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# **Vygotsky's Concept of Perezhivanie: Its Philosophical and Educational Significance**

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## Vygotsky's Concept of *Perezhivanie*: Its Philosophical and Educational Significance

1. It often happens that words or phrases from one language are taken up into another. Sometimes they are 'naturalized', becoming part of the language that imports them. But some foreign expressions, though widely used, retain their foreign character. These are often phrases or compound words that resist grammatical integration. Familiar examples in English are *nouveau riche*, *status quo*, *modus operandi*, *persona non grata*, and so on *ad nauseam*. Such phrases are adopted because they strike hearers as particularly apt at capturing some phenomenon and there is no obvious English equivalent or natural translation. So speakers just insert the foreign words into English sentences.

Sometimes we find this phenomenon in theoretical discourse. A term figuring prominently in a theory expressed in language A starts to capture the imagination because it picks out a distinctive phenomenon unrecognized in the theoretical discourse of language B. Usually it is not just that the word or phrase refers to something B-speakers have missed, but because it has conceptual connections and connotations not made perspicuous in language B. The term is integrated into discourse in language A in a fruitful way that has no parallel in B. This makes it difficult to translate, so B-speakers just adopt it as is. Even where there is a translation, the foreign term is often preferred. For example, someone might insist on speaking of *mauvaise foi* rather than 'bad faith' to invoke the distinctive web of conceptual connections and allusions evoked in the original French discursive context.

2. One term presently much discussed is the Russian *perezhivanie*. A number of thinkers inspired by the psychologist Lev Vygotsky have recently made claims about the significance of this notion and its theoretical promise, especially for educational theory (see Fler, Rey and Veresov 2017, and the special issues of *Mind, Culture, and Society* (2016 (23.4)) and *International Research in Childhood Education* (2016 (7.1))). The claims are diverse, but everyone is agreed that the term does not translate easily into English, and so it is increasingly common simply drop the Russian word into English sentences. However, since Russian is not a language that has lent many words to English, most non-Russian speakers will struggle to guess what the term means. So those who use it have to explain it. However, notwithstanding the burgeoning literature (e.g. Blunden 2016; Mok 2017), the concept remains shrouded in mystery (see Kozulin 2016, p. 357). For example, although Veresov and Fler (2016, p. 351) proclaim that '*perezhivanie* is one of the key concepts of cultural-historical [i.e. Vygotskian] theory', on the very same page they concur with Smagorinsky (2011) that it remains 'more a tantalizing notion than a concept with clear meaning'.

This is cause for concern. Elusive concepts that seemingly get at something deep can engender a kind of cultish fascination. As time goes on, they may gain a life of their own, people tire of explaining them, and it becomes accepted that they denote something of critical importance when in fact their meaning remains obscure. So my aim here is to clarify the concept's significance and how best to capture this in English. In my view, we should avoid appropriating the Russian term and find ways that are natural in English to express what the Russian concept is so apt at revealing.

3. The term *perezhivanie* derives from the word '*zhit*' which means 'live', conjoined with the prefix '*pere-*', which means variously 'across', 'under', 'over', 'through' or 're-' or 'again' (so

'*perekhod*' is the name for an 'underpass', 'crossing' or 'overpass'; '*perekhodit*' is the verb 'to cross', '*peredelat*' means 'to re-do', '*peredumat*' re-think, and so on). So the verb '*perezhivat*' conveys 'living through' or 'going through' something. For example, suppose a mother is meeting her 13-year old daughter. The daughter is late and the mother is worried. When she finally arrives the mother says, '*Ya kak perezhivala*' – meaning 'I was so worried', or 'I was really going through it'. Thus the verb is here used to convey a sort of experience, usually involving anxiety, suffering and distress. The focus is not only on the phenomenology. It is important that a specific something is the focus of worry, in this case, the absence of one's child. So the noun form, '*perezhivanie*', conveys an experience, or an experiencing, in the sense of a living-through or going-through something.

