moscow just recently (1984), fifty years after the death of its author; twenty chapters grouped under the title Theory of emotions: historical-psychological study.

With Professor Veggetti, who accompanied me in the use of this important Russian-language text, we were able to work long hours in order to finally bring the work in the Italian language in an integral way, comprehensive of notes and comments of important personality of Russian psychology.

The work was stimulated, deepened and enriched by numerous and interesting exchange of experiences we have had and still now we continue to have with the Psycho-Pedagogical University of Moscow (MGPPU). In July 2009, I participated in my first mission as part of the delegation formed by Professor Veggetti, Professor Lucisano and Professor Boncori and others Italian students. On that occasion, were discussed, among other things, the basis of the agreement for the establishment of a new course to double degree in PEDAGOGY AND SCIENCE EDUCATION between MGPPU and LA SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY who had legal recognition in Russia and Italy. In June 2010

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there was the second mission where we have defined the phases and procedures of the agreement. The third mission took place in April 2011 and started operating the beginning of the new Master of Science (Joint degree in Pedagogy and Educational Sciences - WISDOM / MGPPU) with great joy and satisfaction.

The Italian delegation was made up of all graduating masterful Italian and two lecturers of La Sapienza between participants in the double degree program.

In the meetings with Russian colleagues in Rome and in Moscow I had the opportunity to have a direct relationship with the second generation vygotskijan experts. So I had one more reason to propose an Italian edition with notes and insights available just in the Russian version.

I hope that this work of Vygotskij in Italian may be a useful contribution to those who wish to deepen their knowledge of meaning of the author about the emotions and to propose the study of emotions in the context of psychological and pedagogical modern debate.

Recognizing our own emotions is a complex and non-immediate exercise. The pain and the pleasure are the clearest sensations and our nature, similar to the animals, leads us to move away from pain and to pursue pleasure as much as possible.

Every time our feelings are deeply troubled, we express unthinkable and unexpected energies that lead us to immediate action that may have consequences for the rest of our lives.

Expressing these simple observations we have used terms such as "mind", "stirring", "upset", "energy". This mode of expression, which can be called "common language", contains some concepts used in various theories of emotions, without assuming a precise definition of culture and science. This will be the attempt of the next exposure.

A current definition of the term "emotion" is as follows:

Has several accepted definitions:

1. It is an experience characterized by a strong degree of feeling and usually accompanied by marked motor expression;
2. It is a peculiar conscious state during which either pleasantness or unpleasantness is predominant;
3. It is the sum total of experience during any period in which marked bodily changes or feeling, surprise or upset take place;
4. Or it is the dynamic expression of the instincts which may emanate from either conscious or unconscious sources.

Emotion is an event but it does not exist as a unique thing or entity which can be completely divorced from the remainder of experience. There are varieties of emotional experiences and reactions, just as there are varieties of perceptual experiences, attentive reactions or cognitive experiences. Subjectively, an emotional event is marked by a distinctive, conscious feeling to which one assigns such names as fear, disgust, anger or grief. Essentially emotion is a peculiar state of consciousness which is distinguished from others conscious events by the circumstances of its occurrence and by the presence of pleasantness or unpleasantness.<sup>1</sup>

In evolutionary terms, or Darwinian, the main function of emotions is to make more effective the individual's reaction to situations where an immediate response is necessary to the survival, so a reaction that does not use cognitive processes and a conscious process.

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<sup>1</sup> ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA, INC. VOLUME 8 1960 WILLIAM BENTON, PUBLISHER CHICAGO : LONDON : TORONTO

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But emotions also have a relational function (communication to others of their psychophysiological reactions) and a self-regulation (understanding of their psychophysiological changes).

According to the Cannon-Bard centralist theory, which reversed the peripheral point of view of James and Lange, the stimulus emotigeno, which can be an event, a scene, a facial expression or a particular tone of voice, is processed in first instance by subcortical centers of the brain (particularly the amygdala) that, after receiving the information directly from the nucleus of the posterior thalamus (via thalamic or subcortical), causes a first reaction with the function of alerting the organism. In this phase the emotion determines different somatic changes, such as the variation of the pulse rate, the increase or decrease of the sweating, the acceleration of the respiratory rhythm, the increase or the relaxation of the muscle tension.

The stimulus emotigeno is simultaneously sent from the thalamus to the associative areas of the cerebral cortex, where processing is slower but much more refined. At this point the output is a response considered the most appropriate to the situation, especially in reference to the "rules of display" that belong to their own cultural environment.

The emotion has an effect on the cognitive aspects: may cause reductions or improvements in concentration, confusion, loss, alert, and so on. The facial expression and verbal language can reflect on the outside the deepest emotions: a shaky voice, an altered tone, a sunny smile, the furrowed brow indicate the presence of an emotional state.

