

# Chapter 5

## The Socrates of Modern Psychology: A Historical-Socratic View on Smedslund's Common Sense Perspective



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For more than half a century, Jan Smedslund, has questioned modern psychological practices and why psychologists have been so eager to use empirical research methods in order to discover lawful or regular relations. Throughout his academic career, Smedslund has been concerned about fundamental problems of scientific psychology and believes the domain of psychology cannot sustain empirical generalizations. According to Smedslund, there are no psychological laws governing the intentional domain and the way people live their lives. Whenever a person asks a psychologist for help, the psychologist is faced with the unknown, yet, “these social interactions give the practitioner access to information that is not available from structured interviews, questionnaires, tests, manuals or other ‘one way’ encounters in which the practitioner remains an observer rather than a participant.” (Smedslund and Ross 2014, p. 369).

In several publications (Smedslund 1988, 1991a, b, 1997, 2012, 2015, 2016a), Smedslund has convincingly argued that the domain of psychology is very inhospitable to experiments because of irreversibility, infinite numbers of determinants, social interactivity, and the impossibility of impersonal objectivity. Psycho-logic (PL) is the name of the common sense psychology where Smedslund gives contemporary psychologists an alternative way of acting toward their patients by using their everyday life knowledge. To Smedslund, PL and common sense psychology is dealing with cultural and social phenomena people take for granted about each other and themselves (a la Kant). That is, those things that cannot be improved because they are just taken for granted, such as the common meaning behind a shared language or expression: For example, we respect a “no” for a “no” because the meaning behind the concept is shared and normally respected. We intuitively assume without further thinking that someone is hurt when we hear a person cry desperately, or

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otherwise, we intuitively assume that a person is happy when we hear laughter. However, by investigating these expressions and our own common sense assumptions further, we can improve our understanding of what these expressions entail for this specific person. That is, through systematic reflections and thought experiments, we can turn our common sense assumptions into wisdom and get deeper into the meaning behind a person's "no," a person's cry, and a person's laughter. However, as Smedslund argues, the unique person can never be understood from a number of universal empirical laws. In practice, psychology must always relate to unique persons in a creative way.

Because we are social animals, we have grown up in a culture as part of language communities and have the ability to reflect on ourselves; Smedslund argues that we already, *a priori*, know a lot about each other and ourselves. Hence, rather than a science whose task is to discover regular or lawful relations by empirical means, the task of psychological science must, according to Smedslund, be to clarify psychological common sense and cultural meanings and conditions. Thus, he proposes to use thought experiments and conceptual analysis to clarify and systematize what we all can and must take for granted when we relate to other people and ourselves, such as our fear of pain or need for love, understanding, acceptance, and safety (Smedslund 2004, p. 7). From Smedslund's writing it even seems that we may derive a professionally and scientifically relevant moral stance: It would not only be professionally and scientifically virtuous to try to clarify *a priori* psychological knowledge, but it would also be wrong to ignore this possibility.

Smedslund (2012, 2016b) has not been afraid to provoke and has boldly expressed his rejection of the mainstream clinical emphasis on empirically and statistically based diagnostic systems and fixed techniques. His bold statement is that the strong emphasis on empirical methods and general laws that we find in current psychological practices often lead to unprofitable use of time, money, and labor. He therefore encourages psychologists to stop trying to validate general causal theories for practice by using statistically supported empirical research methods. Instead of reciting familiar rhetoric on how one should think and cope with symptoms, his notion is that the therapist should clarify and systematize their own concepts and engage the patient with an open mind and careful questioning based on psychological common sense.

## Smedslund's Ancient Roots

Epistemologically, Smedslund's discussions point toward the old Cartesian mind–body problem and topics concerning language and logic, scientific ideals, interpretation, and understanding (Joranger 2015). The mind–brain separation relates to the distinction between the nomothetic and idiographic sciences, first outlined by the neo-Kantian philosopher Wilhelm Windelband (1905, 1919). Conceptually, the nomothetic sciences are based on what Kant ([1787]1996) relates to the natural sciences, that is—sciences that can generalize and describe

the effort to derive laws and concepts that *explain* objective phenomena in general. Idiographic sciences are based on the humanistic sciences and what Kant describes as a tendency to specify, that is—our efforts to interpret and *understand* the meaning of contingent, unique, and often subjective phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