It is tempting to think that the term delineates a particular *type* of experience (an *enduring* of something, characterized by emotional turmoil). That is, Vygotsky means to pick out a distinctive phenomenon distinguished from other modes of experiencing. However, I don't think that's the best interpretation. When Vygotsky discusses *perezhivanie* in the 'Problem of the Environment' (1994), he describes the situation of three children with an alcoholic single-mother. He argues that in order to understand how the environment influences the children's development, we have to appreciate how they experience their situation. The influence is not merely causal in the way that the children's development might be influenced by a toxin in the air. The environment affects them in virtue of their respective ways of making sense of their circumstances. In the case of the oldest, this is a complex dynamic, which plays out over time as he struggles to understand and orientate himself within his situation, and to influence it. Vygotsky invokes '*perezhivanie*' to argue for a suitably rich, or 'thick', conception of experience that encapsulates the dynamic development of the child's self-conscious understanding of himself as being-in-the-situation.

4. Let us try to characterize this thick conception of experience, which I shall dub 'experience\*'.

4.1. In Kantian terms, we can say that *experience\** is a unity of spontaneity and receptivity. It is a taking in of the situation by the subject. As such it has content—it is an experience *of* something. In *experience\**, this object is 'given to' the subject, but it is not *merely* given: it is present to the subject only through the mediation of concepts. Moreover, the way it is apprehended and understood is influenced by the subject's existing beliefs and attitudes, fashioned in light of past experience, her dispositions of character, and so on.

In many cases where we apprehend something familiar and unproblematic, we do not confront an issue about how we are to understand the situation before us. So as I sit and write this paper in an office at [redacted] University, my awareness of my immediate environment does not present me with significant interpretative problems. I am equipped with a repertoire of concepts adequate to make sense of my surroundings. This is not entirely so, since, having just arrived from afar as a visiting academic, my surroundings are unfamiliar. The office contains a few objects mysterious to me (*that* must be some kind of computer thingy left behind by a previous visitor; *this* must be the thermostat, etc.). Of course, if we look beyond the perceptual apprehension of my immediate environment to encompass other dimensions of my *experience\** as a visiting scholar, then I quickly encounter rather more problematic issues, such as whether I am meeting expectations, whether I am making a good impression, whether I feel 'at home' here, whether everything is 'going well'. These questions pervade the way I *experience\** my surroundings. However, I generally have the conceptual resources to address all this, it is just

not clear to me what to think. Of course, my experience\* is mediated not just by concepts but by everything I bring to the situation, which includes the influence of past experience, aspects of my personality, temperament, powers of imagination and so on.

In the case Vygotsky considers, the oldest boy initially lacks resources to cope with his situation. He cannot draw on relevant past experience\*, he lacks the powers of imagination and qualities of character necessary to decide how to act, and his grasp on the concepts he needs to make sense of his circumstances is inadequate. In Vygotsky's story, the boy gradually comes to take responsibility for his mother and siblings, by taking over the role of his absent father. In the course of his experience\*, his conceptual resources are enriched in a way that enables him to act. His understanding matures. He now sees what the concept of responsibility asks of him. He understands what it is to be the 'man of the house'. And this understanding is of a piece with his finding within himself the strength of character and the powers of imagination that enable him to perform the role he sees he must play.

So when we say that experience\* involves the unity of spontaneity and receptivity, we need to recognize the dialectical interplay at work as experience\* engenders the development of the subject's conceptual resources, which in turn transforms the subject's experience\*, thereby engendering further conceptual development. And all that plays out in relation to the child's developing personality and powers of mind.

4.2. *Experience\* has essentially evaluative and emotional dimensions.* Its content is permeated by value and emotion. These evaluative and emotional components are not merely projected by the subject onto an evaluatively-neutral object. Rather, experience\* is apprehended as something that contains value for the subject to discover and that warrants certain emotional responses. So the subject experiences\* the object as beautiful or ugly, uplifting or disgusting, noble or contemptuous, etc., and the subject's delight, indignation, joy, anger, jealousy, fear, depression, etc. are understood as responses merited by the character of the object experienced\*.