The emotions initially appear in an unconscious way, later the subject "test" the emotion. Normally the person who feels an emotion becomes aware of his bodily changes (he realizes that his hands are sweaty or fast heartbeat) and tends to identify these changes with psychophysiological phenomena known ("fear", "joy", "disgust" etc.).

Even from the first moments of life, we receive an "education" to emotions that responds to the rules of time and place in which we live and it is therefore strongly influenced by the cultural component. This practice teaches us to recognize the behavior of others and to "control" our own, especially at times when emotions are particularly strong and are binding on the body. The more the social context is complex and advanced, the more increases the demand for control of emotion and, consequently, increases the possibility of conflict between the natural emotional thrust and the actions.

The first approaches to the study of emotions were of a philosophical nature: the problem was figuring on one side if human actions were determined by emotion or by reason, then establish a hierarchy of human faculties, on the other hand if the emotions were originate from the outside or if they were under the internal control of the person.

In classical philosophical thought emotions were considered forces "strange" because it could not really understand what they were, what was happening in the body and mind of man when he felt certain stimuli (sometimes produced outside, sometimes from his own thoughts), or even if the emotions were simply animal reflections persisted in humans. The "strangeness" of the emotional phenomenon has meant that sometimes emotions are considered to be "foreign" to the concept of man, which was built, instead, to control their thoughts and behavior.

Emotions are still a fertile ground for discussion and generous source of food for thought and scientific research despite numerous studies and many theories proposed by philosophers and scientists for millennia.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, a definition that refers to emotion means any state, movement or condition for which the animal or the human feels the value that a certain situation has for his life, his needs, his

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<sup>2</sup> Emozione (2006) a cura di N. Abbagnano, in Storia della filosofia, n. e., Roma, Gruppo Editoriale l'Espresso, vol. 10, p. 699.

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interests. In this sense, emotion, as affirmed by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics*, is any disease of the soul that is accompanied by pleasure or pain. So emotions can be considered as the immediate reaction of the living to a situation that is favorable or unfavorable: immediate because it is condensed and, so to speak, summed up in the sentimental shade, pleasant or painful, which is enough to put the alarm the living being and place to face the situation with the tools in his possession.<sup>3</sup>

For Plato and Aristotle, the emotions, however, have a meaning, because they have a function in the economy of human existence in the world. For the Stoics, however, emotions have no meaning and no function because they are considered diseases of the soul.

Just due to their importance and their complexity, the vision of emotions has been subject to different and conflicting approaches over time. For example, S. Augustine sees the Stoic ideal inhuman and impossible; S. Thomas, however, returns to the Stoic vision and proposes the concept of emotion as a disease of the soul, where is this potential and may suffer or receive one. Hobbes argued that emotions control the whole conduct of man putting together the physical strength, experience and reason, as the four fundamental human faculties.

Descartes in *The Passions of the Soul* published in 1649 in Amsterdam, is on the same line saying that the vital spirits, that is, the mechanical forces that act in the body, change the passive soul. He places the soul in the pineal gland (or epiphysis), which became the seat of the emotions, identifies in wonder, love, hate, desire, joy and sadness of the six major emotions and derives all the others from them.

For Spinoza, the author frequently quoted in the work of Vygotskij, the desire is the fundamental emotion and is an effort of the mind to preserve his own being, which refers to the soul and the body simultaneously<sup>4</sup>. the joy and the pain are connected to the desire. These are emotions until they are confused and stop being diseases once become distinct ideas.

Kant argues that the emotion exists in the transitory moment in which reason has not yet reached its strength. It is important since it is closely linked to the joy and sadness, which in turn are connected to pleasure and pain: the two perpetual antagonists in life.

In his study on the historical-psychological theory of emotions, Vygotskij critically exposes the theories developed by Spinoza and Descartes. Continually draws the two scientists also highlighting some of the work that other researchers have done on their theories, comparing and highlighting, at times, the factors of mutual divergence and convergence.

In extreme synthesis, we can say that emotions have often been considered a factor of imbalance to the rational conduct of man. As balance disorder and expression related to the "feral" of the human being, acquired a negative meaning and scientific value is not significant, therefore not worthy of depth studies.<sup>5</sup>

The situation changes in the second half of the nineteenth century, when emotions become the object of scientific inquiry and shall be made in close connection with the movements and body states that accompany them. We put the foundations of the current psychology as a discipline that deals with the study of emotions, but at the same time it becomes more conscious of the fact that emotions affect across many different disciplines: neurology, biochemistry, psychiatry, sociology, psychology, pharmacology, physiology, etc.. Neurological studies have increased knowledge about the role played by different brain mechanisms in emotion, while biochemical and pharmacological

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3 Ibid.

