

VALUES AS A MEDIATIONAL SYSTEM FOR SELF-CONSTRUCTION: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Los valores como sistemas mediacionales en la
construcción del Self: Contribuciones desde una
perspectiva Cultural-constructivista

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Resumen

The text provides the reader with some theoretical reflections on human values in their relationship to self development from a cultural-constructivist perspective. We emphasize that the concept of self has theoretical aspects that need to be explored to advance alternative explanations about values. Our perspective emphasizes the dynamics of duality and inclusive separation of psychological processes taking place between subject and culture, as well as the role of semiotic systems in the emergence, organization, and development of values.

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We will address the development of self, here conceived as dialogical self, as well as how constructive and non-constructive values can enable us to better understand the emergence and role of emotions in human development. Finally, the analysis of certain biographical aspects of a former Colombian guerrilla illustrates and highlights the main concepts discussed throughout the text.

Keywords: Cultural-constructivism, human values, dialogical self, self development

Resumen

El texto presenta algunas reflexiones teóricas sobre los valores humanos en relación con el desarrollo del Self desde una perspectiva cultural-constructivista. El concepto de Self tiene aspectos teóricos a ser explorados para avanzar en explicaciones alternativas acerca de los valores. Enfatizamos en las dinámicas de dualidad y en la separación inclusiva de los procesos psicológicos en la relación sujeto y cultura, y en el papel de los sistemas semióticos en el surgimiento, organización y desarrollo de valores. Vamos a abordar el desarrollo del Self, concebido como Self dialógico. Igualmente, los conceptos de valores constructivos y no-constructivos permiten comprender la emergencia, y el papel de las emociones en el desarrollo humano. Finalmente, presentamos el análisis de algunos aspectos biográficos de un ex guerrillero colombiano que ilustran y destacan los principales conceptos tratados en el texto.

Keywords: Perspectiva cultural-constructivista, desarrollo de valores, Self dialógico, Desarrollo del Self.

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INTRODUCTION

What kind of theoretical relationship may exist between human values and Self construction? The purpose of this paper is to present some theoretical reflections from a cultural-constructivist perspective about human values in their relation to self development. We emphasize that the concept of self has many conceptual aspects which need to be explored and clarified. In order to elaborate on the issue, we present concepts and ideas that may contribute to analyze the relationship between values and self development. Such ideas were developed as we investigated the role of human values in phenomena involving violence, bullying, prejudice, and discrimination in various contexts of our society.

Pragmatism (utilitarianism) and consumerism are dominant perspectives in our contemporary reality. Ethics and moral values linked to philosophical traditions seem to be part of an era that no longer exists. However, ethical and moral principles, with their potential impact on politics and economy, lie at the heart of the improvement of our social models in case we want to create better ways to develop the future of our societies. Hence, it is absolutely necessary to deepen our understanding of highly complex phenomena such as the development of human values, and the construction of the self vis-à-vis the development of society. We will address the development of self, here conceived as a dialogical self, as well as how constructive and non-constructive values can enable us to understand the emergence and role of emotions in human development within cultural contexts such as schools, homes, public settings, and other everyday life situations.

A cultural-constructivist approach will be used as a basis to achieve this goal (Branco, 2012; Branco & Valsiner, 1997; Valsiner 1998, 2006, 2007a, in press). Our perspective emphasizes the dynamics of duality and inclusive separation of psychological processes taking place between subject and culture (Valsiner & Cairns, 1992), as well as the role of semiotic systems in the emergence, organization, and development of values.

Four Theoretical Issues Concerning Values

We conceptualize values as an affective semiotic system that mediates the relationships between the biological emotional aspects of experience (Prinz, 2010), the cultural constructed principles of affective regulation, and the individual's actions and experiences along the course of the developmental trajectory (Valsiner, 2005, 2007a).