It is crucial that these emotional and evaluative dimensions are intrinsically part of the experience\* itself. It is not that the real object of experience is, strictly speaking, an object of intellectual apprehension, and the evaluative components are subjective responses that lend value to objective reality. Rather, subjects always-already find themselves in situations which call from them evaluative and emotional responses the appropriateness of which they must discern and assess. Recognizing this helps illuminate the intimate relation between experience\*, action and activity. If the world as I experience\* it calls forth evaluative and emotional responses from me, then experience is not motivationally inert. On the contrary, the world as I experience\* it will demand (or permit, suggest, etc.) that I act in certain ways; my experience\* will require that I do such and such, allow me to do so and so, render this way of acting appropriate and that one inappropriate, and so on. Once again, we see a dialectical interplay: by acting I change the world, and hence change my experience\* and what it calls upon me to do. And, of course, our two dialectical processes are really one: experience\* wrings from me both understanding and action, which in turn changes the situation and my understanding thereof, prompting further transformation on both sides of the subject-object relation.

4.3. *Experience\* is essentially self-conscious*, in at least two respects. First, the subject is necessarily aware of her experience\*. She may misinterpret what she is experiencing, but she is necessarily aware *that* she is experiencing. One might say, experience\* is an object of subjective awareness (though 'subjective' is ultimately redundant).

This is not to say that aspects of experience\* may not influence subjects in ways of which they are unaware. My traumatic experience\* may cause in me dispositions of character which I do not know I have, and if I later become aware of them I may remain ignorant of their cause. However, though elements of my experience\* may not reach awareness, or may exercise unconscious influence, they must be understood as elements of an experience of which I was aware.

Second, experience\* is an object of self-conscious reflection. Indeed, if the object of experience\* is troubling, as in Vygotsky's example, then experience\* will be essentially such as to invite reflection. Subjects will not just be aware of what they are experiencing\*, but of *how* they are experiencing it, of the evaluative and emotional dimensions of the experience\*, and they will self-consciously attempt to make sense of the experience\*. At first, this might be an inchoate struggle, which only later begins to offer illumination as the subject finds the resources to render her experience\* intelligible and to understand how it is appropriate to think, feel and act in its light. (Of course, subjects might resist engaging in self-conscious reflection. But experience\* is *such as to* prompt such reflection, even if it does not do so in some particular case. What needs explanation is why the subject does not reflect, not why she does.)

5. What, then, is experience\*? As I mentioned above, a natural response is to say that experience\* is a particular *kind* of experience; namely, the conceptually-mediated, personality-inflected, emotionally-evaluatively-agentially, self-conscious and reflection-inducing kind. Experiences of this type are to be found in certain particular contexts (e.g. of trauma, turmoil, struggle, suffering, etc.) and lend themselves to certain forms of analysis, therapeutic or phenomenological.

I want to suggest a different interpretation. In my view, experience\* is just experience. We can drop the Asterix. All experience contains the dimensions illuminated in the discussion of experience\*, it's just that the emotional, evaluative and agential dimensions of experience are often familiar, undramatic and unproblematic, and don't pose questions for us that prompt reflection, or at least reflection that is enduring, agonizing and transformative. Sometimes my experience may leave me nonplussed about how to react, but this may not matter. Although the situation as I perceive it is laden with evaluative, emotional and agential significance, there may be nothing much at stake, so its elusiveness doesn't provoke a struggle for meaning. Moreover, even where I recognize that I don't know what to think or feel, I may hold the best course is to relax and be patient: in time things may come to make sense and the issues resolve themselves. Perhaps too much reflection on my experience will only inhibit understanding and impede resolution.

Moreover, to recognize that experience is essentially value-laden, emotion-inducing and action-oriented is not to deny that some experiences may just leave us cold. My drive home from work warrants no particular emotional reaction, I see it as neither good nor bad. Similarly, reading a book or seeing a film might be a profound emotional experience that changes my life in some way, but some books and movies may just leave me indifferent. We should not conclude there are two kinds of experience, the emotionally-laden sort and the indifferent sort. Rather, we should say that experience has emotional, evaluative, agential dimensions, but sometimes they are dialed down, even to zero (though something may occur to dial them up, causing me, e.g., to see the book that once left me cold in a different light).

