'Existentializing' Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development:

Higher Mental Functions as Skillful Coping

by

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Abstract

Cultural psychology has typically viewed culture as an abstract system of rules that are first internalized and then employed individually. Lev Vygotsky has been largely mobilized in cultural psychology to support such an account via emphasis on the priority of semiotic mediation and the role of signs in his account of psychological development. Yet, increasingly such a view of culture and socialization as a process by which something external to human conduct is internalized has been viewed as missing the fundamental co-constitutive relationship of personhood and culture. In this thesis, I juxtapose the existential-phenomenological works of Hubert Dreyfus and Martin Heidegger to Vygotsky's view of development to generate a sketch of an ontogenetic approach that accounts for the co-constitutive relationship of persons and culture. I propose an 'existential' zone of proximal development as an existential aspect of all human interaction, or as implied in our relationality, which also provides a view of higher mental functions' as normative skills. I finally offer an interpretation of how this shift in understanding changes Vygotsky's developmental account from being a recognition of the relation of less and more competent cultural actors to being a central aspect of what it means to be a person.

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Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who is known for his Cultural-Historical

psychology, an approach that has been extremely influential in recent attempts to establish a

genuinely cultural psychology (see Valsiner 2000; Wertsch, 1985). Vygotsky's approach was

strongly influenced by the Soviet context within which he worked, as he attempted to reconcile

aspects of the dominant idealist and materialist paradigms of that time into a cohesive

psychological theory emphasizing culture, development, and history (Berducci, 2004). While his

work has been translated into English since the 1960s, his influence within psychology has been

largely sporadic, particularly within mainstream positivist psychology.

Vygotsky is perhaps best known in the Western world for his notion of the 'Zone of

Proximal Development,' or ZPD. Formally, the ZPD refers to the distance between the

independent activity of a less skillful cultural actor and that novice's potential development in

relation to a more skillful cultural actor (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In a less formal sense, the ZPD

refers to Vygotsky's finding that novices are more skillful within a particular cultural domain

when they are 'scaffolded' by an individual with more experience in that domain. For Vygotsky,

the ZPD reflects a recognition that learning and development are irrevocably intertwined from

the beginning of a child's life, and that psychological development is a necessarily *social* and

historical process (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84). Specifically, Vygotsky conceptualizes development

as [moving] from *lower mental functions* to *higher mental functions,* from more innate sensory

learning to higher forms of skillful conceptual learning (Vygotsky, 2012). Vygotsky emphasizes

that this movement involves an abstraction from our everyday involvement with tasks to an

engagement with the conceptual contents of our 'minds.' Thus, the movement of freeing ourselves from the sensory world is one of abstraction in Vygotsky's account.

While Vygotsky's account privileges abstraction from our daily involvements as necessary in our maturation, existential-phenomenological accounts within philosophy provide a different perspective on the development of these higher psychological functions as normative skills. Hubert Dreyfus, a continental philosopher, has argued that the acquisition of normative cultural skills involves not an abstraction from the life of the individual, but rather more differentiated and nuanced involvement with the particulars of our daily engagements (Dreyfus, 2014). Unlike Vygotsky, Dreyfus contends that it is only early in the acquisition of a particular cultural skill that abstractions, in the form of propositional rules, are relied upon. Over time, more expert performers develop a more differentiated field of 'sight' through direct training and practice with others and gradually refine their engagement in a given cultural practice rather than relying on complex abstract concepts. Moreover, increased involvement often involves an increasing sense of responsibility for one's participation in a particular cultural practice.

Following Baerveldt (2014a), Vygotsky's work should be understood ontogenetically, particularly given that Vygotsky's early influences challenge the way that he has typically been understood in cultural psychology. While many interpreters of Vygotsky (such as Valsiner (2000) and Wertsch (1985)) have focused explicitly on the relevance of semiotic mediation and the role of signs in psychological development, Blunden (2012) has noted that Vygotsky cites Goethe more than Hegel, suggesting a productive tension in his work between the dialectics of Hegel and Marx and the expressivism and *Lebensphilosophie* of Goethe (Baerveldt, 2014b). In this thesis, I will not attempt to work out all of the tensions within Vygotsky's work or necessarily present a cohesive challenge to the prevailing interpretations of his psychology.

Rather, I intend to juxtapose Vygotsky's view of ontogenesis in the 'zone of proximal development' with that of two prominent continental philosophers, Martin Heidegger and Hubert Dreyfus, who are both also influenced by *Lebensphilosophie*. In doing so, I will re-articulate Vygotsky's account of development in the ZPD in an attempt to see the ZPD as a necessary part of all facets of human existence rather than an abstract developmental concept.

Within mainstream psychology, human development and socialization are typically understood as a movement from the specific to the abstract, from the particular to the general. Vygotsky has typically been interpreted as offering an understanding of the ontogenesis of persons in culture that is largely compatible with mainstream psychology. However, my interest as a cultural psychologist concerns how human development and socialization can be understood as moving in the exact opposite manner; that is, how we can understand development as moving from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the specific, from detachment to immersion. Culture is typically understood as an abstract system of rules that are then internalized and employed individually; however, cultural psychology has begun to view human action as constituted in culture. In his seminal book, Shweder (1991) puts forward cultural psychology as a field of study that concerns itself with the ways in which person and culture dynamically and jointly constitute each other. As such, interpreting socialization as a process by which something external to human conduct is internalized misses the fundamental co-constitutive relationship between person and culture. A novel approach to understanding the relationship of development and culture can enable a movement beyond the 'rule-based' understanding of socialization and development to a more dynamic account that can articulate both the normalizing and normative dimension of socialization, while also accounting for more unique stylized expressions of skilled cultural actors, who do things in 'their own way' while

nonetheless remaining intelligible to others. In an effort to develop this non-reductive view of culture and persons, I will employ the existential-phenomenological works of Dreyfus and Heidegger to re-articulate an 'existential' zone of proximal development that accounts for the co-constitutive relationship of persons and culture, an understanding that mainstream perspectives in psychology have not yet taken in their understanding of human development.

In this first chapter, I will argue that Vygotsky's typical interpretation privileges a view of skill development as an abstraction from the sensory world. I will also demonstrate how there remains in Vygotsky a recognition of the centrality of the social world in development, such that all human behaviour stems from our involvement with others. I will demonstrate that this existential concern with the social origin of behaviour can be elaborated to emphasize that human skillful conduct only remains intelligible when understood as acquired in a normative world with others. Finally, I will argue that the development of 'higher mental functions' in the ZPD can be seen in a manner that accounts for how we become more fully involved in our world, and how particular domains of cultural activity come to appear as more differentiated as people improve their skills.

In the second chapter, I will more explicitly connect Dreyfus' account of skill acquisition to Vygotsky's account of the development of higher psychological functions. I will demonstrate that what Vygotsky calls 'higher mental functions' are normative skills that can be understood in terms of their acquisition and refinement, such that we can account for qualitative differences in the performances of beginners and experts.

Finally, in the third chapter, I will consider how we may understand the ZPD as an existential aspect of all human interaction, or as implied in our relationality. I will argue that Heidegger provides a starting point for characterizing relationality in the context of skill

acquisition, something that is not clear in the work of Vygotsky and Dreyfus. I will consider how this shift in interpretation changes the ZPD from being a recognition of the relation of less and more competent cultural actors to being a central aspect of what it means to be a person. I will discuss Heidegger's (and Dreyfus's) view of authenticity in human conduct, and specifically consider whether this notion is necessarily connected to the cultivation of expertise in Dreyfus' account. I will conclude by considering the relevance of this research to psychology as a discipline and propose some future research possibilities stemming from this project.

Chapter 1

In this first chapter, I will review the major themes of Vygotsky's 'Cultural-Historical' theory of development and consider some of the complexity in his view of the psychological, and specifically his notion of the 'zone of proximal development.' I will demonstrate that notable interpretations of Vygotsky have focused on internalization and mediation in his account of development, and how this account prioritizes abstraction as necessary in the development of 'higher mental functions.' I will also argue that Vygotsky views the social world as necessary in understanding human development, and that this concern can help connect him to more existential accounts that also prioritize the social world.

Vygotsky's Theory of Higher Psychological Development

From Lower to Higher Psychological Functions

While much of mainstream psychology focuses explicitly on static psychological mechanisms, Vygotsky takes a more nuanced 'genetic' approach to psychology. For Vygotsky, intelligibly characterizing psychological processes is only possible by understanding their origins and the changes they undergo (Wertsch, 1991, p. 87). Human development is seen as a consequence of the intersection of two distinct 'lines of development,' namely evolutionary and cultural lines of development. Vygotsky, however, rejects any explicit recapitulationist parallels among these levels of development, instead maintaining that each level is directed by unique and non-reducible explanatory principles (Wertsch, 1991, p. 88). Vygotsky maintained that humans have certain low level pre-wired psychobiological functions that are evolutionary in origin, but that we are also necessarily born into a pre-existing cultural world (Wertsch, 1985, pp. 24-42). It is by virtue of this cultural line of development that traditional historical practices and skills come to be acquired via the tutelage of skilled cultural actors (Wertsch, 1985). As such, children

never inherit culture in an evolutionary sense, but rather must themselves be socialized into a particular cultural world and thereby learn how to intelligibly execute various skills with others.

Importantly, for Vygotsky, development involves a qualitative transformation of psychological functions from lower to higher kinds (Valsiner, 2000, p. 40). The lower inherited psychobiological functions (or as Vygotsky calls them, elementary mental functions) include reflexive and largely unconscious functions that are entirely under stimulus control (that is, triggered by the environment) (Fernyhough, 1997, p. 67). Crucially for Vygotsky, it is only through social interaction that elementary psychological functions are transformed into higher mental functions, becoming more controlled and purposeful (Fernyhough, 1997, p. 69). For instance, Vygotsky maintains that infants are born with a capacity for reflexive attention that is entirely controlled by environmental stimuli (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Gradually, through interaction with others, young children come to direct the attention of their caregivers by crying, cooing, and later by pointing (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Only once attention is developed in the social realm [in this case, between children and caregivers] can children gradually learn to direct their own attention. This example demonstrates Vygotsky's famous mantra that human development always appears "first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Thus, for Vygotsky higher mental functions are always social in origin and are shaped in a child's acquisition of culturally based skills and practices.

The implications of Vygotsky's view of the social origin of higher mental functions goes beyond noting that higher mental functions are derived from the social world. Rather, returning to Vygotsky 'genetic' approach to psychology, we can infer that the specific arrangements and

operation of higher mental functions can be traced back to their ontogenetic antecedents in the social world (Wertsch, 1991, p. 89). Higher mental functions will not be exact replicas of their social precursors, but these 'internalized' and 'individual' functions are crucially related to the social involvement of the child (Wertsch, 1991). Returning to our previous example of attention, as a child begins to direct their own attention Vygotsky contends that children 'internalize' this culturally derived skill to enable their own voluntary attention (Vygotsky, 1978; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Internalization refers specifically to a view of cultural development as flowing from the social world to individual activity. However, 'internal' and 'external' here cannot strictly be taken in the Cartesian sense of 'mind' and 'world,' but has a particular Spinozan implication that will be discussed later in this chapter. Suffice it to say that while internalizing culturally-based skills is central to the 'genetic' psychology of Vygotsky, the 'internal' is not purely or rigidly cut off from the social. Rather, the activity of individuals is always social and should always be understood in terms of their social origin (Berducci, 2004).

As higher mental functions always originate from the cultural world, Vygotsky noted that understanding psychological functioning requires first and foremost an understanding of a specific cultural context; this strongly reflects Vygotsky's Marxist proclivities, as will be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter (Wertsch, 1991). Wertsch (1991) notes that Marx & Engels (1959/1845) argue that "humans' psychological nature represents the aggregate of internalized social relations that have become functions for the individual and form the individual's structure" (p. 89). Thus, while culture is the historical product of humans, Vygotsky notes that it invariably shapes human activity. This dialectic between culture and human activity has contributed to several approaches for understanding this reciprocal causation in Vygotsky, particularly among those who emphasize the importance of semiotic mediation in the

development of higher mental functions (Valsiner, 2000). I will now consider the role of

semiotic mediation in Vygotsky's 'genetic' perspective.

The Social and the Internal: Language and Meditation

Following Marx, Vygotsky emphasizes the central importance of tool use in human

cultural activity (Wertsch, 1991, pp. 90-1). While most tool use is directed at modifying the

external world, Vygotsky emphasizes the use of 'signs' as tools. For Vygotsky, humans are sign

users first and foremost, and signs as with all other tools are derived from culture (Wertsch,

1985). However, signs are unlike technical tools like hammers in that they are directed at other

people or ourselves. Technical tools serve as "conductor[s] of humans' influence on the object of

their activity. [They are] directed toward the external world…directed toward the subjugation of

nature" (Vygotsky, 1960, p. 25, cited in Wertsch, 1985, p. 78). Conversely, signs are

psychological tools that do not change whatever they are directed toward; rather, signs are means

by which human actors come to both externally regulate other's behaviour and inwardly regulate

their own behaviour (Wertsch, 1985). Signs are the tools that we acquire from the social world

and come to internalize to direct our own activity. For instance, consider our previous example

of attention. As children begin to acquire the ability to direct the attention of others, Vygotsky

would argue that they operate on the basis of particular 'signs,' like pointing, that have particular

cultural meanings and enable the child to regulate the attention of others. Gradually, those signs

are transformed and become internally directed to enable the child to regulate and direct their

own attention. These signs aren't created *by* the child, but rather these signs are 'entered into' as

a child engages others in a given cultural context. For Vygotsky, the development of higher

mental functions invariably involves the use of signs that stem from our culture and enable that

actor to direct their own particular orientation to their world. As signs are always derived from

pre-existing cultural skills and practices, they necessarily embody a kind of 'politics' that comes to affects the manner by which individuals acquire higher mental processes and employ these processes in the regulation of their conduct (Newman & Holzman, 2014). As such, for Vygotsky, individuals are never simply self-contained, but embody the politics of their own cultural milieu. Vygotsky contends that human activity is always already mediated by signs reflecting our cultural milieu, most notably in the development and use of language, which can be seen as the ultimate human psychological tool (Wertsch, 1985). Activity that is mediated by signs reflects, for Vygotsky, the smallest unit of analysis that can be intelligibly characterized in psychological research (Wertsch, 1991; Valsiner, 2000).