Values are an amalgam of affects, cognitions and motivations, related to practices and experiences that emerge along development. They act as semiotic mediators constantly feeding the different I-Positions assumed by the Dialogical Self (Hermans, 2001), and are essential for self development along ontogeny. Values, here conceived as psychological process-like, affect-laden field constructs (Valsiner, 2007a), are indefectibly constructed along relationships between the individual, her/his social partners and cultural contexts. They operate as affective hyper-generalized fields that may help to promote a kind of cohesion among Self-positionings within a psychological domain known as semiosphere (Lottman, 2005/1984), which is found at both subjective and collective levels. Values particularly operate within a zone of the semiosphere that the first author characterizes as the ethosphere (Rengifo-Herrera 2009, 2012). Such semiotic zones are, thus, the cultural contexts within which ongoing psychological processes of the developing individual take place.

The semiosphere is an abstract dimension where all semiotic relations are constructed no matter if collectively shared or individually constructed. According to Lotman (1984/2005), "we have in mind a specific sphere, possessing signs, which are assigned to the enclosed space. Only within such a space it is possible for communicative processes, and the creation of new information, to be realized" (p. 207). In turn, the ethosphere (Rengifo – Herrera, 2012) is a specific, differentiated field of the semiosphere that especially has to do with forms of experiencing reality (from a phenomenological sense), and is particularly charged with strong and significant emotions. In the ethosphere, constructive-social and/or non-constructive-antisocial values are developed, and may change under the influence and participation of both cultural practices and self reflections.

To explain how values arise from relations between subject and socio-cultural context it is necessary to analyze several dimensions of the phenomenon. Four questions need to be considered in order to approach the ontogenesis and psychological status of human values:

First: What kind of explanations does psychology offer on the issue of values?

Second: What could be the biological bases of values emergence and development?

Third: How do cultural constructivist perspectives explain the psychological development of values?

Fourth: How are such relationships expressed? Where can we find them?

Each question corresponds to a topic of discussion and analysis along this paper, which seeks to explore some theoretical notions while proposing a set of conceptual relations to broaden our understanding of the phenomena under study. Below, we address the four issues referred above.

Some Theoretical Perspectives on Values

Currently we can often find media documentaries, websites and even academic information emphasizing the role of biological heritage in human behavior (Haidt & Joseph, 2007, DeScioli & Kurzban, 2009; Hauser, 2006). A lot of available information claims that psychological processes can be understood if we look closer, and study how genes operate, i. e., if we do research on human biological setup. However, it is important to underline that human biology is not sufficient to promote, and therefore explain, the emergence of human values (Prinz, 2010).

In social sciences—and particularly in psychology—the non-dynamic perspectives to study these intricate phenomena are certainly the rule. This usually occurs because the traditional perspective in social psychology is mostly insensitive to developmental issues, in other words,

to the complex dynamics of change and emergence of novelties along irreversible time (Eccles & Wingfield, 2002). Yet, if we are interested in the ontogeny of values, it is necessary to find ways to explain such transformation processes by constructing arguments about the emergence of theoretical novelties.

Similarly, other theoretical traditions have directed their attention to explanations focused on external causes, or environmental conditions, as models developed by behavioral perspectives such as Skinner's or Bandura's in the 60s and 70s (Hayes, Gifford & Hayes, 1998), or explanations built on cognition. Cognitivism is another perspective within the realms of psychology, whose major characteristic is to exclude the analysis of the relations between culture and self. One of the most representative models concerning the issue of values based on a cognitivist perspective is the one developed by Rest & Narvaez (1994). Both elements and processes of the cognitive system are very important in Rest's explanations. According to the author, intra-psychological processes give rise to the construction of dynamical relations, and are affected by constantly receiving feedback from the environment. Cognitive approaches are in close relation with other models and explanations of moral development that especially focus upon its rational dimensions (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1983), as well as with models stressing the role of personality (Damon, 2005). On the other hand, there are theoretical perspectives that overemphasize history and cultural activities to explain the emergence of values (Ratner, 2002).