4 Nelle note alla Teoria delle emozioni di Vygotskij, gli scritti di Spinoza citati al riguardo sono il Breve trattato su Dio sull'uomo e sulla sua grazia e l'Etica, in particolare la terza parte in cui egli espone la sua Teoria dell'origine e della natura degli affetti.

5 R. Canestrari, A. Godino (2002) Trattato di psicologia, Bologna, CLUEB, p. 234.

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underlined the importance of hormones and adrenal glands in emotional process and behavior related to emotions.<sup>6</sup>

Darwin tried first, from a scientific point of view, to shed light on the emotions and has pioneered the comparative study of these animals and humans.

Freud first intended emotions as an inseparable component of the functioning of the mind: the shaded part of each of our mental process. The study of emotions, in this way, no longer opposed to rationality, it becomes a key to reading and interpretation.

With the birth of modern scientific psychology physiologists and doctors have begun to deal with the study of both the intellectual activity, both of sensations and emotions, trying to apply to the study of the mind that the methods already applied to the natural sciences.

Exposition his theory of the emotions, Vygotskij states that "emotion is not simply the sum of the sensations of organic reactions but mainly a tendency to act in a certain direction." The feelings for him are the typical somatic manifestations that accompany strong emotions, which in some cases can turn on the memory of past emotional experiences, but not resurrect or update them, and only in exceptional cases raising emotional preparation, the organic changes can lead to the development of a true affection<sup>7</sup>. He returns, as we shall see, many times on this fundamental aspect of his theory.

- Darwin with his studio *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) has left a precious heritage to modern psychology. He waged a long series of observations and studies of the expressions of people belonging to different ethnic groups and animals of various species. For "expressions" meant the whole of the interior and exterior body movements that occur and accompany various moods. The results comforted the conviction of Darwin on the universality of emotions which, according to him, are the result of evolution of adaptive features can be summarized in two aspects:
- permit effective action in relation to the environment;
- allow a communication tool.

Beyond the limits that may be encountered from the methodological point of view (ie Darwin had not considered that, all the subjects of his experimental investigation, had contact with westerners), can be summarized that the structure of emotional expressions, according to Darwin, is innate and linked to membership of a given species, while its "modulation" is a characteristic of cultural transmission. Modulation can intervene at the level of expression but not at the structural level: the emotion remains the same with the same schema.

Darwin can be considered the first proponent of nativist theory of emotions. The psychological school of Chicago, with Dewey and Hall, connecting to nativism Darwin considered emotion as the recurrence in some modified form of teleological movement, tracing it back to residual manifestations of ancestral instincts.

About a century after Darwin, the American psychologist Ekman<sup>8</sup> has done research confirming the hypothesis that the facial expression of emotion uses an innate repertoire and then the expressive movements of the face are the result of non-learned behavior patterns. Ekman also states that the emotional expression often follows cultural rules that prescribe in such situations is

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6 W. Visconti (1989) *Emozione* in M. Laeng, (a cura di) *Enciclopedia pedagogica*, III vol., Brescia, La Scuola, pp. 4313-4316.

7 W. Visconti (1989), *op. cit.*

8 P. Ekman (1980) *The face of man: expression of universal emotion in a New Guinea Village*, New York, Galand STMP Press.

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allowed or not to show signs of their emotions. So, although they are innate, some muscle movements linked to certain emotions can be controlled.

Contrary to the views expressed above, the nativist anti-thesis states that emotional expressions vary from one culture to another and are therefore the result of learning. Ekman has made experiments in this direction. Looked at people of Eastern and Western cultures tested (whether obvious or not declared) coming to the conclusion that, for example, facial expressions, the Chinese express amazement differently from Westerners or the Japanese contain their expressions in a smile. Ekman showed in his experiments, the fact that there are emotions so-called "fundamentals" that have common expression in different cultures and seem stressed by innate neural stimuli. But at the same time, the fact that they are innate not exclude the possibility that they are subject to changes inhibitions and voluntary, "so the use of the term innate or learned does not imply an absolute dichotomy."9.

In fact, if we consider the concept of the emotions expressed in a few thousand years ago and to this day we walk this path landing on the current theories, we see that we have not found a scientific solution unique to the emotions.

I have seen during some observations that I made on classes of children between three and five years of age, the fact that even in the form of game are moving a lot of emotional energy. On the level of general culture, passed this stage, it seems that the emotion is perceived as a sign of inability to manage their thoughts and feelings, so as a problem. Without going too much into these considerations could be better developed elsewhere, I wonder if a path of knowledge of emotions can and must be made available also, and I would say especially, the teaching staff as something transversal.