As previously mentioned, most of Vygotsky's contemporary interpreters emphasize the central importance of semiotic mediation in the course of cultural learning. For instance, Valsiner (2000) argues that higher psychological functions necessarily involve the use of signs to facilitate purposeful, controlled behaviour (p. 40). For Vygotsky, the most important 'sign system' that human agents develop is language. In his account, language is a developmental accomplishment that begins in the social interactions between infant and caretaker. Vygotsky noted that human infants are uniquely predisposed to both instinctively interact with their caretaker and to discriminate between entities within their world (Berducci, 2004). These capacities enable infants to enter into language training alongside mature partners within the world (Berducci, 2004). In this model, early language training is behaviouristic as the child has not yet developed any capacity with their mature partners' language; in other words, early language learning involves both explicit (i.e. reinforcement) and subtler (i.e. vicarious) normative corrections on the part of the mature actor (Berducci, 2004). Thus, this kind of early training is both context-specific and context-bound, as the activity of the mature partner remains

a purely referential sign, and thus also lacks the deeper meaningfulness we would associate with inculcation into more mature linguistic systems (Berducci, 2004).

As training continues, children gradually enter into more intersubjective interactions with their mature partners, coming to understand particular words and gestures rather than purely reacting to them within a given situation (Berducci, 2004). Berducci (2004) argued that this reflects the crucial moment at which children have entered into what Vygotsky has termed the 'developmental continuum,' and are beginning to engage in 'external speech.' For Vygotsky, external speech, which necessarily implies another person, is the origin of all other forms of language, including all forms of written communication (Valsiner, 2000; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Gradually, as the child becomes more adept at external speech, they begin to also develop the capacity to operate independently by 'internalizing' the initially external speech and employing it to guide their own activity. This form of speech, which Vygotsky termed 'private speech' is more abbreviated than 'external speech' and can enable children to regulate their activity when performing a given task alone (Berducci, 2004; Wertsch, 1985). Vygotsky maintains that this 'private speech' originates in the voice of a more mature partner in training, and thereby must stem initially from the social world (Berducci, 2004).

As previously mentioned, Vygotsky maintained that all forms of language originate in social 'external speech' and become internalized for children into a form of 'private speech' that enables some self-control in autonomous activity. Private speech become further transformed and abbreviated as children become older (around 7 years of age), disappearing into 'inner speech' (Berducci, 2004). This 'inner speech' is more abbreviated than external speech, a characteristic Vygotsky called "predicativity," or the propensity of 'inner speech' to retain predicates and related parts of a sentence, while also removing the subject and the words related

with it (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 34; Wertsch, 1985, pp. 121-2). Additionally, in 'inner speech' there is a prevalence of 'sense' over 'meaning.' Sense, for Vygotsky, is the "sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the world"; it is our dynamic and fluctuating ocean of phenomenological understanding that could possibly be evoked by the word, which inevitably changes along with the circumstances of its evocation (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 259). 'Meaning' refers to the denotative, stable part of sense that remains constant regardless of the circumstances (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 259). Thus, words spoken externally become both richer (in that they have acquired a context) and more impoverished (in that meaning is constrained by such context). For Vygotsky, inner speech is characterized by a priority of sense such that the richness of abbreviated 'inner speech' cannot be exhausted in spoken words. Vygotsky also argued that inner speech is also characterized by a tendency toward agglutination (that is, the combination of words into a single word that expresses a more complex and rich idea) and that there is an 'influx of sense' such that the 'senses' of words flow into each other and thereby influence each other (Vygotsky, 1934/2012; Wertsch, 1985). As inner speech becomes further abbreviated and 'sense-based' it is transformed again into thought (Berducci, 2004). Thought is not characterized by discrete units but rather is considered in terms of the disclosure of a single idea pregnant with meaning; however, thought must be separated into speech to be communicated (Vygotsky, 1934/2012). As Vygotsky famously has written "A thought may be compared to a cloud shedding a shower of words" (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 266). Here, the priority of sense over meaning becomes even more robust, and we see a clear dialectic between the personal and the cultural, overcome, according to Vygotsky, only in our expression. Thought, however, is not precipitated by other, more primary thoughts. Rather, thought is brought forth by affective-volitional tendencies, which Vygotsky dubs our

'motivations' (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 267). Crucially, Vygotsky argued that we cannot fully understand thought or language without also first understanding the motivational basis for their expression: "To understand another's speech, it is not sufficient to understand his words- we must also understand his thought. But even that is not enough- we must also know its motivation. No psychological analysis of an utterance is complete until that plane is reached" (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 268).

Vygotsky also included written speech on his developmental continuum as the most monological, least truncated, and most mature form of linguistic expression (Berducci, 2004). For Vygotsky, written speech is the most mature because an interlocuter is not immediately present but accounted for; thus, written speech must typically prioritize 'meaning' over 'sense' to enable clarity for the anticipated audience (Berducci, 2004). In both the most mature form of expression, 'written speech' and in the more mature form of abbreviated speech, namely thought and inner speech, Vygotsky emphasizes a developmental movement away from the immediacy of the social world. Words do not simply 'point' but for Vygotsky but in fully developed adult language becomes conceptual and thereby free of the concrete materiality of the world. This supposedly enables individuals to go beyond the perceptual givens of the world, and engage in more mature conceptual thought (Vygotsky, 1934/2012).

The Development of Concepts

The acquisition of conceptual thought is the hallmark of development in Vygotsky's account. The intersection of language and thought in their ontogenetic emergence forms the basis for understanding the development of concepts as the means by which language and thought enable actors to detach themselves from the concrete world, beyond the perceptual given, toward the use of concepts as abstract yet functional tools that mediate our involvement in the world

(Vygotsky, 1934/2012). As alluded to in the previous section, thought and language are two ontogenetically intersecting lines of expression that form a dialectic between the 'inner' and 'outer' (which I will elaborate further below). As a child begins to analyze and synthesize words and then employ them as psychological tools to guide their attention to particular features of the world, they also begin to develop conceptual thinking, which always already stems from the social world (Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Vygotsky noted that early concept formation involves arbitrary groupings of objects and ideas that may be unrelated, but become associated on the basis of contextual circumstances, subjective impressions, or random chance (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, pp. 117-9). This early stage of concept formation, termed the syncretic heap stage, leads into the complex stage, which is characterized by associations between objects or ideas that are based on relations rooted in common empirical attributes (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, pp. 119-26). These can gradually result in what Vygotsky termed "pseudoconcepts" which look like true concepts in their use, but their connectedness is formed on the basis of experiential or associative elements [i.e. perceptual qualities], rather than logical and thereby abstract considerations (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, pp. 127-32). True concepts, for Vygotsky, are characterized by connections based on abstract conventions for associating objects or ideas that are themselves typically based on a normative epistemology (Vygotsky, 1934/2012).

For Vygotsky, 'everyday' concepts stem from encountering entities within the world, and engaging with them, often under the watchful eye of a caretaker (Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Concepts develop, for Vygotsky, from the 'bottom' to the 'top,' meaning that they are never explicitly instructed but rather stem from generalizations of and abstractions from the child's concrete experiences. 'Everyday' concepts, for Vygotsky, form the basis for the development of scientific concepts, which requires an initial movement in the child from the 'worldly' to the

'abstracted' and 'volitional' (Vygotsky, 1934/2012). As concepts are abstract, they can also become systematized on the basis of explicit instruction; that is guided by culturally relevant epistemological systems that are introduced abstractly, but then can be re-introduced to provide a different kind of verbal description of the concrete and empirical world. Thus, for Vygotsky, it is only in the abstraction of worldly phenomena that abbreviated and systematic scientific concepts can be formed, and thereby guide the activity of the actor (Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Vygotsky notes that the connection between 'everyday' concepts and 'scientific' concepts reflects the difference between the child's zone of actual development, that is, the skills that they can perform autonomously, and the child's zone of *proximal* development, that is, the skills that they can perform only with the guidance of more mature actors (Vygotsky, 1934/2012; Newman & Holzman, 2014). In summary, concept formation for Vygotsky entails a kind of abstraction from the world that enables an actor to conduct themselves autonomously without the immediate guidance of more mature actors. Ontogenesis, for Vygotsky, largely moves from the concrete and particular to the abstract and systematized.

Zone of Proximal Development

The 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD) can be understood, for Vygotsky, as the unit of analysis for all human activity, particularly in the relationship of learning and human development (Newman & Holzman, 2014, p. 52). For Vygotsky, training should compel further development, and thereby ought to be beyond the current developmental level of an actor (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, pp. 199-201). If training only was to attend to an actor's actual level of development, then it would not itself be a source of development because it would only draw upon what has already been cultivated (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, pp. 199-201). Thus, for Vygotsky, the ZPD is the means for understanding all uniquely human activity, and more specifically how

children come to enter into their particular cultural milieu: "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and *a process* by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88, emphasis added).

As previously mentioned, the ZPD reflects Vygotsky's finding that children are capable of skills with the guidance of others that they are not able to perform independently. The ZPD also demonstrates that children become increasingly capable of engaging in activity independently of skilled partners volitionally rather than simply spontaneously, which parallels the formation of spontaneous 'everyday' concepts and scientific concepts as previously mentioned (Newman & Holzman, 2014). While 'everyday' concepts stem from a child's direct contact with things in the world that are in turn usually then explained or modelled by an adult, scientific concepts generally emerge without any direct contact objects in the world, but rather via the instruction of an educator (Newman & Holzman, 2014). In both of these cases, the movement is that of a ZPD, but the developmental accomplishment remains that of abstraction, either from the world (as is the case with everyday concepts) or are always already abstracted (as in the case of scientific concepts). Concepts, regardless of their ontogenesis, are otherwise indistinguishable, but still come to mediate the child's relationship to things in the world as abstractions from the world (Newman & Holzman, 2014). For Vygotsky, the mind is an ontogenetic and historical accomplishment that is produced by the gradual internalization of various normatively significant cultural practices. (Newman & Holzman, 2014, pp. 51-2).

Importantly, Wood, Bruner, & Ross (1976) described the activity occurring within a ZPD in terms of 'scaffolding,' a term that has been widely associated with Vygotskian scholarship on the ZPD more generally (Newman & Holzman, 2014). Scaffolding refers to the manner by which a more skillful actor guides a less skillful actor in executing a particular task that is at that time

outside of their abilities (Newman & Holzman, 2014, p. 56). This notion implies that there is a gradual development of a skill in the relation of a less and more skilled individual such that over time, the less skilled individual develops the capacity to perform a skill autonomously via internalization from their learning within a ZPD. Again, there is a priority placed on internalization and abstraction as a necessary precondition to autonomous activity within the world regardless of the social origin of such activity.

In summary, for Vygotsky, the ZPD remains the central means by which capacities and skills transition from the 'interpsychological' to the more mature and abstracted 'intrapsychological.' The ZPD underscores the relationship between the social world and human learning and development.

Vygotsky's Complexity: Uniting Idealism and Materialism

Finally, I will now consider Vygotsky's work in the context of Soviet scholarship within psychology during the early 1920s. At that time, psychology in the Soviet Union was torn between 'mechanistic' psychology, which focused more on overt behaviour, and 'idealist' psychology, which focused more on the nature of consciousness (Berducci, 2004, p. 330). While the Soviets tended toward 'mechanistic' psychology in most cases, there was substantial debate concerning what kind of materialism would be most appropriate for Marxism, without rejecting idealist Hegelian dialectics (Berducci, 2004, pp. 330-1). Nonetheless, all research conducted was initially only to study overt behaviour via the methods of the natural sciences (Berducci, 2004, p. 331). In an effort to portray consciousness as observable, Soviet scholars, including Vygotsky, began to turn their attention to Spinoza; for Vygotsky, Spinoza offered a possibility to develop a synthesized 'idealist' and 'materialist' psychology (Berducci, 2004, p. 331). Vygotsky applied Spinoza's monism in an effort to clarify the connection between thought and activity, and

thereby the development of all psychological functions, a movement Vygotsky noted as flowing from lower to higher kinds (Berducci, 2004, p. 331). Thus, Vygotsky's novel psychology intended to be integrative and scientific, studying objective and observable behaviour while also attending to the study of thought and consciousness.

Importantly, Spinoza was a monist who maintained that thought was an attribute of the natural, and thereby could not be understood as being something that is separate from nature (Berducci, 2004, p. 331). Berducci (2004) notes that Engels saw Spinoza as being "above any representation of mechanistic materialism…" and employed Spinoza's understanding of thought in his work 'Dialectics of Nature' (p. 331). In this work, Engels maintained that all matter transforms 'naturally' from lower to higher (thinking), and that this relationship between thought and matter differentiates dialectical materialism from the more primitive mechanistic materialism (Berducci, 2004, pp. 331-2). Thus, for many Soviet scholars, dialectical materialism, which forms the basis for Marx and Engels' philosophy, is based on a synthesis of the social, mental, and natural (Berducci, 2004, p. 332). A kind of dialectical materialist philosophy, which maintains that all of history is rooted in inherently contradictory social arrangements and events that gradually move toward a revolutionary transformation of the world, is clearly seen in the emphasis that Vygotsky places on radical transformation in his work (Berducci, 2004, p. 332). Berducci (2004) argues that the notion of transformation is central to all of Vygotsky's work, and is highlighted in his understanding of the developmental continuum (p. 332).

Vygotsky's developmental continuum is comprised of four aspects: phylogenetic, cultural-historical, ontogenetic, and microgenetic (Berducci, 2004). As previously mentioned, Vygotsky saw human transformation as a consequence of the intersection of two lines of development, namely evolutionary and cultural. Phylogenetic development refers to the

development of the entire human species, and is that form of development that is most clearly related to evolutionary theory. Cultural-historical development relates to the emergence and development of cultural practices that form the normative 'background' that we are born into and employ to resolve basic human dilemmas. Ontogenetic development refers to the chronological maturation of a single individual from throughout their lives. Finally, and most importantly for our purposes, microgenetic development involves the capacity of individuals to acquire and engage skillfully in the world. Importantly, these aspects of the developmental continuum are non-reducible and differ qualitatively (Berducci, 2004). We have been, and will continue to focus specifically on microgenetic development- that is, the acquisition of an individual's skills via their socialization into a particular culture, and their capacity to intelligibly interact with others in their particular cultural milieu.