All the perspectives mentioned above, however, fail to consider the social relational dimension, intertwined with the subjective dimensions of values development, not taking into account the fundamental role of such relationships in the construction of psychological processes, and consequently, not paying enough attention to their important role in the development of values (Branco, 2009, Branco, 2012, Madureira & Branco, 2012).

The last perspective we present here comes from a cultural constructivist approach (Valsiner, 2007a). Cultural constructivism is based on a systemic view (Branco, 2006, 2007 and Branco, Palmieri & Pinto,

2012) that assumes the psychological phenomena complexity, therefore requiring the consideration of all different dimensions involved at both methodological and theoretical levels of analysis. For example, the study of Branco, Palmieri and Pinto (2012) analyses, using a micro-genetic methodological approach, the characteristics and relationships between individualism and developmental patterns of cooperation and competition among peers in preschool children. Theoretical concepts like interdependence, whole-parts relationships, inclusive separation of analysis, subject's agency (Rosa & Gonzalez, 2012), sociogenesis (Vygotsky, 1988), semiosphere (Lotman, 1984/2005) and dialectical relations are all relevant categories for achieving research analytic goals from a cultural constructivist perspective. The theoretical framework is built on the assumption of the sociogenesis of human development, where the developing individual has an active participation in the psychological processes therein involved. Moreover, the theory enables a broader understanding of the emergence, organization, and transformation of psychological processes in general.

The cultural constructivist perspective emphasizes the inclusive separation of psychological processes taking place between subject and culture (Valsiner & Cairns, 1992), as well as the role of semiotic systems in the emergence, organization, and development of values. Accordingly, we conceptualize values as semiotic affect-laden fields that mediate, at a hyper-generalized and beyond verbal level (Valsiner, 2007a), the relations between the biological emotional aspects of experience and the cultural constructed collective and individual principles of affective regulation, for the purpose of establishing ways of conduct organization, as well as the regulation of the flow of the person's experience (Valsiner, 2005, 2007a). More on this perspective can be found later on this article.

Biological Approach to Values

The universal characteristics of human psychological capacities along development are widely referred by most theoretical perspectives on developmental psychology. Such perspectives consider values development as stemming from a kind of universal moral nature. In the same way, universalists claim to have found evidences on the biological origin of morality, i.e., of rules for what is right or wrong in human living ex-

perience (Prinz, 2010). After the advances made by neuropsychological research in the last fifteen years, many researchers focused on genes in order to explain changes in children development, using, for example, linear causal models (McGrath & Johnson, 2003). Nevertheless, the tendency to overestimate the results of such research approach creates the false idea that biological perspectives can provide research evidence to solve most problems of human psychology.

Nativists present their data in academic congresses and in the media, but they still have found no clear evidence about the existence of universal moral rules. As DeScioli and Kurzban (2009) say, “people constantly negotiate which moral rules to observe, but the meaning of these debates depends on the unique and universal implications of moral judgment” (p. 15). Likewise, nativists have quite poor results to show that morality patterns are transmitted genetically (Blair, 1995; Turiel, 2002).

One of the arguments to explain moral nativism is the alleged existence of universal rules to inhibit actions whose purpose is to harm others (Prinz, 2010, p. 371). Threats to harm others not only means recognizing the existence of power relations, but also recognizing the possible use of violent actions. However, scientists have great difficulties in finding evidence on such universal rule because, if on one hand, some cultures prohibit actions that hurt others; on the other there are permissive cultures that accept violence. Prinz criticizes the emphasis on harm avoidance: “Rather than presuming that we are innately disposed to avoid harm, we might say we are innately disposed to take pleasure in other people’s company” (p.375). Throughout his text, Prinz (2010) explains why evidence on the biological bases of morality is overestimated. The central issue has nothing to do with harming or not others, he argues, but is related to our tendency to be gregarious (Prinz, 2010, p. 374). Undoubtedly, gregarious traits are part of the biological heritage of human beings, for the quality of being gregarious enables the development of relational ties. This is very important for the survival of the species, but it is also true that gregarious characteristics can be developed (or not) by cultural systems to promote collaborative relations among people.

