

Annals of Theoretical Psychology 13

Jaan Valsiner
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Tatsuya Sato
Virginia Dazzani *Editors*

Psychology as the Science of Human *Being*

The Yokohama Manifesto

 Springer

Psychology as the Science of Human *Being*

Annals of Theoretical Psychology

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Editors

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Preface

What is changing in psychology?

We think that psychology as a science is—once again—at a crossroads. As it has happened recurrently in the past, it is about to lose its appropriate focus—that of the subjective domain of the human being (the *Psyche*) that is an immediate component in the arena of living—involving all the activities of *being human*. Being ourselves—as human beings—involves happiness and sorrow, hopes and failures, endless searches of “who am I,” and developing sellable tools for helping others as well as destroying them. Both construction and destruction are parts of being human—poetry and cruelty go hand in hand in our lives.

The human *Psyche* is complex, subjective, meaningful, and mysterious. As such, it cannot be reduced to explanations that consider it accounted for by causal mechanisms of lower levels of organization. Thus, the efforts to reduce higher-level psychological functions to physiological or genetic “causes” violate the hierarchical systemic structure of the totality of human beings. That system is organized at multiple levels—all of which are related, yet in ways that are functionally non-causal. Each level is simultaneously participating in the organization of adjacent levels as well as buffering against the potential malfunctions of these levels. The result is a highly resilient open system that depends on the processes of constant relating to the environment. These processes are not in any way “caused” by direct environmental “influences,” nor by “genetic factors.” These processes are basic for all living systems. Higher levels of organization of the psychological phenomena are *related to* physiological and genetic levels—but *not determined* by them.

Nobody doubts that genetic, anatomical, and physiological levels of organization are important in providing the basis for higher psychological functions. But these levels can provide evidence only about the basis of the *Psyche*, not its inherent functioning which is subjective in its phenomena. Yet that subjectivity is organized by basic, objective organizational forms. Psychology studies the *Psyche*—and can only be helped, but not substituted, by knowledge from the lower levels (studied by neurosciences) or organizational levels above the psychological (sociological, political-economic, etc.). The phenomenon of the *Psyche*—human being in all of

its subjectivity—is an organizational level in its own right. The science of psychology deals with the organization of that level.

The problem is that of meta-level aspirations of psychology as a discipline. Psychology, in its social presentation as science, has arrived into the twenty-first century in a state similar to that of hundred years ago. It has been very successful—but mostly in its self-defeating ways of reducing its deeply subjective object—the *Psyche*—to various material (genetic, physiological) or legalistic (social rules, texts) alternate objects. All this happens in its fight to prove it is a science—by external social and commonsense standards of looking “scientific.”

It is precisely the claim that the psychological level of analysis is scientifically legitimate in its own terms that this work is set up to defend. Psychology today is in the process of being taken over by the seeming successes in the neurosciences—with psychological phenomena reduced to physiologically and even genetically proposed explanations. We have seen such efforts before—the 1913 “Behaviorist Manifesto” succeeded in stifling the theoretical progress in psychology for a century. Our effort is to go beyond the detrimental impacts of that turn in the history of psychology. The “Yokohama Manifesto”—to be unveiled at the International Congress of Psychology in Yokohama in July 2016—is a starting point to restore the role of higher psychological functions as the central object of psychological science. The contributions to the present volume constitute the basis for the international and interdisciplinary synthesis that will be further developed in Yokohama. It is an explicit statement against losing the focus of psychology as science to the contemporary fascination with neurosciences or genomics having answers to basic human questions of psychological kind. They cannot—the qualitative nature of the psychological phenomena is different from their objects of investigation.

This volume brings together a representative selection of specialists from around the world who are all working in turning psychology into a science of human ways of being. *Being* refers to the process of existing—through construction of the human world—rather than an ontological state. The volume includes work that is to establish the newly developed area of cultural psychology as the general science of specifically human ways of existence. It is a next step after the “behaviorist turn” that dominated psychology over most of the twentieth century, and like its successor in the form of “cognitivism,” kept psychology successfully away from addressing issues of specifically human ways of relating to their worlds. Such linking takes place through our intentional actions: creation of complex tools for living, entertainment, and work. They construct tools to make other tools. Human beings also invent religious systems, notions of economic rationality, and legal systems. They enter into aesthetic enjoyment of various aspects of life in art, music, and literature. They are capable of inventing national identities that can be summoned to legitimate one’s killing of one’s neighbors, or being killed oneself. The contributions to this volume concentrate on the central goal of demonstrating that *psychology as science needs to start from the phenomena of higher psychological functions* and look at how their lower counterparts are reorganized from above. Such kind of investigation is inevitably interdisciplinary—linking psychology with