You should ask now the problem of how to create an educational program to be inserted transversely across the whole of human learning in order to better understand the world of emotions.

You may establish specific educational programs on the topic "emotions" for each strip of teaching: pre-school, elementary, middle, high schools, universities, adult education (lifelong learning).

So raise the quality of student demand and thus increase the response of the teachers who in turn are inserted in a phase of training on these issues.

This could be a further contribution to the development of a better social conscience.

I wonder more and more often and more forcefully if and how you can bring the teaching of knowledge of emotions at the institutional level. It might be interesting to add alongside other school subjects fundamental to social life, some teaching modules designed to raise awareness of our emotions. These modules could be programmed to accompany during the entire period of instruction and to assist in preparing more and more emotions as deep and complex language of human nature.

Emotional control, implemented in different forms in different cultures is based on the idea that they have a negative value in the life of the individual. Probably an "emotional literacy" competent help to appreciate the usefulness of all emotions, even those considered "negative": the sadness produces a movement of introspection allows you to challenge yourself, fear sharpens the senses, raises the brain on high alert, placing the subject to act in the face of a real danger; envy, in his "positive" sense of feeling of lack of something that you can get - a better understanding, a better job, etc.. - Can become "aspiration" and move huge propulsive energies.

The role of emotions in reporting on events important to the individual, against which put in place suitable behavior, it seems so substantial that could be subject to a specific and sustained

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9 W. Visconti (1989) *Emozione*, cit., p. 4314.

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approach to teaching during all the years of training and it would be appropriate to ask whether insert or not in the context of lifelong learning. It could be very challenging and qualifying for those working in education, access to training programs that help to improve the knowledge of this important aspect of life. You have to ask the question of whether an institution, careful preparation of more qualified teachers in understanding the emotions, may be able to trigger a virtuous circle of "emotional literacy", in order to obtain a greater awareness of the individual and, therefore, greater civic consciousness. In other words, just emotions, common to all human beings and cut across gender and age, can be an important tool for developing a greater awareness at a better social consciousness, in which the individual gains the ability to understanding of its pulses and, therefore, also of those of their fellows.

Education culturally transmitted, especially - but not only - typical of Western societies tend to encourage people to leak so reduced their emotions to avoid "discover" in front of others, to adopt attitudes hard - as can be considered more "human" attitudes of tenderness - to be less "attacked" in some work situations or pseudo affective relations, to perceive their fear as little as possible to look strong and flaunt safety, etc..

This attitude get used people to emphasize the cognitive processes at the expense of the emotional sphere, so as to indicate, with a propensity rooted in centuries, reason and feeling are opposites.

The challenges posed by today's society require the development of relational skills and raise educational urgency of emotional processes.

The topic of emotions is very present in every sphere of society: it can range from school to work, from sports to emotional relationships, politics, migration, war cooperation, always finding the emotional aspects closely related.

For example, in cases of bullying, it is clear at least a double incidence of emotional sphere: one in which young people are already victims of injustice, frustration and perhaps overwhelming, respond distorted the natural need for self-affirmation and defense of their rights, and one in which other young people, while those who are victims of bullying acts, respond "mediated" to the stress controlling negative emotional response by virtue of a self-preservation and a better social life.

Even in the context of management education, we had a fast evolving and increasingly sophisticated because in addition to the academic and IQ, leaders need to express a capacity for leadership, declinable in self-knowledge for effective management of their potential and an understanding of the behavior of others, to be able to work with others in a collaborative and effective.

Rapid changes in economic, social and technology have increased the emotional fragility of the current generation of children or, perhaps, have highlighted the importance of emotions and their manifestations without being supported by a proper structure of learning. May raise the question that the previous generation has "highlighted" and "liberated" the emotional expression but did not have adequate means to "educate" and "understand" this expression also in support of the next generation. The emotion not necessarily need to be learned by children in the same way as the language and, perhaps even more than the language, needs to be supported properly.

Learn to observe the emotions could help to achieve greater clarity and awareness of automation that it brings. The observation is obviously not a real education to the emotions but would have a good basis for a larger work as part of a training course. The problem could be laid down, in education, in the following terms: "How can we bring awareness into our emotions?" Or "How to Learn to transform emotional experiences in conscious experience?"

Importance of research results and the empirical investigation: through the work of Vygotskij we can retrace studies on emotions. Also carry some considerations arising from my experience and observations of children in a kindergarten.

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In the history of psychology have been proposed many theories of emotions and The Theory of emotions by Vygotskij is a valuable reference full of critical reflections and timely reminders to the entire scientific landscape that has competed in the last centuries of this fascinating topic.