Both biological and cultural influences play an important role in the emergence and development of values and morality, but culture seems

to be especially relevant. From a biological viewpoint, nativist researchers link the prevalence of sharing and reciprocity in different cultures around the world with the existence of biological bases for morality. However, there are other explanations grounded in cultural characteristics that strongly suggest the role of sharing and reciprocity. Concerning sharing, for instance, there is a possibility to explain it through the cultural anticipation of the establishment of cooperative relations with others, which is extremely relevant for the survival of social groups.

If an individual shares the things he acquires evenly, he will probably increase the possibility of cooperation from those receiving the benefits of his sharing. In all cultures it is beneficial to give and share in order to establish reciprocal relationships. Cultures demand this sort of behavior taking into account that cooperation is a central issue to the organization of mutually helpful relations. This happens because cooperation leads to the emergence of a collective sense of belonging to a group, which consequently brings up the need to create welfare systems. However, exclusively rational rules are difficult to be internalized, and there are serious doubts that human beings donate to others only based on moral rationalized considerations. What prevail are the socio-affective dimensions of human interactions, built along historical and institutional experiences. Biological legacy, therefore, cannot explain why some individuals share and others do not. Cultural and personal practices and experiences make the big difference.

Undoubtedly, we cannot fail to consider that biology plays a specific role in the organization of psychological dimensions. Moral development very likely is not just a culturally constructed psychological process, especially when we acknowledge the central part played by human emotions and biological dispositions (Branco & Valsiner, 2012). However, the contribution of biology does not need to be related to universal values or moral standards. Rather, we believe that there exist some general structures and patterns of functionality (innately defined) in our species which enable subsequent organization of moral patterns and the configuration of values systems (for example, consider empathy). Although in different ways, both nature and culture participate in the co-construction of individual and collective aspects of values and morality.

Biological tendencies such as gregariousness and complex emotions provide the basis for the development of moral rules and values in specific cultures. Emotions, particularly, seem to be essential for the success of internalization (Bertau, 2008; Branco, 2006; Valsiner, 2007a), as well as for action regulation. A good example is the parental control use of emotions, and how this control is effective to get children to behave in socially desirable ways. Emotions are biological tools culturally regulated by means of overvalued habits which co-construct values, so they have a double bio-cultural nature. In short, evidence favors a complex scenario where biology, culture, and human agency contribute to the development of values and morality. Basic emotional processes and the tendency toward gregariousness and sociability (Maturana, 2002) point to the need to take into account the whole set of constraints and possibilities of the human psychological system to create moral references, rules, feelings and values. Likewise, semiotic dynamics, directly linked to the sociocultural genesis of human development (Vygotsky, 1988), open new venues to explain the emergence of values in the interactions between individuals and collectivities over time. These systemic approaches (Paolicchi, 2007; Rosa, 2007) then set the stage for conceptual relationships between biological and cultural perspectives.

A Cultural Constructivist Approach to the Development of Values

According to cultural constructivist perspectives, values are semiotic fields (affectively disposed) that allow for the establishment of psychological regularities in order to reduce the uncertainty of the context (Palmieri&Branco, 2004). For Valsiner, Branco and Dantas (1997):

values are related to a (...) “feed-forward regulation” that operates under the conditions of irreversible time, literally turning around the better-known feed-back notion to face the future (...) Yet, when irreversibility of time is considered, then the feedback from the result of action Z necessarily reaches the person at time $X+1$, thus constituting a feed-forward (relative to the time when Z was performed), which then provides further feedforward signals (for $X+2$) and so on... Hence the results of human action are always feedforward regulators of either the immediate (next) future moment, or of some (indeterminate) moment of the future. (p. 239).