A related distinction is made by Ian Hacking (1995) and Kurt Danziger (1997), who separate “natural kinds” from “human kinds.” Whereas natural kinds are defined as something that exists independently of those studying them (e.g., physical objects and biological species), human kinds are described as defined and constituted by the aims, methods, and practices of human agents. Danziger (1997, pp. 191–192) claims that: “Human kinds... are not natural kinds, but neither are they mere legends. They do refer to features that are real. But it is a reality in which they themselves are heavily implicated, a reality in which they are a part.” According to Walsh et al. (2014), psychologists have defined the focal points of their study through this kind of dual thinking. They believe that: “Psychologists with a natural-science orientation typically emphasize the prediction and control of behavior (...). Psychologists with a human-science orientation generally stress *subjectivity* (...)” (Walsh et al. 2014, p. 6).

Smedslund positions his critical views on modern psychology as belonging to the ideographic sciences dealing with language, meaning, and subjectivity. Despite his strong rhetorical and logical argumentation, and despite being one of Norway’s most cited psychologists internationally, in his home country he is regarded as an rebel. However, Smedslund’s thoughts have not developed like mushrooms from the earth. His theories are extensions of and in continuity with several critical scholars of his time. Intellectual traditions in critical psychology (cf. Brunswik 1956, 1942; Danziger 1997; Hacking 1995; Kvale 1992; Richards 2010; Robinson 1986; Rose 1990; Rose and Abi-Rached 2013; Taylor 1989; Teigen 2002; Tolman and Brunswik 1935), social psychology (cf. Gergen 1973; Harré 2012, Martin and Sugarman 1999, Moghaddam 2003), and cultural psychology (cf. Bruner 1990; Shweder 1991; Valsiner 2014; Vygotsky 1978),<sup>2</sup> are in many ways concerned with the same or related questions that are raised by Smedslund.

Looking back at the history and philosophy of psychology, Smedslund’s theoretical notions and his tireless explorations, lead back to ancient time. In the history and evolution of Hellenic thought, we find two tendencies of inquiry, one dealing with what one today would call natural science, that is, the objective manifestations of the universe, and what one today would have called human sciences, that is, the study of mind, language, and meaning. To the former class belong Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, and their attempts to discover principles for the explanation of natural phenomena. The pioneering Greek thinker, Socrates, however, belongs to the other group. Socrates’ way of revealing psychologically relevant conditions by defining and asking questions about language and everyday life, without any empirical investigations, makes him one of the fathers of psychology

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<sup>1</sup>For American psychology, the terms idiographic and nomothetic were introduced by Gordon Allport in his work *Personality: Psychological Interpretation* (1937).

<sup>2</sup>The traditions are overlapping and not clearly delimited.

and the grandfathers of modern psychopathology, and the first who attempted to study human beings from the point of view of subjectivity.<sup>3</sup>

In the words of Snider (1903, p. 216), “In Socrates, the human mind burst forth into knowing itself as thinking.” To Socrates, and one may argue that it is also implied by Smedslund’s stance, neither the experience nor the language of specialty can be explained without taking into account how people live their lives. Thus, how people live their lives cannot be removed from the explanandum which requires that the persons involved go into thoughts experiments directed toward themselves and their nature. Zeller (1877, p. 116) very thoughtfully remarks:

The interests of philosophy being thus turned away from the outer world and directed towards man and his moral nature, and man only regarding things as true and binding of the truth of which he was convinced himself by intellectual research, there appears necessarily in Socrates a deeper importance attached to the personality of the thinker.

Like Socrates, as he is presented in the respective dialogues of Plato and Xenophon, Smedslund may best or advantageously be portrayed as approaching problems relying on “the dialectic method,” “the concept of virtue,” the notion “know thyself,” as well as the metaphoric notion of “midwife.”

## The Dialectic Method

In Socratic philosophy, the “dialectic method” occupies a lofty position emphasizing reflective questioning and thought experiments, and Aristotle characterizes it as the induction of reasoning and the definition of general concepts. By the dialectic method Socrates penetrated deeply into human nature and experience, and Gomperz (1906) speaks of the great zeal that Socrates exhibited in this method. He believes that a life without cross-examination, that is, without dialogues in which the intellect is exercised in the pursuit of truth, for Socrates is a life not worth living. Schwegler (1877, p. 75) pertinently asserts “that through this art of midwifery the philosopher, by his assiduous questioning, by his interrogatory dissection of the notions of him with whom he might be conversing, knew how to elicit from him a thought of which he had been previously unconscious, and how to help him to the birth of a new thought.”