The first in order of time, and the most popular, is the theory of James-Lange, after the two psychologists (the American W. James<sup>10</sup> and the Danish C. Lange<sup>11</sup>) who, independently of each other, formulated between 1884 and 1885. According to this theory, the excitement comes from the effect of return on the consciousness of the body caused by alterations in peripheral perception of the stimulus, exemplifying, according to James, is not true (as common sense tells us) that "we cry because we are sad, "but it is true that" we are sad because we cry ", the origin of emotion there is an internal state of the body, but a perception of the same device, so much so that, if we try to represent a situation able to arouse emotion, we can only have an awareness of intellectual or "cold", but not an experience de facto, while if for example we simulate a state of anger, it is very likely that the impact on our consciousness of peripheral events such as 'raising the tone of voice, muscle tension and the like, ends up provoking in us a feeling of real anger.

The theories of James and Lange, inter alia, have drawn attention to its two aspects somatic emotion: one attentive to external changes of the body (expression, sweating, eye movement, tremor etc..) And the other attentive to internal changes (contraction of the viscera, increased heart rate, rapid breathing, etc..).

According to Wundt<sup>12</sup> and his student Titchener, contemporary of William James, emotions are conscious experiences, characterized by peculiar qualities, not separable, which can be identified through an introspective method. This reading is incompatible with the behaviorist view of emotion.

Another theory that has enjoyed credit was that of J. Watson (1925), according to which the emotional repertoire of the newborn has just three different types of emotion, fear, like behavioral response to loud noises or lack of support, anger, like behavioral response to discomfort caused by bandages too narrow, and finally love, like behavioral response to the titillation of the skin, to caress and swing, and all the other emotions, however complex and seemingly different, are established in the body, in the course of development, through a process of conditioning the these three primitive emotions. In addition, Watson interprets emotions as mere responses to specific stimuli peripheral devices organism. Even the methodological aspect of his research leaves no room for doubt: the observer knew in advance the type of stimulus that was given to the child and, therefore, was induced to recognize the answer based on the projections of his expectations. Comments following footage of the baby's face is changed because of the emotion evoked by a stimulus is not known, showed that no observer would be able to distinguish the three classes of emotional responses hypothesized by Watson: fear, anger, love.

This interpretation of the peripheral type was reversed by the theory of WB Cannon and P. Bard (1927), which assigns to the central nervous system the important role in the mechanism of emotion. According to Cannon and Bard, the hypothalamus is the seat of the dynamic pattern of emotion in the presence of a stimulus able to arouse emotion, these patterns are released cortical inhibition and give rise to peripheral events, whose signal is returned the cortex, which gives emotion its experiential meaning. In fact, in his article The James-Lange theory of emotion: a critical examination and alternative theory appeared in the American Journal of Psychology in 1927, Cannon argues that the origin of emotion is to be found within the brain.

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10 W. James (New York City , 11 gennaio 1842- 26 agosto 1910) psicologo e filosofo, è spesso considerato il padre della psicologia americana.

11 C. G. Lange (Copenhagen 4 dicembre 1834 - 1900) filosofo e psicologo danese.

12 W. M. Wundt (Mannheim, 16 agosto 1832 – Lipsia, 31 agosto 1920) psicologo e fisiologo tedesco.

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In 1950, M. Barnold and 1951 D.B. Lindsley formulated a theory of emotion that integrates the best elements of the peripheral theory of James-Lange and Cannon-Bard of the centralist, and which today is generally credited. According to this theory, the stimulus causes excitation in the cortex, which in turn has the double effect of producing a contemporary and emotional attitude and dynamic hypothalamic release schemes, which are expressed at the peripheral level. The resulting alterations devices are also perceived as the initial stimulus, and bounce alter or tend to change the emotional attitude established in the cortex.

In addition to the above, there is another range of different theories that are grouped under the term "differential theory," which have in common the explicit references to Darwin. They argue that there is a limited set of distinct emotions, the result of human evolution, which correspond to the action of specific neural circuits that act on both the external physical expressions that the autonomic nervous system (ANS) 13. The idea that there is a limited number of emotions comes from a long philosophical tradition: even Descartes had identified six main passions from which all the others. The fact that there are countless types of emotion that are different definitions, often do not coincide with each other in various languages suggests to bring the issue to a double distinction: the existence of primary and secondary emotions.

For example Plutchik<sup>14</sup> argues that the disappointment would be an emotion arising from a dyad primary emotions surprise and sadness.

Other authors<sup>15</sup> argue that the idea of a mixture of emotions, in analogy with the mixing of colors, is not sustainable.

The differential theory has not yet acquired a unanimous view of the criteria for the classification of emotions and therefore the possible combinations between them.