So my recommendation is that we translate *perezhivanie* as ‘experience’, so long as we work with a thick conception that recognizes the phenomena Vygotsky wanted to highlight. That way, we can wean ourselves off the temptation to insert the Russian term into English sentences, and decisively counter the cultish implication that *only* the Russian will do.

The plausibility of this recommendation can be difficult to see precisely because philosophers and psychologists have often used the term ‘experience’ in a thin and denuded sense to denote perceptual experience understood as the in-the-moment apprehension of the immediate environment. And they posit as the vehicles of experience, sensory representations, which go by many names (‘ideas’, ‘impressions’, ‘sensations’, ‘appearances’, ‘sense-data’, and so on) but which, given the prominence of vision in epistemological discussions, are treated on the model of pictorial representations (something akin to retinal images, only in the mind rather than the eye). Notwithstanding the notorious difficulties individuating and identifying such phenomena, philosophers have been wont to construe perceptual experience as comprised of the apprehension of such perceptual entities (or the apprehension of the world via the mediation of such entities). If we allow ourselves to think of experience as something complex and enduring (a person’s experience of a sunset in the Rockies, for instance), then it is understood as a complex composed of many more fundamental perceptual experiences, conceived as elements of the whole.

A Vygotskian ought to resist such a compositional view of experience and argue that the supposed entities we pick out as the component parts of an enduring experience are not free-standing atoms, but merely abstractions from the whole, upon which they ultimately owe their nature and identity. At present, as I take in the room in which I am sitting, I cannot characterize the parts of my experience out of relation to my experience as a whole. Of course, I can focus in on *that* green cabinet, and make its ‘greenness’ the object of perceptual attention. But it is folly to think I am thereby getting at one of the perceptual simples out of which my experience is composed. Our experience forms a unity and we articulate its parts only by abstraction therefrom. We shouldn’t kid ourselves that the parts have an independent existence.

Once we overcome the tendency to think of experience as so much philosophy and psychology has,<sup>1</sup> we can make better sense of *perezhivanie*, understood not as something we invoke to supplement the traditional conception of experience, but as a plausible alternative to it.

6. In my view, this rich conception of experience is in harmony with Vygotsky’s thinking when he deploys the concept *perezhivanie*. Commentators make much of the supposed differences between Vygotsky’s use of the term in his early *Psychology of Art* (1971), and the later writings ‘The Problem of the Environment’ (1994) and ‘The Crisis at Age Seven’ (1998). It is not uncommon to read that, in his later works, Vygotsky’s treatment in *perezhivanie* marks a transition in his thinking—it is part of his developing interest in semiotic mediation, in a psychology of sense and subjectivity, which Vygotsky never lived to develop, and that is why the concept remains pregnant and mysterious. *Perezhivanie* is thus presented as a potentially fruitful, but ultimately incomplete and underdeveloped notion that Vygotsky perceptively invoked on his journey towards the cultural-historical theory he never managed to articulate. So now it falls to us to continue that journey...

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<sup>1</sup> Though by no means all, of course. Dewey is a notable exception (e.g. 1934, 1938); see also Ryle 1949, McDowell 1994, Noë 2004.

Such readings are fanciful and self-serving. Once we interpret Vygotsky's remarks about *perezhivanie* in light of the rich conception of experience articulated above, it becomes clear that there is continuity between Vygotsky's early and late thinking, at least on this score. A thick conception of experience is precisely what one needs if one is trying to understand the aesthetic experience of, say, an actor working her way into a role, or an audience being transported into the world of the play. In turn, such insights in the psychology of art might be expected to illuminate the nature of pretend play and its role in the psychological development of the child (a classic Vygotskian topic), and as we saw, they bear on how we are to understand the influence of the environment on the developing child. I think Vygotsky appreciated throughout his career that such a concept must figure centrally in any theory of individual development, for it allows us to portray the child's consciousness of herself and her situation as a function of her developing intellectual, conceptual, emotional, attitudinal, imaginative, and evaluative capacities, as well as personality, memory and so on. This is a conception of experience that invites us to see the mind as an organic unity of psychological powers, powers of an embodied agent engaged with the world, so that we might do psychology cognisant of what Vygotsky calls 'the full vitality of life' (1987, p. 50).