Briefly stated, the dialectic method is divided into two parts, the negative and the positive. The former is known as the Socratic irony. By this method, the philosopher takes the position that he is ignorant and endeavors to show by a process of reasoning that the subject under discussion is in a state of confusion and proves to the

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<sup>3</sup>The source of information regarding the biography of Socrates and his philosophy comes from two authors, Xenophon and Plato. The former portrays him as a moral philosopher and in his book, *Memorabilia* (Xenophon 1897), he seems to eulogize his master. The latter however presents him as a thinker, and it is maintained by many critics that Plato put into the mouth of Socrates his own ideas. It is lamentable that this great philosopher committed nothing of his monumental work in writing.

interlocutor that his supposed knowledge is a source of inconsistencies and contradictions. On the other hand, the positive side of the method, “the so-called obstetrics or art of intellectual midwifery” (Schwegler 1877, p. 741) leads to definite deductions. To illustrate the two phases of this method, the following example may be taken. A youth of immature self-confidence believed himself to be competent to manage the affairs of state. Socrates would then analyze the general concept of the statecraft, and reduce it to its component parts, and by continuous questions and answers would show to this supposed statesman that he was lacking true knowledge. Again, a young man of mature judgment, but of an exceedingly modest temperament, being reluctant to take part in the debates of the Assembly, Socrates would prove to him that he was fully competent to undertake such a task.

Like Socrates’ dialectic method, Smedslund’s method is divided into two parts, one negative and one positive (Smedslund 2004). The negative part is provocative and takes the position as ignorant to show by a process of reasoning that the discussed issues are in a state of confusion, inconsistency, and/or contradiction. Like Socrates, through thought experiments and by questioning those who believe that the psychological domain sustains empirical generalizations and fixed techniques, Smedslund make it clear that every person is unique and cannot be reduced to general laws and diagnosis. By analyzing the general concept of “science” and the general concept of “person” and “context” etc., Smedslund finds that one cannot predict a person from any general laws, or place a person under any diagnostic system, or treat a person with any fixed technique. A person must instead be understood in accordance with social rules and by way of clarifying the logic of meanings, and not by causal laws. Finally, everything a person does is sensitive to context and consequences. Hence, by changing context and/or perceived consequences, acting and experience can always be changed. The resulting uniqueness of persons and their contexts means that what persons do cannot be predicted by any general theory, incorporated by any general empirically based diagnostic system, nor dealt with by any general fixed techniques.

The positive side of this method is that one should begin to understand, predict, and deal with people by means of a calculus embedded in all human languages. “The calculus is a formalization of implicit common sense” (Smedslund 2004, p. 7). To Smedslund, one must rely on what follows from the meaning of words, sentences, and nonverbal acts, and one must be open to and deal with the ever-changing uniqueness of the persons and situations one encounters. If someone asks: How can there be a science and a profession dealing with persons, if persons are so changeable and unique? Smedslund would explain to the questioner that people are very predictable because they speak the language and follow the social rules of their group or culture. Since language is shared, we can predict innumerable things about every competent speaker. “For example, everyone will answer, ‘yes’ to the question ‘Is a dog an animal?’” (Smedslund 2004, p. 8).

Smedslund (2004) refers to the Polish linguist Anna Wierzbicka and colleagues (Goddard and Wierzbicka 1994; Wierzbicka 1992, 1996) who claim that there are many basic psychological concepts embedded in any ordinary language, which also appear to be lexically presentenced in all human languages, something that may

make psycho-logic a transcultural framework for psychology. Among these concepts are: “I,” “you,” “can,” “know,” “think,” “want,” “feel,” “good,” “bad,” etc. These concepts relate to each other in definite ways, e.g., what a person “feels” in a situation follows from that the person “thinks” and “wants” in that situations. By investigating these and other concepts, one can describe, explain, predict, and control what persons do, “given information about her situation.” (Smedslund (2004, p. 8). By this follows that even though the content of psychology does not allow for general causal laws, the existence of a common conceptual basis for human languages and cultures makes it possible, to some extent, to describe, explain, predict, and control what persons do.