Signs are the royal road to explain the structuring of psychological processes. But signs also provide an understanding about the process of the co-construction of regulatory systems of emotions and actions. No doubt signs enable regulatory systems with more flexibility and directionality regarding new contexts and relations. Goal orientations and promoter signs are examples of semiotic devices whose objective is to create meaning about unforeseeable experiences, and also mechanisms to anticipate events that can take place in the future. Likewise, these devices are also required to make sense of apparently insignificant facts of everyday life (Valsiner, 2007b, 2008).

Values are symbolically established as affective hyper-generalized fields (field-like) to regulate the possibilities for perception and interpretation of the behavior by individuals. Valsiner proposes the concept of affective hyper-generalized fields to understand the emergence and restructuring of values along life experiences. Such affective fields are hyper-generalized meanings “that have left their original context of emergence and favor new experiences. Thus, a person may develop the notion ‘life is unfair’ from a series of life events of being mistreated” (Valsiner, 2007a, 315). These affective fields emerge from recurrent scenarios at different mesogenetic levels, and give a particular nuance to the subsequent experiences of the individual. They also have regulatory functions, and allow for the organization of phenomenologically powerful experiences that will create a basis for messages and events interpretations, providing for the individual’s relationships with himself and with others.

Values allow actions that contribute to the positive development of both individuals and groups, but also may encourage the emergence of unexpected levels of destruction and violence. Some examples can be found in the acts of racial extermination (Germany and Rwanda), as well as violent political processes (Kosovo War) or wars involving drugs and social problems (Colombian Armed Conflict). This means they can be defined as constructive and non-constructive, although each category relates to each other according to inclusively separation processes. Constructive values promote cooperative actions, solidarity, and common benefits. Sharing, protection and care are examples of

this type of values. Non-constructive values, on the other hand, involve actions that exclude, attack, harm and disrespect the interests of others.

The notion of values as field-like psychological constructs brings out issues concerning meanings variations across the flow of temporality. Values, defined as “affect-laden beliefs associated to affect-laden goal orientations” (Branco & Madureira, 2008, p. 323), are not only systems to regulate actions temporally, but also spatially. Their field-like quality may be associated with spatial functions, interchange, and relational (affective and cognitive) boundaries. Their semiotic layers are the expressions of experiences through which values are favored by affective fields, and are relevant to the processes of internalization and externalization of meanings (Valsiner 2007a, p. 340) pertaining to life and self. Value fields, then, create affective regulations and derive from the recurrence and habituation that canalize development for extended periods at mesogenetic levels, i.e., at the level of cultural practices and activities.

Values, understood as hyper-generalized semiotic fields, may initially appear to be inaccessible and also immutable due to their relative power within the self system. However, some experiences create new emotions and interpretations that transform and recreate personally significant meanings. The stability or change of values semiotic fields are linked to the relations between individuals and contexts. Changes are particularly defined by the reorganization of the anticipated experiences in the future, of socio-historical changes, and the promotion, or absence, of alternative meanings concerning self and others. So, it should be clear that values, as affective fields are not temporarily fixed and they can be modified during the subject's development.

The concept of “promoter signs”, proposed by Valsiner (2007a), can be theoretically productive and related to the concept of values, for they are characterized by “sufficient abstractness that begins to function as guiders of the range of possible construction of future (...) Phenomenologically, these promoter signs are deeply internalized and operate as personal values-orientations” (Valsiner, 2007a, p. 58). Values, as affective fields in close relation to self development, can thus be regarded as promoter signs, which yield personal and social motivations that

have implications concerning the emergence of violence, hostility and bullying, or conversely, the emergence of solidarity and cooperation in the relations between self and others.