Vygotsky's view of microgenetic development can best be understood by examining his microgenetic continuum- something I've already discussed. For Vygotsky, microgenetic development is necessarily the development of language, and thereby the continuum is comprised of those components that individuals develop as they acquire a language; namely, 'written speech,' 'external speech,' 'private speech,' 'inner speech,' 'thought,' and finally 'motivation' (Berducci, 2004). Again, all other components of this particular continuum stem from external speech and as they move toward thought become more 'sensical' and thereby abbreviated and less useful in interpersonal communication. Thus, we can see that more understandable speech (i.e. external speech) is also by necessity the most conventional in Vygotsky's view of language.

Importantly, this view of language was heavily influenced by Spinoza, and thus we ought to take special care in evaluating the movement from the 'inner' to the 'outer' in Vygotsky's

thought. As Vygotsky is a monist, we cannot simply critique his notions of 'inner' and 'outer' in terms of Descartes' substance dualism. Rather, following Berducci (2004), I will consider the relevance of Spinoza's thought to the manner by which Vygotsky views 'inner' and 'outer' as a monist.

First, Spinoza argued that everything that exists is a part of a single indivisible 'Substance,' which is an integrated whole that also contains its own explanation: "…what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing from which it must be formed" (Berducci, 2004, p. 335; Spinoza, 1677/1994, p. 1). Berducci (2004) argues that this 'Substance' is analogous to Vygotsky's developmental continuum as this continuum explains its own origin in terms of the revolutionary transformation of its own components (such as private speech becoming 'mature' inner speech), and all components are produced from other components from the continuum (p. 336).

Next, Spinoza (1677/1994) notes that 'Substance' contains 'Attributes,' which are "…what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence" (p. 1). Though Substance contains an infinite number of Attributes, Spinoza maintains that humans are only capable of understanding two of these Attributes- thought and extension (Berducci, 2004). For Spinoza, thought refers to the 'ideational,' while extension refers to the 'material' (Berducci, 2004, p. 335). Berducci (2004) goes on to argue that we can see Spinoza's thought and extension as analogous to Vygotsky's view of the 'inner' and 'outer' and thereby simply as different ways of referring to the same Substance, namely the developmental continuum (p. 336). Thus, within Vygotsky's account of development, references to 'inner' and 'outer' should be understood as means of ascribing meaning to the developmental continuum without referring to different

substances; rather, the 'inner' and 'outer' for Vygotsky are the expression of the larger inseparable transformative substance, the developmental continuum (Berducci, 2004, p. 336).

Finally, Spinoza (1677/1994) notes that 'modes' refer to "…that which is in another through which it is also conceived" (p. 1). Modes are those different things that are within the unitary Substance, such as toys, wine glasses, hammers, and chairs. Thus, there are an infinite number of Modes that can exist. Berducci (2004) argues that within Vygotsky's developmental continuum, modes are the 'components,' such as external speech (p. 336).

In summary, Vygotsky's notions of 'inner' and 'outer' that we have discussed throughout this section, are not dualistic *a la* Descartes, and thereby cannot be critiqued in the same way. Rather, Vygotsky's monism, influenced by Spinoza, changes the manner by which we can understand his cultural-historical theory of development. Going forward, we need to take the historical Vygotsky into account when considering the relevance of his 'zone of proximal development' to contemporary discussions concerning skill acquisition.

The Social Origin of Human Activity: Comparing Vygotsky to Heidegger and Dreyfus

I have sketched a brief overview of Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychology, his theory of revolutionary developmental transformation, and the 'zone of proximal development' as the unit of analysis for understanding the movement of development from the 'external' world to the 'inner.' I have also underscored the importance of properly conceiving of Vygotsky's notions of 'inner' and 'outer' as expressions of a single unifying developmental movement rather than being independent substances. In the following section, I will consider some superficial similarities of Vygotsky with both Heidegger and Dreyfus, notably concerning the primacy of the social world. Here, the intention of utilizing the perspectives of Heidegger and Dreyfus is to develop an account that can attend to the co-constitutive relation of persons and culture by

juxtaposing their work alongside developmental account of Vygotsky, and thereby illuminate a novel phenomenological and existential account of acquiring higher psychological functions (or normative skills) in a zone of proximal development.

Mitsein **and human existence**

A notable point of similarity between Vygotsky and Heidegger is the priority of the social in both accounts, albeit in slightly different ways. As previously mentioned, Vygotsky maintains that all human development stems initially from the social milieu, and that the child gradually grows into their culture by internalizing shared practices *from* their social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Heidegger also recognizes the importance of the social world, but focuses on the ontological prioritization of the social rather than prioritizing the social in human development. In *Being & Time,* Heidegger (1927/1962) attempts to provide a clear description of the *a priori* essential structure of *Dasein*, human existence (Moran, 2000, p. 222). For Heidegger (1927/1962), *Dasein* is necessarily 'Being-in-the-world,' rather than a segregated 'I,' or a "bare subject without a world" (pp. 151-2). It is the fundamental nature of *Dasein* to be swept up in the affairs of the world, to be involved in its dealings with 'equipment' and 'others' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 78-80). Thus, Heidegger (1927/1962) contends that it is ontologically mistaken to view human existence as individually self-contained or passively unengaged *from* the world; rather human existence is always already *Being-in-the-world*. As *Dasein* is always already swept up in the world, the 'equipment' encountered are disclosed in their inclination toward matters of concern, that is, care (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 235-9). Similarly, Others are disclosed in terms of our care, but this care is not related to their 'useability' or 'servicability' as with equipment, but rather relates their being disclosed as 'sharing our condition of Being-in-the-world-with-

others' as "*Dasein* in itself is essentially *Being-with* [*Mitsein*]" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 156-7).

For Heidegger (1927/1962), *Being-with* is the ontological condition that enables others to be disclosed as 'Dasein-with,' such that others are not seen as entities or equipment (Moran, 2000, pp. 238-9). As an ontological condition, *Being-with* remains the *a priori* structure by which Dasein establishes all concrete relations, including the possibilities of being-with other people or being alone (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 155-7). Crucially, the structure of *Being-with* also enables our own Being to be encounterable as Dasein-with for others. Thus, for Heidegger, *Being-with* forms the basis for our concrete relations with others and is necessary for seeing others (and being seen by others) as sharing the condition of 'being-in-the-world.'

Dreyfus, in agreement with Heidegger, maintains that human existence is properly understood as 'Being-in-the-world-with-Others,' and that all human practices are irreducibly social (Wrathall, 2017, p. 7). For Dreyfus, like Vygotsky, the social dimension of all cultural practices is most clearly seen in the language by which that practice is shared, and in that cultural practices involve coordinated activity with other people who may be more or less skillful within a given practice (Wrathall, 2017, p. 7). However, unlike Vygotsky, Dreyfus and Heidegger both maintain that cultural practices are constitutive and thus cannot possibly be characterized in terms of mediation, internalization, or abstraction from the world. This point will be returned to in the subsequent chapters as we begin to consider what a ZPD would be if we were to characterize it in terms of skillful coping, embodied dispositions, and expression.

In summary, we see in Vygotsky, Heidegger, and Dreyfus a concern for the irreducibly social nature of human practices, or in the more radical sense a concern with the social nature of human existence. However, it is clear that the 'existential' accounts of Heidegger and Dreyfus

remain different in their characterization of the development of skills and engagement in cultural practices. In the next section, I will begin to characterize these differences as a point of departure for a more extensive 'existential' reimagining of Vygotsky's ZPD.

Abstraction or Immersion? Differentiating Vygotsky from Heidegger and Dreyfus

In this next section, we will consider some notable differences between Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach and the 'existential-phenomenological' approaches of Heidegger and Dreyfus. I will first establish that Heidegger offers an ontological account of human Being while Vygotsky only offers an 'ontic' account. Then, I will demonstrate the fundamental differences between Heidegger's notion of 'Being-in-the-world' and Vygotsky's prioritization of abstraction in his account of concept development. Finally, I will argue that Dreyfus's account of skill acquisition has fundamentally different implications than Vygotsky's view of the development of higher psychological functions, and that while Vygotsky only characterizes a certain level of cultural development, Dreyfus can account for the stylizations of expert performers, a point that will be worked out in significant detail in subsequent chapters.

Heidegger and 'Care'

A major distinction to be drawn between the work of Vygotsky and Heidegger relates to a crucial distinction made in *Being and Time* between ontic and ontological projects. Fundamentally, Heidegger's project is based in a different 'level of analysis' such that his and Vygotsky's projects cannot be compared without careful consideration. Heidegger's main intention in *Being and Time* was to re-examine the meaning of the question of Being as such, and thus this project has a different basis than Vygotsky's project concerned with concrete human behaviour. Heidegger (1927/1962) maintains that psychology, and other sciences of a similar ilk, are primarily concerned with concrete existence rather than the essential character of the Being

of *Dasein* (pp. 26-8). The questions that are of concern for the sciences are seen by Heidegger (1927/1962) as *ontic*, and therefore relates more to concrete facticity than ontology. Crucially, Heidegger (1927/1962) argued that his project concerned fundamental ontology, and therefore is beyond the concerns of scientific pursuits. Scientific pursuits, such as those that characterize much of psychology, typically 'smuggle' an ontology into their investigations rather than themselves engaging in fundamental ontology; that is, questioning the meaning of Being as such (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 27-34). Thus, while Heidegger's project was rooted in fundamental ontology, Vygotsky sought his understanding of human activity within the concrete material world, and thereby also left much of the underlying ontology concerning the '*Being'* of humans unchallenged.

As my current project necessarily involves some comparisons between Heidegger and Vygotsky, it is crucial to note that their differing levels of analysis also implies that the assumptions underlying their projects differ. Vygotsky's approach to his project was informed by his own Western philosophical inheritance, and thus so was his understanding of the question of the meaning of Being (Fernyhough, 1997, pp. 66-7). Heidegger (1927/1962) notes that his fundamental ontology is also ontic in that any sort of inquiry into the meaning of Being will 'shake up' the material lives of *Dasein*, precisely because Being matters to Dasein (pp. 31-2). Thus, re-interpreting Vygotskian ideas with different ontological assumptions can change the manner by which *Dasein* conducts its ontic affairs, such as scientific pursuits. As such, re-imagining Vygotsky through Heidegger's fundamental ontology will necessarily shift the way that we can come to understand various conceptions since the way that we can understanding human existence will also necessarily shift, providing unique and novel understandings concerning the development of higher psychological functions.

A more theoretical difference between Heidegger and Vygotsky relates to their differing understandings of how humans relate to their world. As previously mentioned, Vygotsky argued that children develop an 'inner' psychological life that is an expression of their social world and more broadly their entire history of development (Wertsch, 1991). The movement of this development involves abstraction from the world and the development of internalized concepts that mediate our involvement with the world. Conversely, Heidegger (1927/1962) maintains that we are always already 'Being-in-the-world' such that any notion of 'concepts' as mediators between a subject and the world is already obfuscating of the primary 'in-ness' that characterizes human existence as *Dasein*. For Heidegger, *Dasein* is swept up in its dealings in the world on the basis of its care, without any sort of 'inner' reality mediating its engagement with equipment and others. Thus, while the development of concepts involves abstraction in Vygotsky's account, Heidegger would instead characterize the development of skillful conduct as a movement from the contingent to the necessary, the refinement and differentiation of a kind of 'seeing' that enables *Dasein* to recognize in a moment what needs to be done without any kind of psychical mediation. For Heidegger, the idea of pure concepts in a realm of pure abstraction, even as an idealization, does not reflect the phenomenological reality of human existence.

Dreyfus and Skillful Normative Dispositions

A shared concern of both Vygotsky and Dreyfus concerns the acquisition of higher psychological functions or normative skills. For Vygotsky, the development of higher psychological functions remains central to understanding the uniquely historical and ontogenetic accomplishment that is the human 'mind' or 'psyche.' As previously mentioned, skillful and mature engagement within a given cultural practice, for Vygotsky, stems initially from the social world and becomes internalized to enable the human agent to operate autonomously, that is

without the explicit guidance of skilled others. For Vygotsky, a significant aspect of psychological maturation is the internalization of language, which enables more purposeful skilled conduct. Similarly, Dreyfus maintains that the social dimension of practices is seen in our acquisition of language, notably how we come to speak about those activities that characterize a particular cultural practice (Wrathall, 2017, p. 7). For Dreyfus, participating in a practice, even as a novice, involves a coordination with others against a 'background' of normative correction. For instance, certain actions are expressive of a given cultural practice, such that it is recognized as such or corrected on the basis of an understanding of cultural practices (Wrathall, 2017).

Like Vygotsky, Dreyfus maintains that even language acquisition must involve a common understanding of what constitutes meaningful linguistic expression- however, the acquisition of language does not rest on the internalization of linguistic practices, but rather a pre-existing normative order or 'background' that forms the equipmental context and normative basis for the social recognition of a coherent practice that is always already articulated as that background (Wrathall, 2017). As such, the normative background organizes the world and human agents into particular contexts such that "normatively articulated purposive activities" can be practiced intelligibly (Wrathall, 2017, p. 5). Cultural practices can be understood as forming this background that enables coordinated intelligible activity, while skill acquisition relates to our dispositional capacity to participate within a particular practice in a meaningfully way (Wrathall, 2017). For Dreyfus, the acquisition of any skill, including language, rests on both the cultivation of a particular embodied disposition and a pre-existing normative background against which the possibility of skillful activity rests, such that the development of a particular skill can be intelligibly characterized as 'correct' or 'incorrect' in their expression (Wrathall, 2017).

Thus, we can see a crucial difference here between Dreyfus and Vygotsky, notably in that while Vygotsky focuses primarily on the acquisition of 'higher psychological functions' via the internalization of culturally-shared skills developed and refined in a ZPD, Dreyfus highlights that skills are first and foremost constituted in their expression, not in them being 'internalized' or 'abstracted' from their social context. Moreover, while Vygotsky notes that other culturally skilled actors form the basis for correction, he does not explicitly recognize that there is a background which enables normative correction within a cultural practice. For Dreyfus, cultural practices are not simply constituted in the language we use to characterize a given activity, but are themselves based in an equipmental totality of reference that forms the basis for a particular practice (Wrathall, 2017). Conversely, Vygotsky's emphasis on abstraction in the development of psychological maturation ignores the built environment that itself 'calls forth' particular intelligible practices.