A summary of previous approaches can be recognized in the functional or organizational theory. This theory states that emotions are organized in a rudimentary way since the first weeks of life and that all members of this organization are developed later, becoming more complex and differentiated with the progress of cognitive development.

In a Russia who lives in the early twentieth century the establishment of the new political regime socialist Vygotskij develops in a very articulated way the cultural-historical theory of emotions in two manuscripts: Thought and Language and Theory of emotions: historical-psychological. While the first has become a classic of psychological studies, "the second one," ... historical analysis of the role of affect based on the work of Descartes and Spinoza, ... remained largely unknown outside of Russia, as it has been made available in English only in 1999 with the publication of the sixth volume of the Works of Vygotskij '(Mahn & John-Steiner, 2004, p. 2). This is the text that we have worked with Professor Veggetti in recent years to make it accessible in faithful and integral version.

Facendosi interprete della teoria storico-culturale, Carl Ratner<sup>16</sup>, afferma che soltanto risolvendo il conflitto tra il "costruzionismo sociale"<sup>17</sup> e il "naturalismo"<sup>18</sup>, si potrà conoscere la

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13 Il sistema nervoso autonomo (SNA), detto anche sistema nervoso vegetativo o viscerale, è l'insieme di cellule e fibre che innervano gli organi interni e le ghiandole, controllando le cosiddette funzioni vegetative, ossia le funzioni che generalmente sono al di fuori del controllo volontario. Viene anche definito "sistema autonomo involontario".

14 R. Plutchik (1995) *Psicologia e biologia delle emozioni*, Torino, Bollati-Boringhieri.

15 V. D'Urso, R. Trentin (1988) *Psicologia delle emozioni*, Bologna, Il Mulino, p. 77.

16 C. Ratner (1989) A Social Constructionist Critique of Naturalistic Theories of Emotion, «Journal of Mind and Behavior», 10, pp. 211-230.

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vera natura delle emozioni. Secondo il costruzionismo sociale le emozioni degli adulti dipendono dai concetti e dalle convenzioni sociali. A differenza degli animali e dei neonati, dove le reazioni emotive sono immediate e le risposte biologiche direttamente correlate agli stimoli, negli adulti sono mediate socialmente. Al cambiare delle ideologie e dei sistemi sociali avvengono variazioni e modifiche anche nella vita emotiva.

Ratner<sup>19</sup>, successivamente, riprende il tema delle emozioni sostenendo che non devono essere distinte dal pensiero attribuendo loro processi differenti. Sostiene anzi che l'emozione sarebbe lo stato che accompagna il pensiero e, quindi, non esisterebbe senza di esso.

As we have seen, the Theory of emotions was written by Vygotskij in 1933 and later published for the first time in 1984. Actually part of a process that goes through and summarizes a lot of work of the Author: "While some aspects of the work of Vygotskij are receiving increased attention and appreciation at the international level among educators, his writings on the relationship between affect and thought have remained largely unknown, although they are central to understanding his work as a whole" (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2004, p. 1).

In 1926 Vygotskij public Educational psychology<sup>20</sup>. In this paper, the author deals with, among other things, on the issue of emotional behavior, the concept of emotion, its biological and psychological education of feelings.

"Compared to all the others, this aspect of human behavior has proved more difficult to describe, to classify and to connect to any law." <sup>21</sup>. So writes Vygotskij, already in the first lines of the sixth chapter, concerning the study of emotions. Continues by recalling the theory of James and Lange and paying attention to the various subjective and objective aspects, psychological and somatic emotion. Closes the chapter talking about the education of feelings. Be deduced clearly already here, all the reasons that led him to develop his Theory of emotions.

In 1934, seriously ill with tuberculosis and now the final stages, called his last chapter of Thought and Language, which was published in December 1934, about six months after his death. In this work the author expresses the arguments of his cultural-historical theory, developed in conjunction with one of his closest collaborators: Aleksandr R. Lurija<sup>22</sup>. In fact, in 1929, he published an important essay on the development of attention of children and an article in the "Journal of Genetic Psychology" in which he presented his theory on the "cultural development" of the child, who later became known precisely as "cultural-historical theory".

My hope is to contribute, through the writing of the work of Vygotskij in Italian, the stimulus for new research and contributions on this very important topic and participate in person teams of national and international research for the preparation of teaching modules and work units that can be proposed at the institutional level.

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17 Nel libro *The social construction of reality* (1966), i sociologi Berger e Luckmann intendono con il termine di costruzione sociale quel processo attraverso il quale le persone creano continuamente per mezzo delle loro azioni e delle loro interazioni una realtà comune e condivisa, esperita come oggettiva, fattuale e densa di significato soggettivamente.