In the next section, we will relate the major principles of the Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans, 2001) with the above mentioned theoretical elaborations on values, providing a first contribution linking together values-as-dynamic-fields and the dialogical self.

Dialogical Self and Human Values

The Dialogical Self is a complex network of affects, beliefs, motivations, and practices derived from multiple significant relations and stories, or narratives, told by the individual. Also, with the notion of a Dialogical Self, we can highlight the role of temporal and spatial characteristics involved in its emergence, as well as the diversity and variability of the voices (bakhtinian influence) “that are neither identical nor unified, but rather heterogeneous and even opposed” (Hermans, 2001, 249). The Dialogical Self enables the emergence and the development of affective anchors to become a central reference organizing individual’s narratives (temporal) and creating new relational boundaries (spatial) through the configuration of multiple I-positions.

The Dialogical Self, contrary to a unified psychological structure, is a kind of system (Branco, Branco & Madureira, 2008) molded by powerful forces promoting ad infinitum transformations. Fields (space dimension) and phases (time dimension) are dimensions where the Dialogical Self is constantly created and re-created (Richardson, 2011). Therefore, we can conceive the Dialogical Self as a semiotic system constituted by different I-Positions in space and time that emerge in, and are related to, diverse contexts, emotions, and relationships involving others (Hermans, 2001). Consequently, Culture and Self are not mutually exclusive systems, being both interdependent and indivisible aspects of a same psychological whole.

Such theoretical considerations can now enable us to understand how values emerge, and establish important relations with the diverse I-Positions which raise and change along self development. In fact, the

point we want to make is that values act as a mediational system for self development. As mentioned above, human values create experiential fields to promote the development of affective systems of regulation. Such systems are useful to anticipate/construct future events and experiences, so they lead the person's actions to face the indefinite future. In order to study the emergence of human values systems, and their development, it is necessary to carry out a prospective analysis of the various factors involved in their configuration as powerful mediators of emotions, actions and relations with others and self. Human values can be conceived as semiotic systems that may create a complex system of articulation.

(...) "subjective cohesion" among the different I-positions proposed by the Theory of Dialogical Self. Human values then assume a semiotic integrative role to guarantee stability and "continuity that only disrupts in case of true breaches caused by overarching ruptures at the very core of the person's motivation system. (Branco & Madureira, 2008, p. 323)

This system gives an affective flavor to experiences as a way to deal with the tensions experienced among the I-positions, and the affective dimension works as a ground to create meanings about a sense of identity, enabling the subject to establish a certain degree of consistency in self across time and social relationships.

The semiosis process that lies at the basis of values emergence creates constant transformations of meanings in the subject's relationships with others and reality. Pierce's theory allows thinking about the existence of three major categories regarding the issue of signs: icon, index and symbol. In this respect, time is a central notion to explain how values are mediational systems to regulate the different I-positions.

As seen before, values are hyper-generalized fields whose function is to anticipate the future, and create feedforward mechanisms that allow Self to feel forward. That is the reason why values play a very important role in the affective cohesion, consistency, and stability of the I/Self positions, while fragmentation would occur when values become too

much incompatible with each other. Hence, we argue that values have an important function to create strong links able to reduce the buzzing confusion sometimes expressed in individual's narratives. In short, irrationality and fuzziness that may exist in the developmental pathways of the Self construction are mitigated by the operation of values. So, the Dialogical Self dimension can be also understood as a phenomenological field whereby the subject can distinguish him/herself from others, being able to recognize his/her own historical condition (and contradictions) along the multiple nuances of the ontogenetic flow.

In this article we emphasize, the affective dimension is the cornerstone of all phenomenological experiences and their transformations, and concerning the Dialogical Self, such dimension plays a fundamental role through the prevailing values dynamics that somehow guides self development.

Values, Self, Violence and Peace

In this section we discuss specific situations that exemplify the conceptual relations built so far. Some facts of everyday life are clear examples of the role of values in the emergence of the Dialogical Self, from now on simply referred as Self.