Dreyfus also notes that the social origin of practices tends towards averageness in those practices; that is, as practices are constituted socially, they must be intelligible and transmissible to anyone, at least in principle (Wrathall, 2017, p. 8). As practices are also maintained in the equipmental totality that forms a background for activity, anyone ought to be able to at least effortfully engage and acquire skills within a particular cultural practice. As such, in characterizing the acquisition of cultural skills, we tend to focus only on the general principles by which individuals come to skillfully act (Wrathall, 2017). Vygotsky's account, in particular, emphasizes the abstraction and internalization of the general principles of a given cultural practice such that one can perform 'autonomously' but in principle intelligibly to those around them. However, Vygotsky's account cannot clearly articulate how in that abstraction there is any possibility of those functions becoming individualized or stylized on the basis of a budding

expertise within a particular cultural practice. As such, Vygotsky's account can only account for an initial socialization into a given practice, but not the further refinement and stylization of that practice within the 'abstract' mind of a person. Conversely, Dreyfus notes that while conformity in the acquisition of skills is necessary initially, as cultural practices become more central to our understanding of how we show up in the world, those skills central to our lives become more differentiated and stylized on the basis of their repeated performance (Dreyfus, 2014). I contend that here Vygotsky's account of the ZPD is limited and underdeveloped, and as such contains no clear discussion of how expertise develops within the ZPD, or what occurs within the ZPD such that expertise within a given domain can be cultivated and mastered rather than simply how actors internalize the 'average' performance of a given practice.

Nonetheless, Vygotsky's understanding of the development of concepts and higher mental functions seems to imply the acquisition of skillful normative dispositions, such that there are ways of getting something right or wrong on the basis of a performance. As such, I argue that we can understanding Vygotsky's view of the development of higher psychological functions or concepts as skillful normative dispositions. It is by understanding higher psychological functions, including language, as skilled dispositions that I will come to argue that we can re-imagine Vygotsky's ZPD in an 'existential' manner that focuses first and foremost on the development of normative skills and includes a more clearly articulation of what occurs within that ZPD, and how people begin to develop their own unique embodied styles that nonetheless remain intelligible in light of a given cultural practice. Moreover, in the next few chapters, I will also argue that the development of skills is not phenomenologically characterized by an abstraction from the world, but rather by the increased involvement within a particular practice

as skills become more refined and stylized. Finally, I will also begin to reinvent the ZPD as an existential imperative at the heart of a legitimately cultural psychology.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a brief overview of Vygotsky's major ideas and contributions to psychology, and emphasized the manner by which he is typically interpreted as focusing on abstraction and mediation in his account of development. I described some similarities between Vygotsky and the existential-phenomenological approaches of Heidegger and Dreyfus. I have begun to sketch a few of the key differences between these accounts, primarily concerning the notion of abstraction and mediation in the development of 'higher psychological functions,' which I have recast as normative skills. Vygotsky offers a crucial understanding of normative skills as necessarily acquired through a process of cultural training, yet his account is phenomenologically inconsistent and it is therefore beneficial to re-imagine his understanding of socialization in a more grounded 'existential-phenomenological' manner. The current understanding of the ZPD seems to only reflect the internalization of 'averageness' rather than the refinement and stylization of a particular skill such that it remains intelligible in light of a cultural practice. Moreover, in re-interpreting Vygotsky, I also hope to illuminate a developmental dimension to socialization that is not present in Heidegger. As such, in the subsequent chapters, I will begin to sketch an existential account of socialization that accounts for the acquisition of skillful conduct and the gradual refinement and personalization of various skills.

Chapter 2

In the previous chapter, I sketched a brief overview of Lev Vygotsky's Cultural-

Historical psychology. I highlighted Vygotsky's prioritization of the social as a basis for the

development of 'higher mental functions,' or normative skills, and underscored the focus on

abstraction and mediation in his account of development. Finally, I began to introduce the

existential-phenomenological perspectives of both Hubert Dreyfus and Martin Heidegger, and

provide some brief comparisons between these accounts and that of Vygotsky. In this chapter, I

will begin to provide an outline of what a genuinely existential account of socialization in a

'zone of proximal development' would look like. The primary focus of this chapter will be the

account of skill acquisition proposed by Hubert Dreyfus. The typical account of the ZPD offered

by Vygotsky (and his primary interpreters) offers a basis for the inculcation of a child into

particular normative practices, but doesn't provide an account of how those skills are refined and

stylized over time as the child begins to acquire further expertise in those skills. For Dreyfus,

personalization and refinement of skills can never involve the abstraction of that practice away

from the realm of social enactment. Conversely, Dreyfus' model accounts for how expertise in a

particular skill can emerge through repeated performance of that skill within a context of

normative correction. Moreover, Dreyfus also notes that as skills are refined and personalized,

they also become more central for one's own self-understanding (Dreyfus, 2014). The emergence

of genuinely personalized expert performances and the relevance of cultural practices for self-

understanding are not fully articulated in the traditional account of the ZPD. As such, I will re-

cast the ZPD as a relation by which skills can develop and mature in a context of normative

correction. This account will provide a richer phenomenological characterization of socialization

than that currently offered by Vygotsky. I will first introduce Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition

and argue that Dreyfus' understanding of expertise cannot be accounted for by Vygotsky's ZPD. Then, I will re-cast the ZPD as a relation that enables the learning of particular skills and the development of skills through their performance.

Dreyfus' Model of Skill Acquisition

In this section, I will introduce Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition, including the assumptions underlying this model, and situate this model as within an existential 'zone of proximal development.' I will then explore whether Vygotsky's initial formulation of the ZPD could account for the development of expert performances.

Underlying Assumptions of Dreyfus' Model

Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition must be understood as phenomenological, namely in that the prioritization of this model is on the embodied experience of the person rather than the relation of subjects and objects. Embodiment, here, emphasizes that the body is the necessary condition for any experience or perception. It is in the training of bodies that certain things show up in certain ways, such that a person is able to skillfully interact with others in a meaningful way (Dreyfus, 2014). Crucially, Dreyfus (2014) maintains that embodiment is based on how things show up to us as requiring our skilled responses that enables people to act both intelligibly and skillfully. Thus, skill acquisition is a process that doesn't simply involve the acquisition of rulesets, but rather involves a transformation of how a person exists in the world. Dreyfus (2004) also maintains that no skills are developed on the basis of 'in-struction' or internalizing propositional attitudes, but rather involves qualitative transformation within a particular domain such that the entire way that a person exists is transformed. Children never simply internalize rules to develop skills, but at first must repeat undifferentiated and seemingly irrelevant actions

in a context of normative correction, which will then gradually become refined and meaningful as the child repeatedly enacts those budding skills with more skillful individuals.

Dreyfus notes that it is only early in learning skills that people will rely on formal rules to help guide their conduct (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 30-1). For instance, when learning karate, novices are reminded to watch their feet after each step to ensure that they are maintaining the proper stance. Gradually, as they become more sensitive to proper foot position, they will no longer need to 'look down' to check, but will 'automatically' correct improper stance from their sense of their body's position. Importantly, while novices are following rules, they also are less able to respond to situational particulars (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 25-43). For instance, in real combat situations, a karateka must be able to fall into a proper stance while responding to other variable elements of a situation (e.g. blocking a punch, moving/strafing), and so if a karateka were to follow formal propositions to check their stance during fights, they may miss important variable aspects of their given circumstances. In other words, no two situations ever repeat themselves in exactly the same way, and as a result formal propositions and rules can never form the basis for more expert enactments of a given skill (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 25-43). This clearly challenges Vygotsky's emphasis on abstraction and the mediation of abstract concepts in our everyday lives; that is, while Vygotsky argues that abstraction from the world forms the basis for the development of more skillful functioning, these abstractions are necessarily removed from the particulars of a given situation, and thereby cannot provide any sort of situational sensitivity to the particulars that can be seen by more expert performers. In summary, Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition is based on people acquiring a kind of relation to the world such that a person is able to 'see' a problem space in a more differentiated and situationally sensitive manner. Accounts of development, like Vygotsky's, that emphasize abstract mediators cannot account for situational

particulars, and thus for Dreyfus cannot explain the movement away from formal rule following toward more situationally sensitive expert performances.

The Model of Skill Acquisition

Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition is a direct challenge to the 'traditional' perspective that beginners start with specific cases that they abstract from and gradually internalize more and more sophisticated rules (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 28-31). Instead, he reverses the priority on abstract rules, and maintains that only the novice relies on abstract rules to enable them to begin performing a particular skill in an intelligible way- abstract rules provide a basis for a novice to 'get on the horse' but not a basis for sophisticated and responsive performance (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 29-31). Only when they repeatedly perform a skill intelligibly in a context of normative correction can a novice begin to acquire both an embodied sense of what it means to 'get it right' and refine their sight such that they can respond to particular circumstances in an intelligible fashion. Dreyfus maintains that the acquisition of any skill involves a nonlinear trajectory through five connected but qualitatively distinct 'stages' of skill acquisition (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, pp. 19-21). I will now provide an overview of these five 'stages' and consider some of the qualitative differences as people become more expert within a given skill domain.

Stage 1: Novice

Dreyfus (2014) maintains that novices begin by having a given cultural practice broken down by a more skilled teacher into digestible 'context-free' features that can be principally recognized by anyone (p. 30). Then, novices are provided by their teacher rules to act on these immediately recognizable features (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 30). Dreyfus (2014) likens the novice to a computer following a program, such that there is no clear sense of the accuracy of their actions (p. 30). In other words, the activity of the novice may be unintelligible *for them* and thus the

accuracy of their performance is almost entirely based on *external cues*, namely how well rules are followed, something gauged in part by their teacher (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 30). As such, they are not invested in the quality of their performance, but rather on the accuracy of their rule following. Early on, novices follow simple rules that enable singular elements of a given task environment to be considered in turn, such that the task is manageable (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 25-43) However, Dreyfus also contends that as the novice acquires more rules over time, they also become less responsive to advice and correction as their concentration is entirely transfixed in following the plurality of rules that have become salient through training (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 22).

As an example, let us consider the novice karateka again. Karate is a bodily skill that has a certain intelligibility recognized by karateka, but many elements of which are unseen or unrecognized by unskilled observers. As individuals are trained in karate, they are often provided with simple movements and postures that form the foundation for their future training. These simple movement and postures are diluted from the rich context of their performance into veritably context-free elements that can be 'conceptualized' and offered as 'rule-based' elements to the novice karateka. For instance, elementary blocks and punches are conceptualized into specific separate elements (such as 'front block' or 'high block') and rules are offered to scaffold the initial learning of a particular element (such as 'keep your elbow in while doing a front block, move your arm in this way, keep your fist closed, etc…). Additionally, novices are also 'scaffolded' by their instructor who in their coordination with the participant move the novice's body to the proper positions, and guides the novice to conduct themselves in a more intelligible manner. Novice karateka often slowly work through movements and patterns as they attempt to follow rules and make corrections of the basis of these abstract rules.

Stage 2: Advanced Beginner

As performers gradually acquire experience acting in real situations, they also begin to become more sensitive to other meaningful aspects of the situation that are often first identified by their teacher (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 31). Gradually, the novice begins to apprehend these meaningful aspects of the situation, and as such they can begin to consider instructional 'maxims' that relate to both these situational elements as well as non-situational, "objectively defined" elements, rather than exclusively context-free features (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 31). The advanced beginner is capable of first apprehending their spatial circumstances and on the basis of certain situational elements, they apply rules that guide their performance (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 31). As with novices, advanced beginners are not particularly concerned with the quality of their performance, largely as they are still focused on the accuracy of their following rules rather than the caliber of their own unique performance (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 31). Dreyfus (2014) notes that because there remains some formal rule following, even in the form of 'maxims' with a sense of some situational particulars, the performance is often similar to the novice- namely, slow, deliberate, clumsy, and laborious (p. 31).

Returning to our previous example of the karateka, as they become advanced beginners, they begin to recognize situational elements that enable more precise application of rules. For instance, consider sparring, which can only really be meaningfully done as students acquire situational sensitivity. Advanced beginners in sparring may be slow and deliberate in their movements, blocks and attacks. They may begin to consider situational aspects, like the movements of their partners, prior to applying rules (if they kick, then step back and low block), which remain abstract and thereby laborious and intentional in their application to a given circumstance. Attacks may be let through as the deliberate and clumsy application of specific

rules to specific circumstances remain slow and plodding. Moreover, the student may not specifically be concerned about their final performance in the sparring match per se, but rather their success in applying rules, remaining bound to specific abstract propositions that guide their activity.

Stage 3: Competence

Dreyfus contends that as the advanced beginner starts to familiarize themselves with more aspects and situational features of the given task, they become overwhelmed with the quantity of aspects to attend to and learns to take a hierarchical approach to making decisions (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 31-2). In applying this hierarchical approach, the student develops rudimentary plans and applies these to the situation to 'filter out' aspects of the situation that may not be as important as others (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 32). However, since an overall sense of what is important in a given situation is missing, the student may find performances overwhelming and exhausting (Dreyfus, 2004). As the student begins to learn to implement plans, they come to restrict themselves to a few pertinent features, and adopt more cohesive strategies on the basis of recognizing and implementing plans multiple times (Dreyfus, 2004). Gradually, competent students begin to apply more holistic strategies, and begin to take risks in the application of an entire strategy to a circumstance (Dreyfus, 2004). Obviously, individuals cannot be 'propositionally' prepared for every possible circumstance, and thus their involvement and their success and failure start to matter to the student (Dreyfus, 2004). This is a crucial shift as students start to feel responsible for their choices; they cannot rationalize their success or failure on the basis of not having a rule, but instead have to accept that they are making decisions in an instance and are therefore responsible for the outcomes of that decision (Dreyfus, 2004). As such, competent performers take risks in devising strategies, which are based on a choice that

may or may not be successful (Dreyfus, 2004). Dreyfus describes the typical conduct among competent performers as involving "detached planning, conscious assessment of elements that are salient with respect to the plan, and analytical rule-guided choice of action, followed by an emotionally involved experience of the outcome" (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 33). As there is an emotional involvement in the success or failure of a particular execution of a plan, competent performers may give up if they begin to feel as if they are 'fixed' in their continued development or after multiple failures (Dreyfus, 2004; Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 32-3).