anthropology, sociology, history, and developmental biology. Various contributions to this volume are based on the work of Lev Vygotsky, George Herbert Mead, and Henri Bergson, and on traditions of *Ganzheitspsychologie* and Gestalt psychology. The book should be of interest to psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, biologists, anthropologists, and cultural scientists.

The time for bringing the focus in this volume to the public domain is ripe. Psychology in the twenty-first century is no longer centered on any one continent. Neither is it (any more) a prerogative of any single country. Psychology today is developing all over the world, based on many languages and cultural practices. The new integrative field, cultural psychology, paves the road for true international syntheses of ideas in the field. New developments in contemporary biological sciences—such as the epigenetic revolution in genetics—provide potential analogical examples for new psychology for how to deal with hyper-complex and hyper-rapid phenomena. Psychology has accumulated too many data—now it is time to innovate the discipline by developing new theories of a general kind. We, the editors of this volume, coming from Europe, Asia, and the Americas—hope that reading the contributions in this book will trigger new ideas that will bring psychology out of its recurrent question: “Are we a science?” Answering that question does not make any discipline into a science, or deny it that privilege. To be a science means to inquire and invent. Psychology has yet to activate its intellectual creativity. This work—“the Yokohama Manifesto”—is a call for such activation.

Denmark
Italy
India
Japan
Brazil

Jaan Valsiner
Giuseppina Marsico
Nandita Chaudhary
Tatsuya Sato
Virginia Dazzani

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Part I
The Knowing of Being Human

Chapter 1

Psychology as a Normative Science

Svend Brinkmann

In keeping with the manifesto spirit of this volume, I shall put all caution aside in this chapter and initially make two foundational claims about psychological phenomena before I move on to discuss three conclusions that I believe follow from the initial claims. By invoking the rather grand idea of “psychological phenomena,” I am simply referring to the processes that psychologists (*as* psychologists) should rightly be studying. Chemists study molecular processes, biologists study life processes (*zoe* to use the Greek term), and psychologists supposedly study mental life or mental processes, whatever this may signify. My claims are in short that such mental processes, at least in their developed human manifestations, should be seen as (1) *doings* that are (2) *conversational*. If so, psychology becomes a normative science, or so I shall argue.

Reasons and Causes, Actions and Behaviors

Needless to say, all claims can be challenged and discussed, and this obviously also goes for the two (rather sweeping) claims that I shall be making here, but I do believe that denying these propositions is equivalent to denying that there can be a psychological science in the first place. Paradoxically, much of contemporary psychology implicitly or explicitly denies these claims and thereby (if my argument is valid) renders its own scientific endeavors impossible. Most psychological research thus works with “variables” and is interested in measuring the “causal effects” of such variables upon human behavior. Agency, meaning, and intentionality disappear. So, as I hope to make clear, denying the two claims is tantamount to eliminating human agency, or, in other words, disregarding our capacities as human beings for being responsive to the reasons for acting, feeling, and

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thinking that are afforded by the situations and practices in which we find ourselves. Instead of beginning with these higher-order psychological phenomena, the standard account in psychology states that psychology—like all sciences worthy of the name—should study *causes* and *effects* (rather than *reasons* and *responsivity*) and conceive of human *action* as mere *behavior*.

Bios and Zoe

To borrow a distinction that goes back to Aristotle and was made famous by Arendt (1958) in the twentieth century, we can say that my argument implies that human mental life is part and parcel of *bios politikos*—a kind of life praxis that gives a person a biography—whereas *zoe* (life in a biological sense) is rightly studied by physiologists rather than psychologists. Elsewhere, I have built upon Sellars' (1997) distinction between a “space of reasons” and “space of causation” to make the point (Brinkmann 2011a), but here I shall attempt to express the idea in a less technical way. A space of reasons is one in which people operate as agents, based on judgments about what is a reason for what. Noticing the elderly lady with damaged grocery bags provides (under normal circumstances) a reason for others to help. The relationship between the situation and the preferred action (to intervene and help) is wholly unlike causal relationships between, say, the weight of the goods in her bags and the ensuing accident when the goods fall on the ground. The latter should rightly be seen within a space of causation. The goods have no reason to destroy the bags and fall on the ground. They simply do this because of blind causal powers involving gravity.