To illustrate our point, we have chosen to perform an analysis of specific segments of León Valencia's autobiographical text. This analysis aims at identifying the different Self positions and narratives that are key to understand the relationship between values and the processes of Self construction. Some studies developed at our laboratory at the University of Brasilia, and others still in development, are based on microgenetic analysis of dialogues, narratives, and Selfpositioning presented by the individual (Freire & Branco, 2010, Freire, 2008). At the moment, we are carrying out an idiographic study in order to analyze the ontogenesis of values based on the investigation of eight to ten years-old boys' semiotic systems, in Colombia and Brazil (Rengifo-Herrera, in preparation).

Murders, bullying, racism, torture and other expressions of violence of non-constructive values are commonly found in contemporary society. Violent, destructive values—meaning values concerning the

legitimacy of accomplishing selfish/group goals through the destruction and harming of other human beings—may have different origins and consequences for the development of society itself. Constructive values, on the other hand, create structural and functional regulators to individuals and groups that allow everybody to live together in relative peace, respecting each other's interests, beliefs and well-being. This may happen when groups legitimate their actions throughout their history as a way of establishing beliefs, practices, and regulatory systems that allow everybody to live in peace.

However, non-constructive values frequently dominate the pathway followed by individuals and groups to solve their disagreements. Such non-constructive and often violent values find reasons to deny equal rights to everybody or every group in the society, creating arbitrary “zones of exclusion” through which they validate and legitimize the dominant group's violent actions (see the concept of a state of exception, proposed by Agamben, 2004).

Although there is a tendency for non-constructive values in our cultural practices, we have chosen an example that illustrates quite the opposite. This case helps to explain the real possibilities of changing value systems throughout the development and the dynamics of the Dialogical Self. This example is based on the life history of an individual who believed in armed struggle and violence as way to politically achieve equal rights in his society. His meeting with strong emotional situations somehow broke apart his violent system of values, based on the imposition by force plus the annihilation of the enemy world view previously held by him. Close encounters with death led him to abandon these non-constructive motivations and gave place to the importance of life as his predominant value to guide his relationships to self and others.

Valencia was a former Colombian guerrilla fighter who is now the director of an NGO (Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris), which investigates and promotes human rights and peace strategies. According to his book “*Mis años de guerra*” (*My years on war*, Valencia, 2008), life was not his main value when he belonged to the guerrilla. For him, the most

important values were social equality, justice and democracy. However, life (especially enemies' lives) was not above such values, or principles.

Leon Valencia was born in the town of Pueblo Rico, located in the coffee growing region of Antioquia. According to his account (Valencia, 2008), at the age of seven he developed a special bonding with reading. After an accident that prevented his father from working, father organized a book club for reading novels, where friends met every evening to read and comment on texts. From seven to 10 years-old, Valencia listened to the readings sitting by the room's corner whenever he had no homework assignments.

During his teenage years, Valencia met some priests who promoted social protest movements in the Southwestern region of Antioquia. His participation in such events helped him to develop humanistic values and a critical appraisal of social reality. His education and his writing activities, then, led him to make contact with the guerrilla group ELN (National Liberation Army), as well as the MOIR (Revolutionary Independent Labor Movement).

Together with revolutionary priests, he learned and practiced the "liberation theology", political movement, which denounced the slavery conditions of Colombian peasants imposed by rich landowners across generations. After reading a book on the history of "*Che*" Guevara, and another entitled "*Proclamations*" (by Camilo Torres) he completely changed his values and beliefs, as well as his life. He radically changed to believe that revolution by way of weapons was the only and best way to promote equality and social justice in Colombia. According to him,