In Smedslund’s book from 2004, *Dialogues about a New Psychology*, we are witnessing several different dialectical dialogues between the psychologists Manny, Adam, and Eve. Like in Plato’s dialogues, they are using thought experiments and examples from everyday life to challenge regular psychological concepts in such a way that they all become illuminated and changed. In one of their discussions (Smedslund 2004, pp. 236–239), Manny and Adam discusses the relationship between psychological praxis and scientific research.

Manny says:

A colleague of mine recently asked me ‘How can you do research without having variables and without quantitative estimates of outcomes?’ The question was a reminder of what my mainstream colleague takes for granted. To answer it, the only option is to reject the question itself and its underlying presupposition. So I replied, “If by ‘research’ you mean ‘experimental empirical research where you vary one factor, keeping others constant and observe the variation in the dependent variable,’ then the answer is given, and I agree with you. You must have variables and you must have quantitative estimates of outcomes. However, as we have tried to show, the domain of psychology is not very suitable for this kind of research. The deepest reason is that the domain is pre-structured, that is, it must be described in terms of the language of the person investigated. This again means that plausible, subjectively convincing general hypothesis tend to be true, and implausible, subjectively unconvincing general hypothesis tend to be false. The only remaining place for empirical procedures is the testing of local assumptions and procedures. Maybe this should not be given the prestigious title ‘research,’ but should rather be called ‘checking and double-checking,’ ‘testing,’ ‘controlling,’ etc.

To this, Adam replies:

Even so, I think it is impossible to stop making quantitative estimates, especially when it comes to conclusions and outcomes. For the proses, for example, of social policymaking, we need to know how many are profiting how much from a certain treatment program compared to a control group. We need to know probabilities. This is true irrespective of whether or not a treatment program is based on previous empirical evidence or on deduction form premises that must be taken for granted, that is, psycho-logic.

And Manny replies:

At first, both may appear to be subsumable under the conventional hypothetic-deductive model. However, as we have discussed many times, this is not so. The mainstream approach is based on counting, and hypotheses are both generated and tested by observed differences and correlations. This is a strategy for exploring the unknown and meaningless. The new approach is based on explication meanings and deriving implications from them. This is strategy for exploring what is already tacitly known.

During the discussion, Manny and Adam come to a clearer view of the differences between the old and new psychology as having to do with rejection versus acceptance of language-based knowledge. They both agree that language has made us describable, explainable, predicable, and controllable to each other and that psychology can capitalize and build on this, as a systematization and simplification of what we take for granted in the form of the axiomatic system of psycho-logic. They also seem to agree that humans are constituted by social rules that exist independently of us as individuals. What we know about ourselves in a more general sense follows from that we are human and members of a linguistic and cultural communities. The rest of our knowledge is specific and concrete. It may thus be thought strange to label psychological knowledge as scientific, as neither a priori psychological knowledge nor the specific and locally relevant knowledge of unique persons and groups of persons has ordinarily not been acknowledged as scientific. However, to the extent that psychology is a science, this must change.

The example shows that Smedslund's method presents two striking tendencies; one destructive, the other constructive; the former annihilates erroneous conceptions, and the latter aids the building up of functional concepts representing common sense and everyday life. In a broad sense, the dialectic method bears some resemblance to the psychoanalytic, inasmuch as both seek to analyze human nature in the light of individual experience; to find the ultimate and predominating truth underlying such an experience; both attempt to make the individual realize the extent of his limitations and capacity of adjustment by subordinating the antagonistic forces and at the same time aiding the construction of a world of healthy concepts.