Psychological Phenomena Are Being Done by Persons

That psychological phenomena are done by persons is the first claim I shall be making. Establishing the link to Arendt's distinction is easy: A person's life (in the biographical rather than biological sense) is something the person *conducts*. A life does not lead itself, but is an active process involving the person in collectives of others. We *live* our lives; it is an active process. Setting the case of severely psychotic persons aside as an extreme example, we do not normally have the experience that our lives simply *happen* to us, and we do not talk about our lives in this way. When we say to someone that she should “Get a life!” we do not mean that the person should become alive, e.g., begin to breathe again after a heart attack, but rather that she should initiate meaningful actions in relation to worthwhile life projects and values.

Interestingly, the original Greek meaning of *psyche* was much closer to the biological sense (*zoe*) than the psychological one (*bios*), as it referred to the fundamental life principle of all living things (plants, animals, humans). *Psyche* was an

animating power related to breath, to being alive in a fundamental sense, and Aristotle's *On the Soul* basically belongs to biology, whereas his psychology is primarily found in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that deals with life as *praxis* (Aristotle 1976; see also Robinson 1989). The latter work is concerned with much more than living organisms, because it addresses the whole normative realm (the human space of reasons, one might say) within which we live our lives, which is why such themes as friendship, moral action, and the virtues take center stage in Aristotle's ethical psychology—or psychological ethics.

So the first claim is that psychological phenomena properly belong to the realm of *bios* rather than *zoe*. I hasten to say that my view does not imply a clearly delineated border between the two realms. Psychology is often most interesting when addressing phenomena that fall somewhere in the gray area between the things that people *do* and the things that simply *happen* to (or in) them. We can sometimes say that some psychological process is clearly done—for example when someone is trying to perform mathematical operations, which cannot meaningfully be said to happen to the person. But most of our emotional life belongs in the gray area: We might feel that our grief *occurs* to us after a loss, for example. We are overwhelmed by sadness and think of ourselves as victims or sufferers in such a situation. However, even an emotion such as grief is not simply a mechanical reaction that happens to occur like an effect following a cause.

Doing Grief and Patienthood

Grief is also *done* or *performed* by skilled human actors, who can only *grieve properly* if they know their local moral order (Harré 1983), i.e., know *how*, and *how much*, grief is called for in the social practices of their culture (Kofod 2013). This is not to say that grief is an action that can simply be stopped (like playing football with friends, which stops whenever the players become bored with the game or are leaving because of other appointments). But it is to say that grief is not a mechanical *reaction*, but rather a *response* to a loss, and the loss is not simply a *cause* that triggers an emotion, but a *reason* for feeling and expressing grief. This also explains why grief (like other emotions) may be evaluated morally: The person who does not grieve sufficiently is easily seen as shallow or aloof (whether justified or not), whereas the person who is experiencing extreme grief in a situation that does not call for deep mourning can be accused of “overdoing it.” Ester Holte Kofod has recently studied parents’ grief after the loss of an infant and found that they do not only struggle with the loss as such, but also struggle with navigating the rather unclear normativity in this tragic situation: On the one hand, there is a cultural discourse claiming that the worst thing a human being can experience is the loss of a child, but, on the other, there is also a discourse implying (to put it bluntly) that the loss is supposed to be less intense when the child is so small at the time of its death (Kofod’s participants have lost their children either before, during, or soon after giving birth) compared to older children that the parents “have gotten to

know” (there is also a cultural discourse, which implies that the loss of very old persons should call for less intense forms of grief). How—and how much—should one grieve then? This is not an easy question, but one that Kofod’s participants reflect upon, lending support to the idea that also difficult emotions that overwhelm us have a normative aspect.