The competent karateka, for instance, can enter into a combat situation with a plan that they exercise more or less successfully. For instance, they may devise, on the basis of situational cues, patterns of techniques that can be applied in rapid sequence to counter or attack an opponent in a sparring match. These patterns of techniques may not necessarily always fully be realized or may be abandoned in the course of a match, but nonetheless are consciously applied and considered, and thus entail a degree of responsibility from the competent karateka. They may become frustrated if their approaches are not working for them, and while they may attain gains, may also give up if they feel that their risks are not paying off. However, they may also begin to gain more confidence in their own performances succeed, and begin to experience a clearer sense of pride and ownership for successful outcomes.

Stage 4: Proficiency

After much practice and experience as a competent performer, some individuals may also come to develop even more fully refined skills. After having been involved in multiple instances of a given situation that involve the application of a cohesively developed plan, and having evaluated the adequacy or inadequacy of these plans, proficient performers may begin to 'see' a current situation as being comparable to a earlier one and spontaneously recognize the best

course of action (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 33). Crucially, Dreyfus (2014) notes that proficient performance reflects the first instance in which skillful activity is not immediately interrupted by detached contemplation or planning; rather, only when the course of action breaks down will the proficient performers way of 'seeing' the given situation be interrupted and detached contemplation becomes necessary to get back on track (p. 33). Nonetheless, while the performer may understand without conscious effort what is happening in a given circumstance, Dreyfus (2014) argues that they must still deliberate how to skillfully operate within the world (pp. 33-4). Thus, their engagement may be temporarily interrupted as they come to determine a course of action.

The proficient karateka, having been involved in hundreds of sparring matches, begins to see matches as resembling others, and thereby come to recognize an appropriate strategy to take during the match. For instance, they may recognize that as a partner is much taller than they, distance becomes more critical and then comes to rely on kicks rather than punches that could require closer engagement with their partner. Nonetheless, while the proficient karateka may 'see' an appropriate course of action given a situation, they must still make the decision to employ a particular strategy, requiring at least a momentary breach in the smooth flow of skillful engagement.

Stage 5: Expertise

As the proficient performer becomes even more experienced in a particular skill domain, they begin to automatically 'see' the situation in terms of their understanding, and also an appropriate course of action given the situation (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 34-5). The expert acts without conscious reflection or even awareness- they simply do what must be done given the situation (Dreyfus, 2014, p. 34). As Dreyfus notes, the skills have become a part of the expert

such that they are no more aware of their skillful conduct as they are of their body in an instance (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 30). The expert has become fully immersed in the skill domain such that the situation 'calls forth' their skillful response without any deliberation about the course of action (Dreyfus, 2004). Any attempt to consciously reflect on their conduct will likely result in a breakdown of the skillful performance; the expert doesn't *know* what they're doing, they simply *do* what needs to be done (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 34-5).

The expert karateka 'sees' automatically what needs to be done in a given sparring match and acts appropriate with the most efficient and skilled approach. They incorporate their own unique strategies to respond to the situation such that while their actions may be personally stylized, they remain appropriate for the situation. For instance, an expert karateka who can see both the situational elements and an appropriate course of action responds to the unique situational characteristics of the match without deliberating on whether a course of action is appropriate; rather, they adjust and tweak elements of their approach in the moment to perform in a smooth and appropriate manner.

Summary

In sum, the activity of a novice within a particular skill domain is mediated more directly by propositions imparted by a more skillful performer. In a sense, a novice is not unlike a computer, operating on the basis of rules in a methodical but detached and uninvested way. Over time, a novice performer can begin to develop shortcuts and heuristics to simplify their approach, but will eventually need to take a risk and act on the basis of their own experiences as they have at that point acted within that same skill domain repeatedly. Once the competent performer begins to take risks and responsibility for the outcomes of their actions, they may eventually begin to cultivate a kind of skillful 'sight' that enables them to engage more automatically and

without inferential or detached reflection on the basis of their previous experiences. The truly expert performer acts without reflection, and typically cannot propositionally explain or reflect upon 'how' or 'why' they did certain things; rather, the expert's embodied dispositions are called forth by the situation and they simply do what needs to be done.

Can Vygotsky's ZPD Cultivate Expertise?

In this next section, I will briefly compare Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition to Vygotsky's ZPD to determine whether or not the ZPD as currently conceived could account for the development of expertise within a given skill domain. As discussed in the previous section, Dreyfus argues that skill development moves from a model of increasing investment and engagement within a particular skill domain rather than the acquisition of more finely delineated propositions that are then internalized (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 25-43). In other words, the expert is no longer bound to the rules that are 'given' to them by a more skilled performer, but cultivates a kind of 'sight' that enables them to see a specific situation in light of the kind of response required and then act skillfully given that situation (Dreyfus, 2004). For the expert, there is no reflective consideration or conscious deliberation on the basis of rules; they have developed a kind of intuition that enables them to see what will work and their bodies carry out what needs to be done. As Dreyfus notes, the expert doesn't 'solve problems' or 'make decisions' at all; the expert simply does what works (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 31).

In a sense, Dreyfus' and Vygotsky's models seem to make oppositional claims. For Vygotsky, the model provided by the ZPD suggests that skills acquired within the social world become increasingly abstracted and internalized, and thus the movement of skill acquisition is from the external world to inner psychic life. Conversely, for Dreyfus the movement is from the inner psychic life, that being reflective consideration, to increasing involvement and engagement

with the external world. Dreyfus would argue that it is the novice that is the 'furthest away' experientially from their given skill domain because their activity is bound by propositions that mediate their access to that skill domain (Dreyfus, 2014, pp. 25-43). Conversely, for Vygotsky, it is the more practiced and mature performer that is the most removed from their given skill domain as they rely on internalized skills that mediate conduct. Phenomenologically speaking, Dreyfus' account of expertise has more explicit clarity on one of the most recognizable aspects of expert performances; that is, the automatic nature of their conduct. Moreover, Dreyfus also articulates how people develop a sense of responsibility for their performance in a given skill domain, namely in his discussion of competency and risk as mentioned above. As such, for Dreyfus, skill acquisition doesn't require abstraction away from the world via internalization, but rather involves an entirely immersed 'sight' of how to do the right thing given the situation. While both Vygotsky and Dreyfus agree that cultural skills are always social in origin, the movement of acquiring a given skill differs. Vygotsky argues for an account of skill acquisition that privileges the abstraction from the world and propositional mediation of involvement among more skillful performances, whereas Dreyfus argues that with increasing competence, people become less dependent on propositions or rules in their activity and increasingly involved in the particulars of a given situation.

In considering Vygotsky's ZPD in light of Dreyfus' view of skill acquisition and expertise, it is useful to consider whether Vygotsky's account of the ZPD can offer a theory of developing expertise. In the ZPD, the activity of novices is mediated by external guidance and rules imparted by skilled cultural actors. As the individual becomes more skillful in that cultural domain, they internalize rules that are then personalized and refined *on the basis of their internalization*. That is, in being abstracted or cut off from their social origin, internalized

propositions come to mediate the access of the skilled actor to their world, and thereby presumably making their conduct more skillful; yet, it is less obvious how these isolated propositions retain their normative relevance in their personalization. In other words, how do people develop any sort of personalized and immediate access to a given skill domain in a way that nonetheless remains significant and intelligible socially?

For Dreyfus (2004), the development of expertise implies the development of an automatic and immediate responses to a given situation. Moreover, the expert also has a particular embodied style to their performance that nonetheless retains intelligibility in its expression (Dreyfus, 2004). Bourdieu (1977) notes that an expert or cultural 'virtuoso' "…with a perfect command of his "art of living" can play on all the resources inherent in the ambiguities and uncertainties of behavior and situation to produce the actions appropriate to each case, to do that of which people will say "There was nothing else to be done," and do it the right way" (p. 8; Dreyfus, 2004). Phenomenologically, the expert in Bourdieu's account doesn't find their activity mediated by internalized 'rules' or 'propositions' but rather simply does what ought to be done given the circumstance. They directly apprehend the situation in light of what ought to be done and do it without any reflection or deference to propositions. Moreover, experts are likely unable to propositionally articulate how they did what they did; the expert musician cannot simply formalize, in light of a performance, the way that they produced the sound that they did beyond superficial 'rules' that would level the intricacies of their performance to something comprehensible by the novice (Dreyfus, 2004). The expert may also employ metaphors to characterize inexpressible aspects of their performance. Overall, the expert cannot simply 'impart' the specificities of their action to others. In contrast, at the level of the novice, propositions are crucial to learning how to enact the basic elements of a given skill. As long as

propositional understanding and detached reflection are involved in Dreyfus' account of skill acquisition, the ZPD can characterize the acquisition of that skill since the only thing imparted by rule-based learning is an understanding of what can already be in principle understood by everyone else (Dreyfus, 2004). Conversely, as propositional understanding and detached reflection becomes inappropriate in articulating the development and expression of more expert skillful conduct, the ZPD becomes woefully incapable of providing an account that captures the richness of the activity of the proficient or expert performer within a given skill domain.

Thus, Vygotsky's basic view of the ZPD cannot provide a model for the development of expertise, but at best can only offer a model of competency- that is, how we come to do things like everyone else. In Dreyfus' model, the competent performer is in some ways similar to the novice or advanced beginner, in that they must rely on some detached reflection to decide and develop a plan or perspective (Dreyfus, 2004). This is similar to the more skilled performer in Vygotsky's model, who in developing 'higher mental functions' acquires a more detached and thoughtful approach to a given circumstance. Conversely, for Dreyfus (2004), moving beyond competence requires an increasing sense of responsibility for one's performance, which is largely absent in Vygotsky's model. It is only in the acquisition of a sense of responsibility that competent performers become increasingly unable to abstract away from the world and take on the detached, propositionally mediated comportment of the novice or advanced beginner (Dreyfus, 2004). As they begin to become more involved in the world of their skill domain, the competent performer matures to accept risk in their performances, notably that they are ultimately responsible for their performances and thereby their mistakes- they cannot defer the blame onto the inadequacy of the rules or the incompetence of their teacher (Dreyfus, 2004).

In sum, I have demonstrated that the ZPD does not provide an adequate model for the development of expertise. Rather, the ZPD provides a model for how we can become competent in a given domain, but not how individuals become more skilled within a given domain or how skillful conduct becomes more personalized and stylized in a way that remains intelligible to others. However, if we were to re-imagine the ZPD in light of Dreyfus' view of skill acquisition and expertise, we could provide a clearer, phenomenologically relevant 'existential' ZPD that can account for development beyond competence.

Skill Acquisition in the ZPD

I will now consider what an 'existential' ZPD would look like, and how it could characterize the development of expertise within a given skill domain. Recall that the ZPD refers to Vygotsky's finding that novices are more skilled within a given cultural domain when they are 'scaffolded' by another person who is more skilled in that domain. In other words, development proceeds first and foremost from the mutual engagement of a novice and more a competent performer in a given skill domain. In re-casting Vygotsky's ZPD vis-à-vis Dreyfus' model of skill acquisition, I will consider two elements. First, I will account for the development and skill acquisition in a ZPD such that an individual can come to appear more skillfully in relation to a more mature cultural actor. Secondly, I will consider the quality of the relationship between the less and more skilled cultural actors. I will begin by considering the first point above, and then we will turn to the second point in the next chapter. In characterizing skill acquisition in the 'existential' ZPD, I will focus on two elements of a performer's development. First, I will discuss how competency can develop into expertise within a ZPD. Secondly, I will consider how a person's performance comes to develop a unique style in its expression within an existential ZPD.

Within an 'existential' ZPD, a novice performer is taught to decompose a given situation into context-free elements that can be recognized without prior experience, and then are taught basic rules to act on the basis of these context-free elements (Dreyfus, 2004). Gradually, as they become 'advanced beginners' with more experience coping with various situations, they begin to detect or are taught to recognize additional aspects of the situation that can then be recognized in conjunction with one another as instructional maxims (Dreyfus, 2004). As the learner has further experience, they become overwhelmed with the quantity of elements that must be recognized, and must develop plans and strategies on the basis of explicit instruction or their prior experiences (Dreyfus, 2004). These strategies enable certain situational features to be ignored and others to be brought to the foreground, enabling easier decision making going forward (Dreyfus, 2004). However, Dreyfus (2004) notes that these strategies are harder to develop than the maxims or rules of the advanced beginner or novice. There are simply too many possible situations for competent performers to be fully prepared for what could happen (Dreyfus, 2004). As a result, the competent performer, independently of their teacher, must choose a perspective without any guarantee that it will be successful (Dreyfus, 2004). Thus, a crucial element of the development of competency is *risk*, which emerges due to the complexity and variability of everyday life and the resultant uncertainty for the learner who must take a perspective and apply it without having certainty about any outcomes (Dreyfus, 2004).

Crucially, the competent learner may regress to rules and maxims learnt in earlier training as a 'lifejacket' to protect themselves from having to take a risk; however, the conscious deliberation associated with earlier learning will inevitably slow down or impede the smooth performance of a given skill, and thereby will also not promote any further refinement of the given skill (Dreyfus, 2004). For instance, rigidly applying a rule to the way that individuals

approach playing an instrument may block the refinement of the learner's performance, and thwart the flexible retreat from standardized rules based on situational generalities. Dreyfus (2004) notes that rule following is a characteristic of the competent performer, but that rule following itself will not promote further skill refinement. Thus, it would be naïve to assume that providing students with lists of rules or maxims will educe expertise within a domain; rather, students must first and foremost be willing to risk departing from their obstinate application of rules and instead employ their own perspectives to a given task environment, thereby taking personal responsibility for the success or failure of a given strategy.

As the competent performer begins to take responsibility for their success or failure, and can no longer rationalize errors on the basis of inadequate rules, they also begin to experience more joy in their successes (Dreyfus, 2004). The competent learner recognizes that their success is based on their own choices, and thus is not simply based on their involvement with another person who provides them with rules (Dreyfus, 2004). The relationship between the learner and teacher changes as this point as the teacher must begin to *free the student to feel responsible* for their failure and successes, and thereby teachers must equally disinvest their own ego from the learner's task. The teacher begins to shift their focus toward holding the competent performer responsible, helping the learner to recognize their own mistakes and devise strategies to rectify their errors, a point that will be explained further in the next chapter. As the learner becomes emotionally involved in the particular skill domain, they also become increasingly incapable of adopting the rule-based approach of the beginner (Dreyfus, 2004). Namely, their involvement inhibits rational deliberation and reflection and instead supports the possibility of further engagement and skillful development (Dreyfus, 2004). This, of course, is a unique feature to the existential ZPD; as the learner becomes unable to abstract away from a given skill domain, they

also become more adept at responding to the solicitation of the task environment itself. Conversely, if the competent performer resists involvement and shirks risk, they may instead regress and become unable to develop any skillful expertise within the given domain.