## Conception of Virtue

Virtue is knowledge because all living things aim for their perceived good; and therefore, if anyone does not know what is good, he cannot do what is good because he will always aim for a mistaken target. However, if someone knows what is good, (s)he will do what is good, because (s)he will aim for what is good. This is the argument presented by Xenophon in his *Memories of Socrates* (iii, 9, 5). What Socrates maintained was that true virtue must depend upon knowledge about one self and other, through rational reflections and thought experiments. Socrates' thesis "Virtue is knowledge" has the consequence that the one who knows what is good, does what is good, or in other words, the good practitioner is the wise and virtuous practitioner. However, that may apply only when a rational choice is made, for I may also do "the very things I hate" under the unchecked impulse of a bad habit or instinct, not only from ignorance of the good. In short, to Socrates knowledge is the root of moral action, and, on the other hand, lack of knowledge is the cause of vices. In other words, no human being or therapist can voluntarily pursue evil and to prefer evil to good would be foreign to human nature. Hence, in the Socratic sense, in the unconscious lies the root of antisocial deeds, and, as Forbes (1978, p. 191) puts it: "Socratic



view of sin, in fact, keeps it in a region subliminal to knowledge. The sinner is never more really than an instinctive man, an undeveloped, irrational creature; strictly speaking, not a man at all.”

In the *Meno* (Plato, 380 B.C.E. 1994–2009),<sup>4</sup> Socrates argues further that no one knowingly desires what is bad (*to kakon*). His argument shows that by “bad” he means things that are harmful to the subject, i.e., the one who would desire these things. It is not in human nature for someone to wish to go after what (s)he thinks is bad in place of the good. We can understand this claim in positive terms. Virtue is the chief psychological good; wrongdoing destroys virtue. Therefore, Socrates’ strong commitment to virtue reflects his belief in its value for the reflexive mind, as well as the importance of the soul’s condition for the quality of our lives.

Since Socrates identified virtue with knowledge, it is evident that education, environment, religion, and conventionality are the determining factors in the cultivation of the conscious. “What may be called institutional virtue,” writes Snider (1903, p. 248), “is for Socrates the fundamental and all-inclusive Virtue, the ground of the other Virtues.” As such, Socrates believes in the common value of the state, he obeys the laws, performs his duties as a citizen. However, this does not hinder him from seeing defects in the existent state and its laws, and trying to remedy them. Indeed, his whole scheme of training in virtue is to produce a man who can make good laws, and so establish a good state. “What is Piety?” he asks, “not a blind worship of the gods, but worship of them according to their laws and customs, which one must know.” (Snider 1903, p. 249). That is, one must know the law of the thing, the time of mere instinctive action and obedience is past.

Compared to Socrates, though Smedslund never uses the notion of the state, he does highlight the common sense of any human citizen belonging to a community. True psychological or therapeutic virtue thus depends upon culture and common sense, and common sense is regarded as a power of human beings that cannot be overturned by empirical inquiries. Hence, common sense encompasses good therapeutic practice as well as good political practice, and opposite; the lack of common sense implies absurdity. According to Smedslund, we can as human beings reflect upon our own psychological concepts and thus come to an improved understanding of what we can and must take for granted about human beings. Psychologists relying on statistically validated empirical generalizations, whether being unwise practitioners and/or mainstream researcher uncritically complying with the current scientific paradigm, can in this sense be compared to an instinctive individual, who does not adapt to the unique persons, and/or the situations, involved by aid of reflective reasoning about what may be possible and impossible for individuals in various situations.

As for Socrates, Smedslund praises the value of common sense, still, that does not prevent him from challenging the institutional virtue, which for Smedslund, in

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<sup>4</sup>Meno (/ˈmiːnoʊ/; Greek: Μένων, Menōn) is a Socratic dialogue written by Plato. It appears to attempt to determine the definition of virtue, or areté, meaning virtue in general, rather than particular virtues, such as justice or temperance. Socrates introduces positive ideas: the theory of knowledge as recollection (anamnesis), among other.



some sense, represent the positivistic mainstream psychophysical knowledge. To Smedslund knowledge is dependent on context, culture (conventionality) and common sense knowledge, which for him constitutes the all-inclusive virtue. This all-inclusive virtue is thereby the determining factor of knowledge and conscious mental phenomena. When intellectuals in modern democracies constitute a community of cultural critics, according to Smedslund, psychologists have rarely seen themselves that way, largely because they are so caught up in the self-image generated by positivist science. Psychology, in this view, deals only in objective truths and eschews cultural criticism. Smedslund's point of view is that scientific psychology will fare better when it recognizes that its truths, like all truths about the human condition, are relative to the point of view that it takes toward that condition. It is where psychology starts and wherein it is inseparable from anthropology and the other cultural sciences, psychology then, needs explaining, not explaining away.