In a related way, in a study of relationships between psychiatric patients and the personnel in clinics, Ringer (2013) has recently shown how patients must figure out how to perform their problems adequately: If they act as “too well,” they risk being sent out of the institution too early, but if they are acting in a way that is perceived as “too much,” they are interpreted as fakers, who are exaggerating their symptoms. Like grief, mental disorders exist in a gray area between phenomena that happen to us and phenomena that are done—between *bios* and *zoe*, reasons, and causes—and the challenge for researchers, who are open to this perspective, is to study these processes as performances without blaming the victims. For if a mental disorder is understood as something done in the same way that a move in a game of chess is played, it might seem to follow that the patient is responsible for her affliction—just like the chess player is responsible for the chosen move. This, of course, is an unacceptable conclusion, and the solution is to appreciate that there is what we might call a *continuum of doings*, ranging from actions that are performed with full reflective self-consciousness (e.g., deciding whether to accept a job offer) to everyday habitual conduct.

Doing Habitual Life

The pragmatists noticed that most of a human life is habitual rather than reflective, but much of what we do (perhaps even everything we do in the sense of *acting*) may become reflective under proper circumstances (Dewey 1922). Dewey would say that we only turn to reflective thinking when our habits break down and are insufficient to enable further actions. Situations of breakdown call for a readjustment of our habits, which is aided by thinking and reflection, but this is not the primordial way of being in the world. However, if some process (e.g., in the body) is completely and in principle forever outside the realm of conscious reflection, what reason do we have for counting it as a mental process? If Searle (1992) is right—and I believe he is in this case—the answer is that we have no such reason.

In her fieldwork among patients diagnosed with bipolar disorder, Emily Martin (herself diagnosed with bipolar depression) has drawn attention to the two poles (pardon the pun!) of willed action and unreflective habits, and she argues that mania should be seen as lying somewhere in the middle of this (Martin 2007, p. 83), equivalent to what I called the gray area above. She argues that by emphasizing the performativity of mania, and describing it “in terms of performance and style,” we might in fact release it from “the narrow confines of pathology” (p. 84), but without ignoring the suffering associated with this difficult condition. Martin documents how patients in support groups engage in meta communication about their

symptoms and learn to perform them adequately and are thereby able to create distance to their own condition. They *are* at once bipolar patients, but also aware that they *perform* their condition in ways suited to the local context (Martin 2007, p. 86).

Normativity and Affordances

The claim that psychological phenomena—our ways of feeling, thinking, acting, etc.—are done by persons is not new. It goes as far back as Aristotle and was articulated for modern psychology by Rom Harré in the 1980s (e.g., Harré 1983) and also in later works (Harré and Moghaddam 2012). In more implicit ways, it figures, for example, in the ecological approach developed by James Gibson, according to which perception is not a passive mirroring of a static external reality (something that *happens*), but is a function of our active moving around in a changing world where we examine objects, do things, and have intentions that we try to realize (something we *do*) (see also Gibson 1986; Costall 2004). For Gibson, perception is a form of action and is thus something people *do*. It is normative in the sense that there is a difference between veridical and non-veridical perception (just as thinking is normative, we might add, because there is a difference between better and worse ways of reasoning). Gibson (1986) argued more specifically about the normativity or value-laden nature of affordances that “[t]he perceiving of an affordance is not a process of perceiving a value-free physical object [...] it is a process of perceiving a value-rich ecological object. [...] Physics may be value-free, but ecology is not” (p. 140). Gibson’s ecological psychology is thus a science of value and meaning, locating these not in the minds of humans, but in the ecology, the ecology of where normativity lives—not in the subjective minds of people.

Doing Anger

This might be acceptable to some, but the normativity of psychological phenomena is harder to accept when we move away from perception to emotions and motivation. This is why I have discussed the example of grief at some length above, but already Aristotle articulated this normative approach in quite a clear way: Although he understood motivation as a natural phenomenon, belonging partly to the realm of *zoe*, he did not think that it could be fully understood by natural scientists (the *phusikos*). We also need the work of the “dialectician” (an equivalent to modern cultural psychologists who might agree with the substance of this chapter) in order to grasp it (Robinson 1989, p. 81). For only the latter “would define e.g. anger as the appetite for returning pain for pain, or something like that, while the former would define it as a boiling of the blood” (Aristotle quoted in Robinson 1989, p. 81).