The competent performer begins to move beyond simply following rules within an existential ZPD. They begin developing unique strategies to approach the particularities of a specific task environment (Dreyfus, 2004). The innumerably mutable situational elements in any specific task environment demands the competent learner take a risk in responding to a given situation, and thereby also mobilizes the emotional investment of the competent performer such that they come to see themselves as responsible for the outcome of a given situation (Dreyfus, 2004). In other words, the success or failure of a given situation is based on their skillful response to the situation, not the inadequacy of their training nor simply a quantitative lack of rules or maxims (Dreyfus, 2004). Gradually, as competent learners' practice and experience both success and failure in a given skill domain, they shift their strategic orientation to their skill domain, from conscious deliberation to embodied involvement, thereby also creating the possibility of the emergence of expertise (Dreyfus, 2004).

The transition from competence to expertise within an existential ZPD is based on the shift toward involvement over deliberate reflection over the course of experiencing a variety of situations (Dreyfus, 2004). The involved learner begins to approach the problem with the same interest but makes different tactical decisions on the basis of their prior experience, thereby responding immediately to each unique situation, accepting the necessary risks and committing to their response without conscious consideration (Dreyfus, 2004). Thus, the existential ZPD should support the cultivation and emergence of a dispositional stance toward unique situations that may include their own unique complications, such as competing concerns or no obvious

approach to the problem at hand (Dreyfus, 2004). Dreyfus (2004) notes that this view of

expertise suggests that there is never a single correct response to a given situation, but rather

different persons with unique dispositions and experience with a given skill domain, who will

respond differently on the basis of their own experiences without deferral to abstract rules or

plans. Rather, the expert simply sees what needs to be done and does it, despite the inherent

ambiguity and uncertainty that characterizes most unique experiences with a particular situation.

Thus far, I have argued that an existential ZPD would require a nurturing relation that

enables the gradual development of emotional involvement, the abandonment of abstract rules

and maxims, and the emergence of a sense of personal responsibility. It is only in the movement

from the abstract and context-free to the concrete and particular that can enable the cultivation of

skillful expertise in the manner described by Dreyfus. However, a final question remains

concerning the development of unique dispositional styles among experts in a given skill

domain. For instance, the vocal style of Ian Anderson and Jeff Lynne, while arguably sharing

superficial similarities, remains sonically and stylistically different. Similarly, Olympic ice

dancers develop their own unique stylized elements to their routines that play on their strengths,

but that also will necessarily reflect the acquisition of their skillful dispositions more broadly. In

this final section, I will address the development of unique styles among experts in the context of

the existential ZPD.

As alluded to above, the emergence of a specific style is the consequence of the genetic

logic that characterizes the acquisition of a skill; each unique experience and skillful expression

cultivates dispositions that enable further skillful activity (Baerveldt, 2015). These unique

dispositional elements of skillful coping among experts are not themselves reducible to rules or

maxims concerning their expression, but rather enables the referential totality of a given task

environment to show up in a meaningful and compelling way. Following Aristotle, doing the right thing in the moment requires not simply a choice, but the cultivation of the right embodied dispositions (*hexis*) which are only acquired by actively performing the skill (Baerveldt, 2015). Similarly, Wittgenstein notes that the acquisition and performance of skills are formally indistinguishable (Baerveldt, 2014a). Stylized elements in a specific person's skillful coping, thus, emerge and are understood in terms of the acquisition of that skill (Baerveldt, 2015). As a result, the possession of a skillful disposition and the acquisition are always the same, and style reflects the unique genetic sequence of temporally extended performances of skillful conduct in a context of normative correction, namely the previously described existential ZPD (Baerveldt, 2015).

I will now further elucidate the genetic sequence of developing expertise. Both Heidegger and Dreyfus maintain that everyday skillful coping involves conducting ourselves in the same way as everyone else (Dreyfus, 2004). Conversely, the expert learner diverges from this everyday understanding to become involved in and respond spontaneously to a particular situation. From novice to competence, the learner responds to the 'general' situation, that is the situation stripped from its particularities (Dreyfus, 2004). Gradually, with expertise comes a response to a 'concrete' situation, which is "…in every case different. The circumstances, the givens, the times, and the people vary. The meaning of the action itself, i.e. precisely what I want to do varies as well…" (Dreyfus, 2004; Heidegger, 1997, p. 101). Thus, for Heidegger and Dreyfus, it is the triumph of the expert to act in terms to the situation that is always unique rather than generalities (Dreyfus, 2004). It is not only the approach that differs (i.e. rule-bound vs. involved) but also the very way that a given situation is disclosed to a performer (i.e. general vs. concrete) (Dreyfus, 2004). Crucially, Dreyfus (2004) notes that the concrete situation is not a

private or metaphysically privileged kind of intelligibility that differs from everyday intelligibility. Rather, expertise enables a finessing of rule-bound responses such that over a long period of skillful coping in light of a given cultural practice, the expert finds situations disclosed in a more refined way (Dreyfus, 2004). The concrete situation calls out the careful yet immediate response of the expert performer in light of their own involved care with the given skill domain (Dreyfus, 2004).

As the expert is not acting on the basis of rules but rather their own embodied dispositions, they cannot explain propositionally why they conducted themselves as they did. Heidegger notes that the "Situation cannot be calculated in advance or presented like something present-at-hand which is waiting for someone to grasp it. It merely gets disclosed in a free resolving which has not been determined beforehand but is open to the possibility of such determination" (Dreyfus, 2004; Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 355). Thus, all the expert is able to do in their skillful coping is to remain open and involved, and conduct themselves in light of their previous experiences; it is in their response that the situation is defined, such that the activity of the expert is seen by others, including other skilled people, as correct (Dreyfus, 2004). The expert's response is not tailored to the suitability on the basis of rules that characterize what is or isn't correct (Dreyfus, 2004). Rather, they do what needs to be done spontaneously, based on the particularities of a concrete situation (Dreyfus, 2004). Returning to our previous discussion of style, as each concrete situation and each expert's own ontogenetic training is unique, their individual response is a uniquely appropriate response that is a possibility for action that is then seized upon and employed *in each person's own way* (Dreyfus, 2004). It is in this way that expert performances can be taken as uniquely stylized models but not general templates of how to meaningfully cope with a given situation; their unique style comes to be taken in average

everyday understanding as a possibility for that person given their own embodied dispositions toward a concrete situation (Dreyfus, 2004).

In sum, an existential ZPD can account for the emergence of expert performance only if it enables a movement beyond simple rule following. The movement from rule-following to investment within a particular skill domain and gradual expertise remains based on both the individual's involvement within a particular domain and the quality of the relationship between that performer and other skilled performers who form a zone of normative correction around their skillful expression. It is toward this quality of relationships that we will turn our attention in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the ZPD formulated by Vygotsky cannot account for skillful expertise as characterized by the work of Hubert Dreyfus, and as such should be re-articulated in light of a more existential concern, namely with personal responsibility in light of one's involvement in a particular skill domain. The 'existential' ZPD does not guarantee the development of expertise, but offers the opportunity for a learner to take the risk to move beyond the formal rule following that characterizes novice learners and develop a more involved and responsive form of skillful coping that thereby comes to enable more differentiated and automatic responses to unique situations on the basis of previous skillful engagement. Throughout this paper, I have alluded to the changing nature of the relationship of the teacher/skilled peer and the learner in an 'existential' ZPD, and have noted that this is central to cultivating skill development beyond competency. In the final chapter, I will explore this relationship more centrally, and characterize how the transformation from competency to

expertise involves a kind of *pedagogical eros* that necessarily changes how teachers are involved in cultivating expertise among learners.

Chapter 3

In the previous chapters, I have argued that Lev Vygotsky's conceptualization of a zone of

proximal development offers at most a model of inculcation into competency or averageness in

skill development, but not the development of expertise and personal style. I have proposed that

an 'existential' ZPD can account for the emergence of expertise and unique style by following

the model of skill acquisition proposed by Hubert Dreyfus. The 'existential' ZPD offers a model

of skill acquisition, but also underscores the importance of the interactions between a teacher and

a learner. When we characterize the activity of the 'existential' ZPD as skillful coping, it is

crucial to note both the developmental trajectory of the learner and the quality of the relationship

between the teacher and learner that facilitates the development of the learner. In this final

chapter, I will describe the qualitative transformations of the relationship between teacher and

learner as a learner acquires skills in the existential ZPD.

Drawing from Martin Heidegger's view of human existence as always already being-with

others, *all* human relationships share the quality of care as solicitude, and as learners acquire

budding expertise in a given skill domain, there is a qualitative shift in the way that teachers

relate to learners. Namely, teachers may come to shift the locus of their care from the task

environment to the involvement of the learner, such that they begin to hold the learner

responsible for their successes and failures. In articulating a phenomenological-existential

account of the activity within a ZPD, I will argue that the very best teachers relate themselves to

learners in a qualitatively distinct manner that sets the stage for the possibility of cultivating

expertise in learners. Conversely, teachers who do not relate to their students but instead remain

fixated on the task environment only provide students with the capacity to develop basic

competence within a skill domain, and thereby flatten and normalize conduct within that skill

domain. I will also consider whether Dreyfus' understanding of expertise is equivalent to an existential concern for authenticity, and whether expertise implies authenticity in skillful performances. Finally, I will consider some limitations of this phenomenological-existential perspective, largely concerning the risk of essentialism and the specificity of the language. Additionally, I will propose some future directions for this research, specifically concerning the intersection of skill acquisition and emotion.

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Heidegger's *Sorge* and the Other

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In this first section, I will outline several central ideas presented in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. I will focus on those ideas most relevant for understanding Heidegger's view of Being as always already Being-with-others who share our existential condition. I will also highlight the central differences between Heidegger and Vygotsky, and consider how Heidegger's phenomenological-existential approach contributes to understanding an 'existential' ZPD.

Care for Others as Solicitude

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger provides a sketch of the *a priori* structure of human existence, which he terms as *Dasein* (Moran, 2000, p. 222). For Heidegger (1927/1962), *Dasein* is always already 'Being-in-the-world' rather than a "bare subject without a world" (p. 151-2). *Dasein* is fundamentally swept up in the world rather than 'inserted' into the world or sitting idly 'alongside' or 'next' to it (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 78-80). Crucially, *Dasein* is involved in its worldly dealings as it purposefully encounters 'equipment' and others who share our condition of 'Being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 78-80; 149-153). For Heidegger (1927/1962), equipment consists of those 'objects' that are disclosed in light of their availability for our dealings or matters of our 'care' (pp. 78-80; 149-153). Conversely, Others are disclosed not as 'things' or 'entities' that we see in terms of their 'useability' or 'serviceability' in the same

way as equipment (what Heidegger calls 'ready-to-hand') (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 156-7, 184-5). Rather, Others are disclosed as '*Dasein-with'* [*Mitdasein*] due to our shared ontological condition of '*Being-with*' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 156-7). For Heidegger (1927/1962), 'Being-with' [*Mitsein*] is the existential-ontological condition by which we come to see others as '*Dasein*-with,' or as Others who share our condition as 'Being-in-the-world' (pp. 156-8). The condition of 'Being-in-the-world' fundamentally implies a world shared with others [*Mitwelt*], such that our 'Being-with' is an *a priori* structure of the Being of *Dasein* upon which all possible concrete relations are developed (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 154-5). For instance, the possibility of 'Being-alone' is for Heidegger (1927/1962) a modification of a pre-existing ontological structure of 'Being-with' such that my 'aloneness' always already implies that there are others from whom I can be isolated (pp. 156-7). Additionally, as 'Being-with' is an ontological characteristic of *Dasein*, it is a characteristic of one's own *Dasein* to show up to others as '*Dasein*-with;' that is, insofar as "one's own *Dasein* has the essential structure of Being-with, it is *Dasein*-with as encounterable for Others" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 157-8).

Crucially, Heidegger characterizes the 'existential meaning' of *Dasein* as 'care,' but this care is not equivalent for Others and equipment, as Others and equipment do not share the same sort of existence (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 235-9; Moran, 2000, pp. 238-9). Equipment, for Heidegger, exist as 'ready-to-hand,' that is in terms of their utility for our own activity; not as isolated or disconnected objects, but always in a 'referential totality' that points to a 'towards-which' [*wozu*] or for what that particular equipment does in light of its reference to other equipment (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 98-102). As such, the form of care we have toward equipment is 'concern,' which is the care *Dasein* has toward entities that do not have their own *Being-with* (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 157-8). Conversely, the care that *Dasein* has for Others

who are '*Dasein*-with' is solicitude, which like our concern for equipment, is an 'existentiale' or a condition for the possibility of our 'Being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 157-8). Solicitude, for Heidegger, is evident in every possible way that *Dasein* relates to *Dasein*-other, including everyday 'deficient' modes of relation such as not noticing or indifference toward others (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 157-8). However, these 'deficient' modes of relation are possibilities that are nonetheless expressions of our primordial 'Being-with.' Heidegger (1927/1962) argues that as we typically remain indifferent or fail to notice other people, previous ontologies underlying philosophical and psychological perspectives ignore the primordiality of 'Being-with' by misconstruing indifference as more ontogenetically prior to our solicitude toward *Dasein*-with (p. 157-8). Heidegger notes that the forms of sight that accompany our solicitudious encounters with Others are 'considerateness' and 'forbearance' which themselves range from 'inconsiderateness' in the 'deficient' modes of solicitude described above to more positive forms of 'seeing' the Other (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 159). The positive modes of solicitude characterize our engagement with another person in a world of common concern, and will be described in more detail in the next section of the paper; suffice to say that it is the positive forms of solicitude that illuminate the qualitative transformation of the relationship between those people engaged with one another in an 'existential' ZPD. Conversely, these positive modes of solicitude are themselves transformations of those everyday modes of solicitude that we acquire through repeated interactions with individuals in a zone of normative correction. I will now turn to explore the relationship of *Dasein* to normativity in light of Heidegger's treatment of *Das Man*, or everydayness that characterizes our lives.