To Smedslund (2004), the wise researcher and the wise practitioner will feel at peace and at the height of their practice if they manage to contextualize themselves and their practices because there will be harmony between what he or she does as a professional, and his or her experience of life as human being. The new, wise, and peaceful practitioner will then have the virtue to know oneself and others and to work as what Claude Levi-Strauss called a bricoleur, that is, someone who creatively utilizes whatever possibilities are available in each unique case to solve the problems, but always relying on the calculus of psychologic (cf. Smedslund 2012, 2016a, b).

## Know Thyself

The great Socratic maxim, "Know Thyself," is one of the strongest moral precepts in ethics and therapeutic practice. Although the sophists had already called attention to the fact that "man is the measure of all things," however this applied to the individual and not to human nature in general. "But Socrates proclaimed that this self-knowing Ego knows itself likewise as object, as the principle of the world, in which man is to find himself in order to know it." (Snider 1903, p. 234) To know one's self implies calmness of self-possession, fearlessness, and independence. Furthermore, it leads one to a striking realization of one's limitations and shortcomings, which form the foundations of success, and, as Forbes expresses it, "in this self-knowledge is the secret of blessing and success in the handling of human affairs, and right relationship with others." (Forbes 1978, p. 173).

Socrates, such as he is rendered in *Memorabilia* (Xenophon 1897, vol. II, book IV), discusses his maxim with Euthydemus. Through thoughts, experiments, and examples from everyday life, the discussion gives a clear and comprehensive idea of the subject matter:

"Tell me, Euthydemus," Socrates says, "have you ever gone to Delphi?" "Yes, twice," replied he. "And did you observe what is written somewhere on the temple wall, Know Thyself?" "I did." "And did you take no thought of that inscription, or did you attend to it,

and try to examine yourself to ascertain what sort of a character you are?" "I did not indeed try, for I thought that I knew very well already, since I should hardly know anything else if I did not know myself." "But whether does he seem to you to know himself, who knows his own name merely, or he who (like people buying horses, who do not think that they know the horse that they want to know, until they have ascertained whether he is tractable or unruly, whether he is strong or weak, swift or slow, and how he is as to other points which are serviceable or disadvantageous in the use of a horse so he), having ascertained with regard to himself how he is adapted for the service of mankind, knows his own abilities?" "It appears to me, I must confess," says Euthydemus, "that he who does not know his own abilities, does not know himself." "But is it not evident," Socrates replies, "that men enjoy a great number of blessings in consequence of knowing themselves, and incur a great number of evils, through being deceived in themselves? For they who know themselves know what is suitable for them, and distinguish between what they can do and what they cannot; and, by doing what they know how to do, procure for themselves what they need, and are prosperous, and by abstaining from what they do not know, live blamelessly, and avoid being unfortunate."

By gaining knowledge of yourself, Socrates (in Xenophon 1897, vol. II, book IV) believes that human beings can form an opinion of other human beings, and, by our experiences of the rest of humankind, obtain for ourselves what is good, and guard against what is evil. But those who do not know themselves, but are deceived in their own powers, are in similar case with regard to other human beings, and other human affairs, and neither understand what they require, nor what they are doing, nor the character of those with whom they connect themselves. Being in error as to all these particulars, they fail to obtain what is good, and fall into evil. On the other hand, they who understand what they take in hand, succeed in what they attempt, and become esteemed and honored.

In the *Dialogues about a New Psychology*, the three participant Eve, Adam, and Manny discuss the meaning of knowing yourself in order to understand another person under the mantra "If you do not understand something, move closer." (Smedslund 2004, pp. 144–147) Moving closer means in this case to get to know a person more completely. It refers to the quality, content, and scope of the interaction. A person can only know another person through an encounter. This involves focus also on the psychologist's person and strategy because what comes out of an encounter depends on both participating persons.

Quality refers to the degree of openness that depends on the degree of mutual trust of the participant. Content refers to the centrality and relevance of the topics covered, and scope refers to the context of the encounter. (Smedslund 2004, p. 144).

Moving closer and knowing yourself is as such a matter of establishing trust. But it is also a matter of courage. In everyday life, the danger from the other one is always there. But also in professional work moving closer is risky. It will not do for you as a psychologist to remain closed and impersonal because this makes it hard for the client to trust you, not knowing who you are. On the other hand, the psychologist cannot just expose herself in the same way as the client does.