7. Let us now consider how this notion of experience might be deployed. In the present context, I propose consider the application of the notion to an issue in education.

Before I begin, however, I want to make a general remark about the application of theoretical concepts in cultural-historical inquiries. Very often, Vygotskian concepts are used to interpret 'data', often taking the form of observations of activity (e.g. classroom activities), or perhaps accounts of activity provided by participants (e.g. a teacher describing her situation, or a transcription of students' commentaries on what they are doing, or of conversation between teachers and students). All too often, the purported analysis simply amounts to a re-description of the material using the concepts in question. So, if we can, say, describe the conversation between teacher and student using the concepts in question, it is assumed that this illuminates the situation under study. Now, sometimes this *is* illuminating—finding the right terms to describe events can be explanatory. But often it achieves little or nothing. We cannot assume that just because we can put something into Vygotsky-speak, we are closer to understanding it. Sometimes, in fact, we understand the phenomena under investigation perfectly well *before* the theoretical analysis and it is only in virtue of that prior understanding that we grasp the sense of the purported analysis. This is particularly true of certain applications of the term *perezhivanie* (see, e.g., Clara 2016, pp. 289–292).

So, when I speak of 'applying' the concept of experience I have something different in mind. Rather than thinking about how we might use it as a tool of qualitative data-analysis, I propose to use it to reinterpret some familiar educational terms of art. At my university, for example, there is a lot of talk about 'the student experience', both in discussions of the university's strengths (e.g. we offer a 'unique student experience') and in discussions of the pros and cons of possible innovations (e.g. such-and-such is desirable because it will enhance 'the student experience'). Now although everyone thinks they know what they mean by 'the student experience', few would be able to unpack this idea in any detail. They can point to some special things about the student experience at [redacted] that differentiate it from other institutions, and they can point to metrics that supposedly indicate quality of student experience (e.g. high retention and graduation rates). But that's about it. Part of the problem is that it won't do simply to enumerate the kinds of facilities and opportunities open to students at [redacted], because what

is at stake is something about the *ethos* and history of the institution, about *what it is like* to be a member of the student body and how all that influences one's 'whole experience' of life at [redacted]. To get a handle on the idea of 'one's whole experience' we need precisely the thick notion of experience I have characterized with Vygotsky's help.

Talk of 'the student experience' is a manifestation of a still broader notion that is in common use, and which is no easier to define. This is the idea of *educational experience*, a term that can be applied to anything from a moment of insight in a lesson to a person's entire educational career (e.g., a person might speak of her educational experience in the UK, which ranges from her entering primary school to her completing her doctorate). For present purposes, let's focus on the concept of educational experience as it might be applied to a course, a module, a lesson, or some mid-sized unit of educational activity. I want to suggest that our thick conception of experience is exactly what is needed to give content to the idea: that is, to understand and evaluate educational experience, we must have in play a conception of the student's evolving awareness and understanding of the object of learning, and of themselves as engaging with the object, which incorporates precisely emotional, evaluative and agential dimensions, in their evolving interplay, and which thinks of educational activity as world-disclosing and situated in 'the full vitality of life'.

The task of characterizing educational experience can be approached in various ways. Our idea might be to articulate a developmental-explanatory account of learning and instruction, an account that attempts to explain the causal preconditions of learning. Or one might have a normative agenda: one's interest might be in the *quality* of educational experience, and one's concern might be to distinguish 'positive' educational experiences from 'negative' ones. If one works with a sharp distinction between description and evaluation, facts and norms, it might look like these are different matters, though of course, it is hard to pursue an interest in the facts of learning without normative considerations entering at every turn. Education is a good, so normative considerations are always in view.

Here I shall focus directly on the normative dimensions of educational experience, and ask by what criteria we should evaluate it. First, I want boldly to suggest that the axes of evaluation should comprise the following interrelated dimensions. We should ask whether the experience is: (i) fulfilling, (ii) enriching, (iii) inspiring, (iv) affirming, (v) personal, and (vi) authentic. An outstanding educational experience will exhibit some or all of these qualities to an appropriate degree and in appropriate balance. An unsatisfying educational experience will be wanting in some or all of these qualities. Second, I want to claim that to understand these criteria, and to grasp their mutual relations, we should operate with the thick conception of experience we have inherited from Vygotsky's discussions of *perezhivanie*.