18 Secondo un approccio naturalista, le emozioni sono indipendenti dalla cognizione, anzi dal punto di vista filogenetico e ontogenetico le emozioni precedono e determinano la cognizione.

19 C. Ratner (2000) *A Cultural-Psychological Analysis of Emotions*, «Culture and Psychology», vol. 6, pp. 5-39.

20 L. S. Vygotskij, *Psicologia pedagogica*, a cura di Serena Veggetti, Trento, Erickson, 2006.

21 Ibid., p 139

22 A. R. Lurija (Kazan, 16 luglio 1902 – Mosca, 14 agosto 1977) medico, sociologo e psicologo sovietico, è stato fondatore della neuropsicologia.

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The various approaches to the study of emotions have moved primarily the understanding of "what" were the emotions and, above all, "where" were preserved and developed. The naturalistic approach to mental phenomena - that is where the mind and body were considered to be two parallel objects, and where you could interact - was the starting point of the German Psychological studies of Gestalt and Behaviorism in U.S..

La novità dell'impostazione vygotskijana allo studio delle emozioni è illustrata da A.R. Lurija in un suo articolo L.S. Vygotsky and the problem of functional localization. The novelty vygotskijana to the study of emotions is illustrated by AR Lurija in his article L.S. Vygotskij and the problem of functional localization<sup>23</sup>. Here Lurija highlights the limitations of the idea of the psychology of the '20s - affirming that human life was a complex of mental "functions" and "property" common to man and animals - and expresses the validity of the innovative idea vygotskijana that, somehow, allowed to respond coherently to the various issues that remain unresolved in the context of conflicting theories so far developed on the theme of emotions.

But, says Luria remained of the questions that naturalists could not answer: How can we understand the mechanism of a voluntary act? Which are the characteristics in which they work voluntary attention and working memory? How can I access to scientific analysis of abstract forms of thought that will allow man to penetrate deeper connections with reality?

Vygotskij, Lurija says again, from a point of view radically different from the explanations of "descriptive psychology". For him the higher mental functions must not only be subject to an extended causal, but the main goal of scientific psychology. Took the view that maintaining the natural scientific approach, rejecting the consideration of the higher mental functions, would mean to stop the progress of science to enter it on false binary: for Vygotskij was completely unacceptable.

Therefore he saw the opportunity to get out of the "historical crisis of psychology" in-depth review of the basic psychological concepts. The "higher mental functions" must have a source, but this source should not be seen in the depths of the spirit or hidden properties of nervous tissue: it must be placed outside of the human body, nell'oggettiva social history. In forming the company through the use of and using the tools, man has created new forms of indirect relationship with the outside world in which he had already adapted and then had checked. The language was formed during the process of social development has not just provided with a method of communication, hitherto unknown, but a new way to organize their thought processes. You adapting verbal communication to the preservation of their experiences creating the language called "inner or verbal thought," that man has been able to develop these higher forms of intelligent perception, voluntary attention, recall, active, abstract thinking and voluntary behavior, which is not have never existed in the animal world.

So, like language, emotions are learned and elaborate continuously during development and those "mental functions" fixed and unchanging become complex and dynamic functional systems.

At this point, continuous Lurija, remains an issue on the table can be understood as the material substrate of the cerebral hemispheres? On which conceptions of the functioning of the brain we base our vision of the material bases of mental activity?

Neurology continued to assert his naive idea of the location of the complex mental functions, but Vygotskij expresses explicitly the limit of this vision, he says, inevitably leads to a vicious circle of wavering between two extremes: extreme naturalism and extreme spiritualism.

His revolutionary vision starts from the consideration that the higher mental functions have a social origin, a systematic structure and dynamic development.

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23 "Journal of Russian and East European Psychology", vol. 40, n. 1, January-February 2002, pp 17-25.

L'articolo è la traduzione inglese di un contributo apparso su "Voprosy Psihologii", 1966, vol. 12, n. 6, pp 55-61, e già pubblicato in "Soviet Psychology", 1967, vol. 5, n. 3, pp 53-60.

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The localization can be understood only chronologically in that, in order to achieve the development of higher mental functions, the higher nervous functions are formed during the development process. Then, the human brain uses for these new functions and different localizations main, if compared with the animal brain.

In his early experiments<sup>24</sup>, Vygotskij also considered the fact that the mental development of the child not only involves simple maturation of instincts, but participation in the process of objective activity and communication with adults.

The higher mental functions, therefore, are the result of a historical development highly complex that can not be found in animal brain. Man has developed over the course of history, the morphological apparatus capable of generating endless new functional systems. New functional bodies, in the cortex, which relate temporal areas with sensory-motor areas. The human brain is a device capable of building "working level" which, themselves, become the basis for further "structures" in a unlimited game of "assembly and disassembly".