(...) my heart knew what was going in my mind. Until then my life did not give me much of a way out. I was in a remote village, in a faraway country, I was a poor boy, very poor, with a disabled father, and with a mother who spent her life rekindling wood fire and watching cauldrons, but that afternoon I had seen that I could be someone, I could be important for many people, that I could leave a mark in the world" (Valencia, 2008, p. 43). (...) *mi corazón sí entendía lo que pasaba por mi cabeza. Hasta ese momento mi vida*

no tenía muchas salidas. Estaba en una aldea lejana, en un país lejano, era un muchacho pobre, pobrísimo, con un papá inválido, con una mamá que se gastaba la vida avivando fogones y vigilando grandes calderos y esa tarde había visto que podía ser alguien, que podía ser importante para muchas personas, que podía dejar alguna huella en el mundo)

Then one day, when he crossed a river, he was almost killed by gunshots, and from this day on he decided to give up on legality and joined the guerrillas. The only thing he carried with him was an old copy of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, a gift from his dad. As we can infer from his self narrative in his book, affectivity became the psychological solid ground for the emergence of his emotional-cognitive positionings concerning himself and his mission in the world.

However, in the long run the death of his friends and his introspections about the fight conditions, and his own future, also created powerful emotions which ended up changing the values through which he interpreted his contexts, goals and his own life. Valencia argued that “My rupture with violence was radical, worked out by introspection, in the abysmal nights of the mountains” (*Mi ruptura con la violencia fue radical, macerada en la introspección, pensada en las noches abismales de las montañas*) (Valencia, 2008, p. 24). He began to understand that life was above all the arguments he could find for his armed struggle. Having witnessed how his friends’ lives just vanished before him, he realized that nothing could be more important than life, and that armed conflicts had no way out.

I had left the guerrilla ranks because I had understood, through the pain of knowing about my friends’ deaths... that lives we had witnessed were above all other values. It was a change in values domains that led me towards peace.” (Valencia, 2008, p. 29) [Había dejado las filas guerrilleras porque había comprendido, mediante el dolor de saber a mis amigos muertos... que la vida, la que nos ha tocado trasegar o presenciar, está por encima de todos los demás valores. Fue un cambio en la escala de valores lo que me llevó a la paz.]

Valencia’s case illustrates the mediating role (as semiotic regulator) of value systems, and their strong impact throughout development. Emo-

tions, subjective experiences, and the individual's history contribute to values development, which actively participate of the Dialogical Self dynamic re-organizations. Multiple semiotic/emotional psychological systems put in motion complex motivations and values, and, as a result, bring about new forms of affective regulation. Then, affect-regulation systems enable the person to anticipate subsequent emotions linked to his/her future actions. In Valencia's case, the death of his friends and the constant anxiety then attached to violent situations reorganized his motivations, and restructured Valencia's values system. In sum, deep emotional experiences reconfigured his life's goals regarding the imagined future. His previous goals of eliminating the enemies, as the best way to achieve justice gave place to sparing and saving lives along the difficult negotiation of a peace process, and of a democratic society. The new value, according to Valencia, then had an enormous affective impact on his own psychological organization—or on his Dialogical Self, in our terms.

In Valencia's case, the close encounters with death consisted in powerful phenomenological experiences that triggered a kind of affective revolution, which ultimately guided an inversion of values—life/peace over death/war—bringing Valencia to rethink and reconsider his present goals and future achievements. The result was a drastic change in his Dialogical Self that promoted a sharp change in his ontogenetic trajectory. Along this article, we claim that the Dialogical Self is configured across spatial and temporal relations giving rise to I-Positions that relate closely to the individual's value system. Changing of values system, as well as the emergence of new I-Positions are very strenuous processes in psychological experience, involving a lot of intra-psychological dynamics of re-organization via internalization and externalization processes. It also implies the reformulation of personal narratives and the creation of new relational boundaries between self and others, which result in the development of the person's Dialogical Self, and the reorganization of the I-positions. We hope, therefore, to have contributed to demonstrate the central role of values on the individual's dialogical self development as new experiences—and values—emerge along ontogeny.

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