7.1 To say that an educational experience is *fulfilling* is not merely to say that the learner derives satisfaction from it. Fulfilment is not a merely subjective measure. It presupposes that the outcome of the educational activity is the acquisition of knowledge and/or the cultivation of valuable skills. Whatever the learner feels about the process, it cannot be fulfilling unless its object and outcome are worthwhile, useful, meaningful, illuminating, and so on. The emotional and evaluative dimensions of the educational experience have to be understood in light of the learner's relation to the world and her agency within it.

7.2 The same goes for *enrichment*, where intellectual, emotional and evaluative dimensions are again all in play. And once again, whether some educational activity enriches me is not a merely



subjective matter. It depends upon the value of what is learnt and how it complements my existing knowledge and competencies. At its best, enrichment involves not merely adding to, enhancing and illuminating students' present conceptions and capabilities, but expanding their horizons, so that new and hitherto-unexpected opportunities for learning come into view. Students are enriched by learning x, because it now enables them to learn y. Here I have in mind, not merely an instrumental relation (as when learning to add enables one later to learn to multiply), but of cases where, until one has learnt x, one cannot even see the point or value of y. (So, say, taking a certain course in music might open up to one a world of musical appreciation that was simply not available to one before.)

7.3 An educational experience is *inspiring* if it excites the learner to see beyond the internal logic of the educational moment itself, moving her, say, to study or inquire further, to embrace certain values, take up certain activities, and so on.

7.4 To say that an educational experience is *affirming* is to say that the learner understands herself to have been fulfilled and enriched by the activity in a way that enhances her flourishing, sustains her commitments, stimulates her growth, and contributes to her living a meaningful life. In an education, what we learn becomes a part of ourselves; the learner has to be able to 'make it her own'. This does not entail that all learning must serve to endorse the learner's prior conception of herself. Some learning is genuinely transformatory—but in that transformation we reject our former views or values in order to embrace others that better conform to our evolving conception of ourselves and the world.

7.5 Educational experiences are thus *personal* in the sense that they speak to the learner, who recognizes (or endeavours to recognize) their value and significance, not merely impersonally, but in relation to herself and her life. Of course, this does not imply that these experiences may not happen in consort with other people. Indeed, certain educational experiences will be possible *only* in consort with others. Some things can only be learnt in dialogue with peers, and sometimes students' relation to their teacher is essential to the educational experience. The teacher-student relation is essentially interpersonal, but that does not make it any less personal for the participants.

7.6 Finally, to say that the educational experience is *authentic* is to recognize that it enhances and illuminates in a way that respects the integrity of the object of learning and of norms of reasoning and inquiry. It is important that, in our educational endeavours, we recognize that we are accountable, not just to ourselves and to others, but to the discipline, and ultimately, to reality. This is an important part of what it is to understand oneself as seeking knowledge, theoretical and practical (knowledge of what to think, of what to do, and how to do it...).

It should be clear that my six criteria are not independent components of an educational experience. We can think of them as 'virtues' that together comprise a unity of mutually-enhancing qualities. Whether the list is complete is contestable, as is my characterization of the virtues listed. Moreover, we can expect the question of whether and to what degree some educational experience exhibits these virtues also to be contentious. This is not a checklist of easily identifiable qualities that can form a litmus test for educational excellence. Educational administrators, who like to measure quality, may be disappointed by the complexity of the

picture I have offered. I do not preclude the articulation of metrics that might capture something of this picture: but before one can devise means of measurement one has to know what one is trying to measure.

Much could be said by way of explanation and qualification, but for now I will restrict myself to one qualification. Nothing in this picture is supposed to deny that learning can be difficult, distressing, disorientating, disturbing, and so on, and that sometimes the quality of an educational experience is enhanced by the fact that one achieves one's goals in spite of (or because of) adversity. And this is not just a feature of the emotional-motivational aspects of learning: it may be that a person's understanding of the subject-matter is enhanced by her struggles with it (you don't fully appreciate the character of a philosophical theory unless you appreciate how difficult it is to understand it, and you don't appreciate that unless you have been through the turmoil of trying to make sense of it). So fulfilment, enrichment, affirmation, and so on, do not preclude struggle, from within the midst of which they may seem a long way off. (This is another dimension to the authenticity of learning.)