The neurology had not considered the fact that the same functions could be attributed to different parts of the cerebral cortex in different stages of development.

Vygotskij says that first of all the mind must form a base of elementary processes in order to be able to build the highest functions. In turn, the latter, contribute to modify the base that is being reorganized under the influence of higher mental functions.

Lurija concludes that it can be said without a shadow of a doubt that Vygotskij's research paved the way to neuropsychology, a new area of science. This attributes to Vygotskij the merit of having put in a position to lay the foundations of this new discipline, of which he is considered the founder and exponent of relief.

The focus on emotions in education (Vygotskij 1926) devoted to the professionals working in the school, pedagogical psychology in which he proposes and then dedicate their work to the emotions broad. This is precisely the impulse that led us to treat an Italian of good philological work devoted to the Theory of emotions. Bring to the attention the reading of this paper responds to a widely felt need today for an education of the emotions.

I am training in various capacities for over 25 years and I have done this activity in different areas of work. At first, I was involved in the formation of young people in taking care of the computer into the world of work and in particular I have dedicated myself to the teaching of programming in different languages (assembler, FORTRAN, COBOL, PL1, MFS and others). In a second time, I supervised the training of professionals in the world of asset management and private supplementary pensions. In this case, the reference audience was made up of adults already in place in other work environments that they wanted to meet and fit into a new environment full of opportunities in an activity carried out by professionals and with the idea of being manager of themselves. For thirteen years working in secondary school degree as a teacher of practical technical information management. My boys are aged between fifteen and twenty years. This year I'm also following a class of students to enable them to obtain the suitability computer science at the undergraduate program in Pedagogy and Education and Training at the University of Rome.

Having had experience of teaching in various contexts - work, school and university I have become increasingly convinced that any human activity cannot be separated from the ability to recognize and manage emotions.

Any type of teaching necessarily passes through the emotional structure of the parties involved: teachers and students. Regardless of the subject you want to teach the construction of the

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24 Vedi il suo *Izbrannye psichologigicheskie issledovaniia* [Selected Psychological Investigations], Mosca: Akad. Pedag. Nauk RSFSR, 1956, e *Razvitie vysshikh psikhicheskikh funktsii*, Mosca: Akad. Pedag. Nauk RSFSR, 1960.

teaching modules or units of work may be set in such a way that complemented at the preparatory stages that give the basics on the emotional human being.

We have seen that it is still open scientific debate on the subject and even the least attentive observer will notice that the latest science is addressing the issue at different levels: from robotics to nanotechnology.

Emotions are still a very vital sector of science that is opening up additional channels of research and experimentation while continuing debate about their origin.

My hope is to contribute, through the writing of the work of Vygotskij in Italian, to generate new research and contributions on this very important topic that is based on discussions at national and international level for the preparation and testing of training modules and work units that can be adopted at the institutional level.

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# Анализ взглядов Л.С.Выготского на психологию эмоций, представленных в его книге «Учение об эмоциях»

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В данной статье описаны этапы перевода на итальянский язык неоконченной рукописи Л.С.Выготского «Учение об эмоциях», которая была написана между 1931 и 1933 годами, и только в 1984 году, через пятьдесят лет после его смерти, опубликована в Москве под общим названием «Учение об эмоциях. Историко-психологическое исследование». До настоящего момента книга не переводилась на итальянский язык. В статье кратко представлен обзор теорий и исследований эмоций, чтобы ввести читателя в контекст научных идей и теорий, на которые опирался Выготский. Проводится анализ взглядов Выготского, предложившего оригинальную гипотезу о развитии эмоций, с теориями Декарта, Спинозы, Джемса-Ланге. Автор отмечает новизну выготскианского подхода и приводит упоминания о сущности эмоций, которые встречаются в других работах Выготского. Также в статье содержится информация о представляемой книге и ее распространении за пределами России. Рассматриваются возможности развития идей данной работы и соответствующего методологического подхода к исследованию психологии эмоций. Автор статьи анализирует также примечания, которыми снабжено русское издание книги (Выготский Л.С. Собрание сочинений в шести томах. М.: «Педагогика». 1982–1984. Т. 6. Под ред. М.Г. Ярошевского. 1984. С. 92–317). Данная работа была выполнена автором в процессе обучения по совместной магистерской программе «Педагогика и психология воспитания учащихся» Московского городского психолого-педагогического университета и Университета Ла Сапиенца (Рим), открытой в 2010 году и предполагающей получение дипломов обоих университетов.

**Ключевые слова:** психология, эмоции, теория эмоций, высшие психические функции, Выготский, Декарт, Спиноза, периферическая теория Джемса-Ланге.

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