The dialecticians understand that anger (like grief or any other psychological phenomenon) is never just a happening (like a boiling of the blood), but always *also* something done or performed, which is why there is such a thing as justified anger in the face of preposterousness (and certainly also unjustified anger). The point is not that anger is always done with full conscious reflection (it very rarely is), but that it *may* be reflected upon, which is what explains why an adult can be responsible for her anger. Anger can be escalated, maintained, and de-escalated in response to various reasons that are given across time, and it seems even possible that anger is inherited by others who were not in fact the victims (people born after World War II in Denmark could still be angry with the Germans, for example, and perhaps (yet perhaps not) have a reason for being so).

What makes “boiling of the blood” (or some modern neurophysiological equivalent) anger is precisely that it is performed in a practical context where it makes sense to question, justify, and state the reason for “boiling of the blood.” Anger is thus a psychological phenomenon in so far as it is a normative phenomenon that can be done more or less *well* and therefore is subject to praise and blame. If it belonged entirely to the realm of happenings, we should confine it to the science of physiology. As Harré (1983, p. 136) once noted, the reason why dread and anger are *psychological* phenomena (i.e., emotions) but not indigestion or exhaustion—although all have behavioral manifestations as well as fairly distinctive experiential qualities—is that only the former are normative and fall within a moral order. Indigestion may happen to us (but we cannot really *do* indigestion), but anger is always also something we do.

Three further terms should be discussed briefly before I move on to the second foundational claim: intentionality, meaning, and the concept of a person. For together with intentionality, normativity is inherently connected to meaning. It is sometimes said (and rightly so, I believe) that cultural psychology does not just deal with “information,” but rather with meaning (Bruner 1990). This is important, for, in a very minimal sense, psychological phenomena are meaningful when they cannot be adequately described in purely physical terms (as something that simply happens), but demand an understanding in terms of intentionality and normativity. Since Ryle (1949), we have been able to say that “thick description” is what is demanded. Thus, the same physical movement of a human eye, a wink for example, can express different meanings (flirtation, a signal of conspiracy, etc.) depending on the purpose and context of the wink.

Aboutness, Oughtness, and the Person

A movement is meaningful because it is *about* something other than itself (intentionality) and because it conforms to a social practice of winking (normativity). Aboutness and oughtness go hand in hand to constitute meaningful psychological phenomena *qua* psychological. The meaning of the movement cannot be found in its physical properties as such, and if, say, the movement is caused by the fact that

a fly enters the eye and triggers a mechanical reaction (a reflex), there is neither intentionality nor normativity and thus no meaning (and, I would add, the movement does not qualify as a *bona fide* psychological phenomenon). This argument was also made by Dewey (1916), who defined mental life in terms of meaning (a composite of intentionality and normativity): “The difference between an adjustment to a physical stimulus [e.g. a fly in the eye] and a mental act [e.g. an intentional wink of the eye] is that the latter involves response to a thing in its meaning; the former does not” (p. 29). We might add with Dewey that nothing has meaning in itself, but only on the background of a larger social practice (with its normative standards of correctness), which accentuates the importance of culture and context in understanding anything meaningful (and psychological).

Finally, the first claim includes the concept of the person, which should be incorporated to emphasize the fact that neither brains, nor minds nor social structures do the doings of psychological phenomena, but always and irreducibly persons. Persons think, feel, act, perceive, etc. and not their brains, minds, or the social structures in which they participate. The failure to respect this grammatical point (in a Wittgensteinian sense) has been called the mereological fallacy (Bennett and Hacker 2003): attributing properties to a part of something that makes sense only when attributed to the whole. Of course, persons could not perform their thinking, feeling, and acting without a brain or a mind, but that is not to say that these parts are the doers of the deeds. Rather, as I have argued elsewhere, brain, body, social practices, and material objects serve as *mediators* that enable persons to perform whatever psychological process is involved, and the *mind* is not to be thought of as a thing (or an agent), but as the range of skills and dispositions of persons (who *are* the agents) to do what they do (Brinkmann 2011b). Thus, the mind cannot be localized (e.g., in the brain), for skills and dispositions are not physically contained, but rather manifested in the life activities (the *bios*) of a human being. It is thus misconceived to look for grief or anger in the brain (even if the brain is needed for grief and anger to be enacted); as meaningful mental phenomena, they are performed by persons in biographical time. The *person* is grieving or is angry, not her brain, and we appropriately console or reproach the *person*, not her brain.