***Das Man* [The One]**

  For Heidegger, everyday Being-one's-Self is always characterized by a concern about

one's relation to Others, which is termed as 'distentiality' [*Abständigkeit*] (Heidegger,

1927/1962, p. 163-4). For Heidegger, this concern with 'distance' is an element of 'Being-with'

such that everyday Being-with-others is characterizes by our subjection [*Botmäßigkeit*] to

Others, or our willing submissiveness to the Other. In other words, *Dasein* "itself *is* not; its

Being has been taken away by the Others" and thereby its possibilities are taken over by Others

(Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 164). Notably, these others are not specific persons, yet *anyone* can

stand in for *Dasein* in its everydayness; these others are those who are present in *Dasein*'s

everyday Being-with-one-another, and are not a specific, totalizing, or metaphysical 'who,' but

rather is a more neutral 'they' that Heidegger (1927/1962) terms *das Man* (p. 164). It is in the

average, mundane, and neutral that the distinguishability and explicitness of *Dasein* is obfuscated

and replaced by an "inconspicuousness and unascertainability," which Heidegger (1927/1962)

deems the true power of *das Man* (p. 164). Notably, *Dasein* in its everydayness becomes just like

anyone else; *Dasein* becomes replaceable as its everyday existence is prescribed by *das Man*

(Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 164-5) Crucially, 'distentiality' is rooted in a concern with

averageness, which is itself an existential quality of *das Man* (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 164-5).

For Heidegger (1927/1962), *das Man* is maintained in its averageness, which enables it to

determine in everyday life what is and is not acceptable; it monopolizes the interpretation of

what is possible for *Dasein* and precludes exceptionality and uniqueness (pp. 164-5). Heidegger

(1927/1962) argues that *das Man* covers over the existential condition of *Dasein* and obfuscates

the primordiality of our Being-in-the-world (p. 165). As such, human expression is flattened as

das Man prioritizes its care for averageness as normative, a process termed 'levelling down' [*Einebnung*] (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 165).

Heidegger (1927/1962) notes that distentiality, averageness, and levelling down constitute the way of Being of *das Man*, which forms the basis of everyday Being-in-the-world-with-others (p. 165). This everyday modality is termed 'publicness' which ultimately prescribes the interpretation of human life, and Heidegger (1927/1962) notes that publicness is necessarily 'correct' because it is "insensitive to every difference of level and of genuineness and thus never gets to the 'heart of the matter' ["auf die Sachen"]" (p. 165). As such, publicness makes it appear that everything is both familiar and accessible to all, such that the interpretation of life itself becomes mundane and unexceptional (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 165). *Dasein*, for Heidegger, is accommodated for by *das Man* as publicness controls the manner in which both the world and *Dasein* itself are interpreted (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 165-6). Crucially, *das Man* is an existential and necessary aspect of human existence, as by creating specific horizons that *Dasein* can come to interpret itself and the world, *Dasein* is given both constancy and intelligible possibilities (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 165-8). In other words, *Dasein* is given clarity on those normative expectations that enable mutual sense-making within a given cultural milieu. Nonetheless, *das Man* also disperses *Dasein* into averageness, thereby precluding *Dasein* from choosing its own possibilities (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 165-6). Crucially, Heidegger (1927/1962) notes that the Self is always first and foremost a 'they-self,' as *das Man* is itself "*an existentiale; and as a primordial phenomenon, it belongs to Dasein's positive constitution*" (p. 167). Thus, *Dasein* is first and foremost a 'they-self,' as *das Man* has already come to articulate and limit the referential context of *Dasein*; in other words, for Heidegger (1927/1962), *das Man* is the normative background of the world, including its rules, expectations, language, and

cultural practices (p. 167). Nonetheless, for Heidegger (1927/1962), *Dasein* can transform itself from a 'they-self' to something more 'authentic,' or a Self that chooses for itself its possibilities for Being (p. 167).

Crucially, even if *Dasein* moves toward becoming a more 'authentic Self,' it is never totally separated from *das Man*, as it is *das Man* that forms the horizons of intelligibility for all human expression (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 167-8). Moreover, the everyday, average form of intelligibility of publicness conceals and prevents the disclosing of the Being of *Dasein*, and thus also covers over the possibility of becoming an authentic Self (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 211-3). Heidegger (1927/1962) terms the 'average intelligibility' of everyday life as 'idle talk' [*Gerede*], which closes off interpretation beyond those possibilities handed over by *das Man* (pp. 211-3). Moreover, as *das Man* gives possibilities to *Dasein* and controls the manner by which it comes to 'see' its world, publicness is also understood by Heidegger (1927/1962) in terms of a 'curiosity' toward everything but nothing specifically, which thereby leads *Dasein* to be distracted and divested from its environment, "never dwelling anywhere" [*Aufenthaltslosigkeit*], and thereby "constantly uprooting itself" (pp. 216-7). Thus, as everyday *Dasein* exists without any understanding of their orientation to the equipment and others in the world, the encounter of both can be misconstrued as detached contemplation rather than a more primordial structure of the Being of *Dasein*. Finally, Heidegger (1927/1962) notes that everyday publicness is also characterized by ambiguity in that as every part of life is principally accessible to everyone, the averageness of everydayness contributes to a mutual dissuasion from coming to an understanding of Being; "under the mask of "for-one-another", an "against-one-another" is in play" (p. 219).

In its publicness, Heidegger (1927/1962) notes that human existence is characterized by a movement of 'falling,' which is the existential-ontological structure of idle talk, curiosity, and

ambiguity (pp. 219-24). For Heidegger (1927/1962), the description of everyday life as 'fallen' is not a negative assessment, but rather suggests that *Dasein* is typically "alongside the world of its concern", or remains inauthentic (p. 220). Overlooking its fundamental 'Being-in-the-world', *Dasein* is most often a 'not-Self' that is fully absorbed in the world of *das Man* (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 220). In sum, Heidegger characterizes the everyday, inauthentic mode of Being of *Dasein* as 'falling' into *das Man*, such that people typically overlook their own possibility to take over their existence authentically (a point that will be described in more detail below).

Dasein as 'Being-there'

For Heidegger (1927/1962), *Dasein* is not simply a subject in relation to the world as an object, but rather human existence is the 'in-ness' of 'Being-in-the-world.' In other words, *Dasein* is its disclosure of possibilities for existence [or 'Being-there'] (p. 169-73). As previously mentioned, the inauthentic 'disclosedness' of *Dasein* is 'falling,' which captures that most of the time, human existence is characterized by absorption in *das Man*, and thereby remains oblivious to its possibilities for Being beyond those handed down from *das Man*. Moreover, *Dasein* is also always already 'thrown' namely in that it "is and has to be" as 'Being-there' which presupposes *Dasein*'s 'falleness' into its *das Man*, into "the groundlessness and nullity of inauthentic everydayness" rather than authentically seizing possibilities for itself (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 173-5; 222-4; Tietz, 2001, pp. 84-5).

Despite the tendency to fall into inauthenticity, *Dasein* in its thrownness, is free to 'waive' possibilities, and thereby is also free to choose what possibilities can be taken up or seized, and thereby is also responsible for its existence (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 330-1). Being free to 'waive' possibilities discloses the possibility to be free from *das Man*, or in Heideggerian terminology, to have a conscience (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 330-4; Tietz, 2001, p. 154).

'Conscience' is an ontological condition that is based in *Dasein's* Being as 'care' and it is disclosed as a call [*Ruf*] that summons *Dasein* to its "ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 313-4, 321-3). In other words, the call of conscience beckons *Dasein* to the possibility of "taking over" its existence, and thereby returning it to itself as itself rather than a 'not-Self' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 315-17). The Self as 'they-self' is illuminated in the call of conscience, and *das Man* falls away as *Dasein* moves from its inauthenticity to its potential to have a conscience, and thereby of being authentic (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 335-6, 341-2, 364-5). In sum, it is in hearing the call of conscience that *Dasein* has the possibility of authenticity, which is accompanied by a pellucidity of *Dasein* to itself, such that it can choose "a kind of Being-one's-Self" that is not metaphysically separated from the world, but is characterized by an understanding of *Dasein*'s 'Being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 314-5).

It is important to note that authenticity doesn't permanently free *Dasein* from *das Man*, but rather reflects the elucidation of possibilities that can be 'taken up' in and for ourselves (Moran, 2000, p. 240). It is this kind of authenticity that we will explore further in the following sections; namely, the possibility of enabling people to be free for themselves to choose a concrete "potentiality-for-Being" that is connected to a more fundamental ontology, or understanding of existence (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 158-9).

Comparisons with Vygotsky

As mentioned in the first chapter, there are numerous theoretical differences between Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychology and the existential-phenomenological perspectives of Dreyfus and Heidegger. In this section, I will briefly reiterate those central differences, and consider the consequences of Heidegger's fundamental ontology for interpreting Vygotsky's

view of learning in a ZPD. As mentioned, Heidegger's project is concerned with 'fundamental ontology,' or the question of the meaning of Being as such, and thus isn't specifically concerned with concrete human conduct. As Vygotsky is more concerned with concrete behaviour rather than investigating underlying ontology, his project could be considered as *ontic*. Vygotsky does not interrogate the underlying ontological basis of his project. Thus, it is important to note that Heidegger and Vygotsky are undertaking fundamentally different projects.

Nonetheless, taking Heidegger's fundamental ontology as the starting point for evaluating Vygotsky's view of learning and development in a ZPD illuminates some of the existential limitations of Vygotsky's ZPD. I have previously noted that Vygotsky's prioritization of 'concepts' as mediators between subjects and objects muddles the primordial 'in-ness' of *Dasein* as 'Being-in-the-world.' In other words, Heidegger's project prioritizes the skillful involvement of a person as always already with others in a world. As previously mentioned, Heidegger argues that *Dasein* is always first and foremost 'fallen' in everydayness, in *das Man*, as we take on possibilities without any actual 'choice' or 'responsibility' for ourselves in light of those possibilities for Being. In other words, becoming part of the world involves 'falling' into normativity but not becoming a Self that is responsible for selecting its possibilities for Being.

As I argued in the previous chapter, Vygotsky's view of the ZPD can at best provide a model for the development of competency, but not of going beyond competency; that is, cultivating expertise within a particular skill domain. The early stages of skill acquisition as described in Dreyfus's model all involve the reliance on detached reflection to develop a plan on the basis of rules that are 'handed over' from others who are already operating within that skill domain. Conversely, the expert feels a sense of responsibility for their performance, and acts in terms of their involved engagement on the basis of their own prior experience in each person's

own stylized manner. As such, the expert is taking responsibility for their performance, and acts according to the possibilities that they have taken up in light of their dedication to act in a given skill domain.

In light of this, I contend that as the standard ZPD can only provide a model of the development of competency, it also provides at best a model of 'falling' or of becoming similar to anyone else in a given skill domain, but not of moving beyond the normative prescriptions of *das Man*. Vygotsky's model provides, in its typical interpretation, a useful way of viewing how people develop skills in the same way as others, but not the stylization and refinement of skills over time. Additionally, the standard ZPD does not provide a model of how individuals come to take responsibility for their own conduct, and thereby go beyond detached rule following. If the standard ZPD is a model for learning, a learner cannot necessarily be held responsible for their successes and failures because they are simply reacting according to rules and scripts that they are given rather than those that they have taken up for themselves. In sum, the ZPD provides at best a model of falling into *das Man*, and thus cannot be used to consider the emergence of genuinely 'authentic' conduct in the Heideggerian sense. I will now turn my attention to the qualitative transformation of the relationship between the learner and teacher in an existential ZPD in light of Heidegger's positive modes of solicitude.

Leaping-in and Leaping-Ahead

In this next section, I will describe Heidegger's positive modes of solicitude, and employ these ideas to characterize the qualitative transformation of the relationship between a teacher and a learner in the 'existential' ZPD. I will argue that teaching experts requires a shift from teaching as 'leaping-in' to teaching as 'leaping-ahead,' and thereby involves a fundamentally different relational structure between teachers and learners.

Leaping-in

As previously mentioned, Heidegger (1927/1962) characterizes the care that *Dasein* has to other *Dasein-with* as 'solicitude,' and that while our everyday Being-with-others may involve neglecting, overlooking, and ignoring others, there are also positive modes that characterize our relationality (pp 158-9). For Heidegger, there are two positive extremes of solicitude. The first is 'leaping-in' [*eineinspringen*] for another, in which *Dasein* relieve the Other of their concern with something 'ready-to-hand' by 'taking over,' thereby usurping the Other and acting for them in light of the Other's task (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 158-9). The Other who has been leapt-in for may then come to reclaim their task once the initial problem has been attended to, and thereby secure what has been arranged by the person who leapt-in (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 158-9). Conversely, if a task has been entirely disburdened, the Other who has been leapt-in for may instead have their concern displaced entirely (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 158-9). Thus, leaping-in can be a form of domination, where a teacher simply shows a learner what ought to be done rather than providing an opportunity for the learner to attempt a given task themselves (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 158-9). Leaping-in can deprive a student of an opportunity to engage and practice a particular skill, and thereby precludes the further refinement of that skill. Notably, Heidegger (1927/1962) claims that a dominating leaping-in can contribute to dependence on another if a learner is never given the chance to do something for themselves (pp. 158-9). The Other who is leapt-in for need not interpret the leaping-in as dominating; if they are disburdened of an opportunity to develop a skill without clear consent, leaping-in can involve domination and control. Nonetheless, leaping-in can also involve teaching that is associated with 'giving' rules and guidance to the student. In this case, there is no explicit domination, but the student is still

relieved of their having to take on the responsibility of choosing a plan or perspective independently.

Crucially, leaping-in involves a care for the task environment over care for the student. The teacher who leaps-in is prioritizing an approach to the task environment, and is thus concerned with how the student comes to encounter the task environment; they force the student to interpret the task environment in light of their own interpretation and thereby monopolize the approach that can be taken to solve a given problem. Early on in skill acquisition, students cannot independently approach a given task without more deliberate reflection and rule following, and therefore cultivating independent responsibility is more or less impossible. As a result, the teacher must initially provide the student with clear rules and leap-in for them, thereby forcing the student to approach the given task in a more standardized and normatively prescribed manner. As teachers provide rules and regulations, they leap-in for their students and prescribe the approach to a given problem. Thus, leaping-in involves care directed toward a general task environment, but not toward the student as a person who can attend to the particulars of a given situation. Crucially, while leaping-in is a 'positive' mode of solicitude, and involves more explicit engagement with another person than deficient modes of solicitude, it is not explicitly connected to Heidegger's notion of authenticity. In sum, 'leaping-in' forms one of the extremes of positive solicitude, and involves in some way disburdening another of their concern for a particular task, which can be done in a more or less dominating fashion. While leaping-in is a part of the way that *Dasein* can care for others in a more positive manner, it nonetheless does not explicitly relate Heidegger's view of authenticity, relating instead to the levelling down and averageness associated with inauthentic everydayness.