8. Having parlayed the Vygotskian notion of *perezhivanie* into a recognizable notion of experience, and having used that notion to illuminate the concept *educational experience*, I now propose to reflect on how the insights so far accumulated might be applied to a particular issue: the evaluation of new learning technologies.

There is much discussion about the power and potential of emerging educational technologies. These debates provoke strong feelings, and at the extremes of the spectrum we see, at one end, utopian visions of escaping the constraints of the traditional classroom for the garden of digital delights and, at the other, dystopian speculations about the displacement of teachers by computers and a brave new world of technologically-enhanced learners, who simply upload information directly into implants in their brains.

These extreme positions pose deep and dark philosophical questions (ethics for cyborgs in conditions of posthumanism...), but if we concern ourselves with the evaluation of technologies designed to enhance learning in educational contexts familiar to us, or in recognizable descendants thereof, what tools do we have? We will not be able to find general philosophical arguments against the use of learning technologies. After all, books and blackboards are technologies, and we would now view arguments against their use as absurd. But similarly, there are not going to be plausible general arguments that favour the introduction of new learning technologies. Everything depends on what the technology enables teachers and learners to do, and whether its use enhances or detracts from something we regard as of genuine educational value. So technologies must be carefully evaluated for their particular merits and failings. And this is no easy matter because we often have to confront difficult questions about what is educationally important, and these questions are not easy to treat in the abstract.

I suggest we approach the evaluation of educational technologies by exploring their effects on the educational experience understood in the way I sketched above. Of course, this does not offer a simple test of some proposed technology that will quickly settle the controversy. But it does enable us to ask meaningful questions about the role and value of the innovation in question, and it equips us with resources in which to frame answers and debate the strengths and weaknesses. We must ask: How does this proposed technology contribute to a learning experience that is fulfilling, enriching, inspiring, affirming, personal and authentic? Debating that will bring into view what is really at stake. Indeed, such questions need to be asked, not just

about new technologies, but about existing, familiar ones. The ubiquitous use of PowerPoint in university instruction, for example, might be fruitfully evaluated by these criteria.

9. To conclude. We began by considering the present interest in the notion of *perezhivanie*, as it finds expression in the work of Vygotsky. Because it is difficult to find a single English word to translate *perezhivanie*, the Russian term is now finding its way untranslated into English papers. I argued that this is unfortunate. Better to try to understand the gap that this term is being used to fill. I argued that what it offers is a way of capturing a thick conception of experience—experience as world-directed, but as permeated with emotional, evaluative and agential dimensions, and open to reflective, self-conscious awareness and critical evaluation. I further argued that we should not see this as a distinctive, and perhaps rare, kind of experience. Rather, *all* experience has these dimensions. So we just need to work with a suitably rich concept of experience, abandoning the narrow and denuded notions that have dominated so much philosophical and psychological thinking. I then sought to draw on this thick notion to illuminate the (much used but usually unanalysed) concept of educational experience. I offered an account of the criteria by which to evaluate the quality of educational experience in the form of six interrelated virtues. Having done that, I showed how the resulting conception might be applied to the evaluation of new educational technologies.

Vygotsky's legacy has been rightly influential in educational theory and psychology. However, notwithstanding Vygotsky's intensely philosophical cast of mind, his work has not had a major impact in philosophy of education (though see, e.g., Derry's important recent book (2013), Su and Bellman 2018, Luntley 2018). Bringing the discussion of *perezhivanie* into view promises, I believe, to connect Vygotskian ideas to debates at the centre of philosophy of education (advocates of Deweyan or phenomenological approaches may find much of interest). In any case, I hope to have shown that the Vygotskian concept of *perezhivanie* is rightly inspiring, and it can be freed of the mystery in which it is often shrouded. Such mystery as remains is due to the depths of the phenomenon it denotes: human experience in all its richness and complexity.

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