Psychological Phenomena Are Conversational

The second claim—that psychological phenomena are conversational—is more frequently made in contemporary expositions of psychological science, so I shall devote less space to explicate it here. It is apparently easier to understand and accept for psychologists from many corners of the discipline. This is not to say that everyone agrees with it, and without being able to demonstrate it statistically, I believe that the majority of psychologists today implicitly deny it by presenting psychological phenomena as discrete entities “in the head,” e.g., in the form of so-called mental representations, neural networks, or something similar. If one accepts the first claim, then one cannot agree that psychological phenomena are

“entities” at all (because doings are not entities), and if one accepts the second claim, then one cannot agree that they are discrete. I already hinted at this above when arguing for the contextuality of psychological phenomena. A wink, to reiterate this example, is only a wink within a context, and nothing, which encloses it upon itself as a discrete event, can be said about this movement that renders its possible meaning visible. Cultural psychologists often express this by saying that psychological phenomena (including the self) are *dialogical*. This is one legitimate way of putting it, but, personally, I prefer the term *conversational* since it does not carry the same positive connotations as the terms dialogue and dialogical. To take a rather extreme example, the musings of a serial killer are “dialogical,” and her relationships with the victims are “dialogical,” without this implying any ethical value. Conversation is a more neutral term (at least in my ears), although this is not necessarily so etymologically. Conversation comes from Latin and means “dwelling with someone” or “wandering together with.” The root sense of dialogue is that of talk (logos) that goes back and forth (dia-) between persons (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995, p. 4). Thus conceived, the concept of conversation is very broad and encompasses much more than a specific kind of linguistic interaction. Our emotions—grief and anger for example—are conversational and involve responses to social situations and other people’s actions.

In a thoughtful little book entitled *The Conversation of Humanity*, Stephen Mulhall builds a philosophy of conversation from the fact that we are linguistic creatures and argues that language is best understood in terms of the figure of conversation (Mulhall 2007). Our psychological reality is conversational reality: “The primary human reality is persons in conversation” (Harré 1983, p. 58). What we call cultures are constantly produced, reproduced, and revised in conversations among their members (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995, p. 2). We should see language and culture as emergent properties of conversations in the broadest sense rather than the other way around. Conversations are not several monologues added together, but the basic, primordial form of associated human life. In other words, “we live our daily social lives within an ambience of conversation, discussion, argumentation, negotiation, criticism and justification; much of it to do with problems of intelligibility and the legitimization of claims to truth” (Shotter 1993, p. 29).

Not just our interpersonal social reality is constituted by conversations. This also goes for our self-interpretations, or what is sometimes reified with the concept of the self. Charles Taylor argues that the self exists only within what he calls “webs of interlocution” (Taylor 1989, p. 36). Now, I am skeptical of the widespread “self-talk” in psychology and popular culture, if it postulates the existence of some entity called “the self.” Following Harré, the self is more properly a term that actually stands for the *process* of a person reflectively relating to him or herself. We might also refer to Kierkegaard, who used the term self more like a verb than a noun and famously defined the self, not as a thing in any way, but as a relation that relates to itself: “The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation’s relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation’s relating itself to itself” (Kierkegaard 1849, p. 73; see also Taylor 1985). Relating to oneself is a conversational process. We are “selves” (i.e., self-interpreters) only in relation

to certain interlocutors with whom we are in conversation and from whom we gain a language of self-understanding. In referring to Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*—or human existence—Mulhall states that “Dasein is not just the locus and the precondition for the conversation of humankind; it is itself, because humankind is, a kind of enacted conversation” (Mulhall 2007, p. 58). Humankind is a kind of enacted conversation: That ought to be the starting point for psychological science. We understand ourselves as well as others only because we can speak, and “being able to speak involves being able to converse,” Mulhall adds (p. 26).