Leaping-Ahead

The other extreme of the positive modes of solicitude is 'leaping-ahead' [*ihm vorausspringt*], which involves engaging with an Other in a way that frees them for their factical "potentiality-for-Being," and thereby enables them to take over their own care 'authentically' (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 158-9). Heidegger (1927/1962) contends that 'leaping-ahead' "pertains essentially to authentic care- that is, to the existence of the Other" (pp. 158-9). In other words, leaping-ahead is related to Heidegger's view of authenticity in that care shifts from the task environment to the Other. Leaping-ahead involves assisting another person in coming to discern and cultivate their own abilities within a given skill domain that that person seizes in their own way. For example, a violin instructor may 'leap-ahead' of their student by cultivating in that student their own unique form of 'playing-for-themselves,' and thereby guide that student in seizing a possibility of 'Being-a-violinist-for-themselves.' Thus, while leaping-in pertains largely to concern with a given task environment, leaping-ahead pertains to authentically caring for another person (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 158-9).

For Heidegger (1927/1962), authentically caring for another person involves 'freeing' them for their own Being, and thereby setting the stage for both style and responsibility in their performances (p. 159). While the novice, or even competent learner may not be held responsible for their successes and failures by a teacher who leaps-in, the more proficient and expert learner must not only feel responsible for their successes and failures, but also be held responsible for their successes and failures by a teacher who leaps-ahead. Thus, there must be a qualitative shift in the teacher from leaping-in to leaping-ahead for their student, as a learner begins to move from competence to expertise in their skill development. Leaping-ahead concerns specifically the learner as a Being who has authenticity as a possibility-to-be. As such, in leaping-ahead, the

teacher doesn't explicitly come to free the student from the particular demands of a general situation, but rather 'sees' the student as the kind of Being that can be "transparent to himself *in his care and to become *free for* it*" (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 159).

The cultivation of expertise requires a qualitative transformation of the relationality between a teacher and learner such that the teacher divests their own care from the task environment to the learner as a *Dasein-with* who like them can be an 'authentic Self.' John MacMurray describes a similar kind of 'seeing' as involving a kind of 'love' or 'eros' such that one comes to "take delight in [another's] existence for his sake," and thereby recognizes and affirms that person's existential condition, and viewing them as the kind of Being that they are (MacMurray, 1935, p. 42). Baerveldt & Dunphy (2016) have referred to this 'erotics' as a capacity for relationality in light of a person's unique generative capacity, their lives as an unfolding of possibilities such that we care and hold space for their living spirit. Following this, I propose that an existential ZPD must account for the relational transition between rule-based 'in-struction' as leaping-in and a more authentic 'pedagogical eros' as leaping-ahead. As such, it is in the recognition of the learner as sharing our condition of 'Being-in-the-world' that teachers can leap-ahead of them in holding them responsible for their successes and failures, and also in never precluding or closing-off their creative engagement as skillfully coping in the world. In sum, I have described the qualitative shift from leaping-in to leaping-ahead as parallel to the acquisition of skill beyond competency. I have also proposed that leaping-ahead has a quality of pedagogical eros. However, while leaping-ahead is explicitly connected to authenticity, we cannot interpret authenticity in Heidegger's account to be a 'state' or permanent transformation that does or does not make someone 'authentic' in a given task domain. As such, in the next

section, we will consider whether expertise implies authenticity, or whether there is a more complex view of expertise and authenticity that illuminates the form of an existential ZPD.

Are Experts Existentially 'Authentic?

In this final section, I will consider whether the cultivation of expertise in an existential ZPD necessarily contributes to the emergence of more 'authentic' conduct in Heidegger's view of authenticity. I will first consider Dreyfus's characterization of expertise in light of Heidegger's view of authenticity. I will then characterize authentic expertise, and consider whether the existential ZPD can cultivate the emergence of authenticity.

Expertise and Resoluteness

Heidegger notes that the possibility of authenticity is always a modification of inauthentic Being, which is ontologically prior (Heidegger, 1927/1962, p. 168). For Heidegger, the possibility of Being 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' is rooted in the fact that *Dasein* [human existence] is "characterized by mineness" and that this is an *a priori* aspect of the Being of *Dasein,* such that humans are always in some state of authentic or inauthentic Being (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 67-8; Moran, 2000, p. 240). For Heidegger, the everyday manner of Being-one's-self-with-Others is inauthentic and enmeshes my own 'care' with my relationality to Others. As previously mentioned, in its everyday inauthentic mode, *Dasein* is largely enveloped in *das Man*, in that *Dasein*'s possibilities are prescribed and handed down to it in light of the concern for distentiality, averageness, and levelling down that forms the existential structure of *das Man*. Additionally, *Dasein* is always already 'thrown' into a world where it is and has to be, which presupposes 'falling' into its world in its inauthenticity rather than coming to take over possibilities for itself (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 330-1).

As previously mentioned, *Dasein* is also ultimately free to 'waive' possibilities, and thereby choose what to take up, thereby making *Dasein* fundamentally free for its existence, yet also ultimately responsible (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 330-1). Being-free discloses the possibility of freedom from inauthenticity, or having a conscience, which is always disclosed as a call to take over one's existence as a Self (Heidegger, 1927/1962, pp. 330-4). However, as Dreyfus (2004) notes, Heidegger actually discusses two related but distinct forms of higher intelligibility related to authenticity that need to be considered. The first, more concrete form of higher intelligibility is termed 'resoluteness' which stems from the inability for *Dasein* to make explicit and justify its condition of thrownness; *Dasein* becomes 'anxious' in that there is a recognition that the everyday average form of intelligibility characterized by rules and normative standard, has no *essential* or *fundamental* authority (Dreyfus, 2004). In other words, an individual feels the lack of foundations underlying the risk in their performances; it is not against the essential nature of a given skill that an individual is evaluated against but rather against the background of norms and standards that shift and change in each performance (Dreyfus, 2004). The resolute performer is the Dreyfusian expert, who faces risks in their choices, and feels the responsibility of their successes and failures (Dreyfus, 2004). Dreyfus (2004) notes that the expert who 'lives in anxiety' is the entrepreneurial, innovative, creative expert who revels in the groundlessness of their skillful coping, and comes to challenge norms surrounding the average interpretation of given skill domain. The resolute expert "no longer takes for granted the banal public interpretation of events, can see new possibilities in the most ambiguous and conflicted situations, and so can do something that all who share his world will retroactively recognize as what was factically possible at the time" (Dreyfus, 2004, p. 271). However, this resolute expert,

while creative, is not yet authentic in the genuinely Heideggerian sense of this term (Dreyfus, 2004).

Cultural Masters & Intelligibility

For Dreyfus (2004), while resoluteness is based on expertise in light of a concrete situation, there is yet another fully authentic mode of Being that is made possible by the primordial understanding of *Dasein*'s own Being. Dreyfus (2004) contends that this authentic mode of Being involves facing existential anxiety, but also involves encountering the anxiety of death, namely that existence can be taken away at any moment, and that *Dasein* must be prepared to surrender both its identity and world. Heidegger notes that this movement is from 'resoluteness' to 'anticipatory resoluteness,' which makes possible a more ground-breaking and inventive intelligibility than disclosed in resoluteness (Dreyfus, 2004). The expert expresses in their skillful coping both a sensitivity to the particularities of the situation and to their previous experiences, and thus abandons norms and rules, while still also remaining intelligible to *das Man* (Dreyfus, 2004). Conversely, authenticity implies a freedom from the "agreed-on current cultural issues", thereby enabling the birth of a new form of intelligibility (Dreyfus, 2004, p. 272). The authentic *Dasein* engages in what Heidegger terms repetition; in a "moment of decisive action," *Dasein* takes up a historically "marginal practice" from its own cultural inheritance and employs it such that the present moment is radically transformed (Dreyfus, 2004, p. 272). In this repetition, Dreyfus notes that a new 'form of life' emerges that radically shifts a group's view of a particular cultural issue; here the authentic performer goes beyond the situational particulars to shape history, and thereby becoming what Dreyfus terms a 'cultural master' (Dreyfus, 2004, p. 272). Thus, a cultural master is not only an innovator in a particular cultural practice, but someone who radically transforms the entire understanding of practices and

thereby transforms the *style of a culture*; in a Heideggerian sense, the cultural master comes to disclose new worlds and thereby wholly new possibilities that were not accessible before but rather resided in long forgotten marginal practices (Dreyfus, 2004).

In an 'existential' ZPD, the relationship of leaping-ahead implies that teachers are always sensitive to the unique brilliance of each student, and the possibility that they could be such a cultural master. Yet, the 'existential' ZPD in no way guarantees authentic performances; rather, it sets the stage for the development of expertise beyond simply conventional understandings of a given skill domain. Authenticity, and even expertise, is not something that can be promised or even anticipated for in any student as not every person will choose to take risks and responsibility for their skillful coping. Nonetheless, a more 'existential' understanding of the ZPD can enable a clearer phenomenological understanding of both the qualitative transformations toward expertise in a learner and the transformation of the relational quality between a teacher and learner. As such, the outcomes are never given in teaching and learning, but remain a possibility that ought to be cultivated rather than covered over by the prioritization of everyday rule-based understandings of skill acquisition.

The ZPD as an existentiale? Consequences for Psychology

In this final section, I will consider how the 'existential' ZPD can be considered an existentiale in the Heideggerian sense, and the consequences of such an interpretation for psychology as a discipline. Specifically, I will argue that the 'existential' ZPD is implied in our Being-with, and thereby suggest that any psychology based on a Heideggerian fundamental ontology is always already a cultural-developmental psychology. Moreover, I will argue that this approach overcomes the false dichotomy between 'individuals' and 'culture' that is often set up

in psychological research that alleges a concern for culture. Finally, I will consider some limitations of this theoretical research, and future directions for investigation.

The Requirement for Cultural-Historical Psychology

As implicated in previous sections, an 'existential' ZPD implies that it is an essential element of the Being of *Dasein,* such that the positive modes of solicitude are implicit in the everyday structure of *Dasein* as *Being-with*. That is, *Dasein*'s Being always already implies that we are in relation to others whom we care about, and this care is termed solicitude. Prior psychological research on learning and development typically overlooked the primordiality of our *Being-with* and thereby also the implication that our relationality in light of everyday understanding is existentially prior to our 'individuality.' Thus, while Vygotsky prioritized the interpsychological as the basis for all learning and development, he nonetheless overlooked the more primordial ontological structure of *Being-with*.

As a consequence, mainstream psychology has typically been a psychology of 'individuals' that internalize 'culture' which is measurable both as a variable and as something that shapes the cognitive architecture of individuals. Heidegger's fundamental ontology precludes this view entirely; we are always already 'Being-in-a-world' such that removing an individual from the particularities of their everyday life to study them misrepresents their existence, and thereby obfuscates the *ontic* pursuits that underlie these investigations. An 'existential' ZPD as central to understanding learning and development requires a cultural psychology that concerns itself with fundamental ontology as a basis for its research. As such, a more Heideggerian ontology is necessary to forms the basis of intelligibility for all ontic psychological endeavours. If psychological research characterizes a ZPD in terms of

internalization and mediation, it overlooks a deeper phenomenological interpretation that provides an understanding of the development of expertise.

In mainstream psychological research, there is often a false dichotomy drawn between the 'individual' and 'culture' which separates the person from world, and explains conduct on the basis of worldly features. Conversely, the approach I have developed in this thesis offers a unified approach that, drawing on Heidegger and Dreyfus, views people as always already 'Beings-in-the-world' such that interpreting one as over and against the other obfuscates the 'in-ness' that characterizes human existence. As such, psychology must account for the phenomenology of skill acquisition while prioritizing the 'in-ness' that characterizes human life more broadly. In sum, an 'existential' ZPD implies that we are Beings-in-a-world that we share with others, and thus that we cannot separate out an individual from their world, or prioritize an interpretation that evokes metaphysical assumptions (i.e. cognitivism) or the mediation of our access to the world (i.e. Vygotsky).

Conclusion

This thesis has offered an interpretation of Vygotsky's ZPD in light of the existential-phenomenological accounts of Dreyfus and Heidegger. I have argued that Vygotsky's view of 'higher psychological functions' is better understood as skills that are acquired in a context of normative correction. Moreover, such acquisition involves not an abstraction away from the particulars of the world but an increasing involvement with the concrete situation, such that gradually an expertise within a given skill domain emerges on the basis of a sensitivity to concrete situations and prior experience. I have also argued that this movement of skill acquisition involves a qualitative transformation of the teacher and learner relationship, such that

teachers come to care less about the situation and more about the student who is taking a risk to act in light of a particular situation.

There are a few important limitations of the current research to consider. Firstly, Heideggerian terminology, and particularly his notion of authenticity is slippery and challenging to describe; as such, there is an implicit risk of essentialism in any of these accounts. I have noted that authenticity is not a permanent state, but such an erroneous interpretation is possible due to terminological vagueness and complexity. In addition, Heidegger's fundamental ontology is complex, and my interpretation here intentionally overlooks much of the more technical details in favour of conciseness and precision. As such, while my interpretation is faithful to the text, it is not a reproduction and thus is necessarily open to challenges. Finally, this research, as theoretical research, is not intended to provide an explicit route forward for psychological research practices; my intentions here are to characterize the underlying assumptions of a genuinely cultural psychological interpretation of the zone of proximal development, but not to prescribe or offer an approach to then study such an existential ZPD.

Future research in this area could focus more clearly on the shift between competency and expertise, as individuals abandon rules and expectations they were handed down to them and take over their own existence. The resoluteness that characterizes expertise involves an anxiety that could be further characterized, especially in terms of socialization into more embodied, affective skills. For instance, the process of gendering likely involves a mobilization of a particular affective capacity in light of possibilities handed down from *das Man*; nonetheless, individuals challenge and stylize their gendered expressions. A phenomenological account of such stylization could further illuminate the connection between affect, anxiety, and risk in developing expertise.

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