In the discussions (Smedslund 2004, p. 146), Adam says:

I know practitioners distinguish between being personal and being private, but exactly what is this?

And Eve answers:

The distinction really builds on the distinction between being 'on duty' and 'off duty' is to be professional, which is, having promotion of the client's best interest as one's superordinate goal. At the same time as being professional, one must move closer, and this entails placing oneself at risk. (...) Case study methodology, using open questions and repeated sessions, as well as being open yourself, helps you to move closer in order to determine what the person wants, thinks, feels, can and does. But even more important is the knowledge that concerns the interactive qualities of the person. A person interacts with other persons. Knowledge about this can only be gained through close encounter. The psychological researcher and practitioner are, or should be, capable of engaging in such encounter in a professional manner.

The virtues, which Socrates and Smedslund emphasize in their dialogues including courage, common sense, piety, and self-control, are continually relevant in our societies and embody some of the key attributes we continually strive for. But also of importance is the emphasis on knowing yourself. To truly know yourself means self-possession, fearlessness, and independence. It enables a person to come to terms not only with his/her limitations but also with his/her potential, which can lay the groundwork for success and realistic therapeutic goals. If a person, be it a psychologist or a patient, does not keep watching over him/herself, forestalling the irrational inclinations to wrongdoing, (s)he will impulsively do what is evil toward him/herself and other, even if (s)he rationally knows what is good. To help another person to gain self-understanding is therefore of high importance and should be a psychological and ethical goal in the therapeutic setting. Using Smedslund's common sense psychology in his doctoral thesis about the psychology of self-esteem, the Norwegian psychologist Waldemar Rognes (1996), clarified that people who systematically have been neglected with ignorance, hostility, and unwontedness, tends to have low self-esteem and self-understanding, and a correspondingly high need to be met with respect, care, and wondering, in the therapeutic setting. Broadly speaking, Smedslund and Rognes view is that any therapist who relies on randomized studies and statistics risks missing out upon various person's unique subjective needs and thereby also fail their ethical and psychological duties as a therapist.

## Common Sense

The phrase "a common point of view as to the general nature of psychology" is and has been critical; it turns out to have both strong positive and strong negative results or connotations; it means the widening of the horizons of psychology, as well as the erection of a barrier to the acceptance of these views. By this statement, Smedslund brought himself within the purview of Thomas Kuhn's "structure of scientific revolu-

tions,” as described in his book of that title (Kuhn 1962). That is, on the positive side, Smedslund declares himself to be radical and more than “normal scientists,” as Kuhn would say it; he has announced himself to be revolutionary. But revolutionaries are unwelcome in science unless they first provide results that lend credence to their views.

The challenge a psychologist meets when (s)he wants to be faithful to subjective experience is to construct a method by means of which reality as we live it is not exchanged for reality as it conforms to a readymade worldview. What Smedslund tries to tell us is that when we turn to experience and learn what it may have to teach us, we cannot do so by a scientific method constructed to exclude it. The wise practitioner, who acknowledges this, must follow his/her common sense, which in the therapeutic sense is an ethical and virtuous duty. Putting Smedslund’s psycho-logic and common sense psychology into ethical considerations, a psychologist who holds high ethical and virtuous standards will always try to clarify a priori psychological knowledge in their approach to another human being. The upshot is that there are few fixed regular relations to be found by empirical methods. This is because any study of persons is also inquiry into the necessarily various, ongoing, dynamic processes of interaction. Nevertheless, meaningful distinctions can still be made between sociocultural practices and individual psychological experiences. It is through this never-ending sociocultural transformation that Smedslund’s new psychology and bricoleurial method must be lodged.

What impresses me deeply is Smedslund’s uncompromising intellectual sincerity and his courage to think through the consequences of his ideas carefully, and to speak out in public even when the scientific community does not want to listen and makes him pay a price for maintaining these standards. Smedslund’s struggle as an academic is, in my view just like Socrates, about maintaining ethical and virtuous standards and intellectual integrity in a scientific community in which his ideas fell on hostile ground held by ignorant troops. Great thinkers often learn, to their surprise, that new ideas are less than welcome. Nevertheless, the virtue of “knowing yourself” continue to be relevant today; it does not only represent an important ethical facet of life when it comes to mental health and therapeutic work, but also to psychology as a science and academic discipline.

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