We might now understand how the two foundational claims are linked: Psychological phenomena are done by persons, and the normative order that structures these doings and renders them meaningful is conversational. The processes of our lives—actions, thoughts, and emotions—are nothing but physiology (*zoe*) if considered as isolated elements outside of conversations and interpretative contexts. A life, as Paul Ricoeur has said, “is no more than a biological phenomenon as long as it has not been interpreted” (Ricoeur 1991, p. 28). As stated earlier, psychological phenomena are not simply *reactions* to whatever happens, but must be seen as *responses* to people, situations, and events. As responses they are conversational and dialogical, for, to include Alasdair MacIntyre among our conversational theorists, “conversation, understood widely enough, is the form of human transactions in general” (MacIntyre 1985a, p. 211). When people are acting or talking, they are not simply staging displays out of the blue, or putting pre-conceived ideas into words, but are dialogically responding to each other's (or their own) expressions and are trying to make sense by using the conversational repertoires—whether conceived as story lines, discourses, or other semiotic devices (Valsiner 2007)—that are available. In short, together with normativity, conversations are the stuff of psychology, the stuff that constitutes our mental life, and the stuff that enables us to develop as persons. Of course, “stuff” is here metaphorical, because I have here argued against what Valsiner (2007) rightly chides as “entification” in psychology. In a literal sense, there is no psychological “stuff,” but only conversational doings.

Three Conclusions

After having introduced and explained the two claims that I believe are foundational for a psychological science, it is time to draw a few conclusions from these. A huge number of conclusions could be seen to follow, but I will highlight just three.

A causal vocabulary is generally inappropriate for psychology: Of course, when psychologists study brain processes (which are perfectly legitimate as an auxiliary research endeavor for psychologists), they must employ a causal language and talk about how neurochemical circuits cause cascades of electrochemical processes in the central nervous system. A causal vocabulary is needed in the neurosciences, because brain processes happen and are not done (a caveat here, however, is that

not even the workings of the brain can be thought of in purely causal terms, because of the self-organizational, systemic processes of the brain, but this takes nothing away from my general argument about psychological processes). But neuroscience is not psychology. As soon as we leave the study of neurochemical happenings and talk about psychological phenomena (and not merely the physical mediators of such phenomena), we must leave the causal vocabulary behind. We should not even say (although doing so is extremely widespread) that a certain brain process is the *cause* of a psychological process. To wit, I am convinced that a process in my brain is needed in order for me to feel grief or read the letters written in a book, but it is misguided to say that the brain process *causes* my grief or my reading. It is just as wrong as to say that the weight and size of a coin (its material properties) causes its value in the monetary system, or to say that the shapes and sizes of letters cause their meaning as words in a book. The monetary system is normative, but is upheld (not caused) by a host of material mediators (e.g., banks, notes, coins), just as written language is normative, but is upheld (not caused) by a host of material mediators (e.g., alphabets, books, libraries).

In the normative realm, there are no causes. Being a bachelor is not the cause why one is an unmarried man. The relationship between “bachelor” and “unmarried man” is normative (*viz.* conceptual), just as the relationship between an action and a social practice, or between grief and loss. A way of integrating the causal and normative vocabularies in psychology, which emphasizes the necessary priority of the latter, has been articulated by Harré (2002; see also Brinkmann 2011b, on which the following is based). Harré introduces what he calls the “task–tool metaphor” to explain how psychological phenomena (the doings) are enabled or mediated by material conditions. As living human beings, we are engaged in doings or tasks (looking for the keys, baking cookies, writing books, trying to remember a friend’s birthday), which, as a whole, make up the subject matter of psychology. These tasks are performed by persons, but can only be brought to fruition—more or less satisfactorily—by means of material mechanisms, notably the brain (but also other bodily organs). The brain is therefore the most significant tool in carrying out our psychological tasks, a tool that is likely involved in all the tasks we perform. But we use other tools as well, and when our brains malfunction, e.g., because of neurological defects that result in dementia, we may as skilled cultural beings use other tools (e.g., a notebook to remember birthdays). This, of course, is not just something that we do in cases of brain dysfunction, but is a pervasive aspect of human life, allowing us to “supersize our minds” as a species (Clark 2008). The implication for psychological analysis is that the workings of tools (e.g., the brain) must be described using a causal language, whereas *the ways we work with tools* (i.e., the doings of persons) must be described using a normative language.

In order to carry out our analyses properly, we must keep in mind another principle accentuated by Harré: the taxonomic priority principle. This principle expresses the (logical and scientific) primacy of the normative language in psychology. In short, the principle states that tools are defined relative to the tasks that

they can be used to perform. To give an example: If I want to study the neural correlates of reading (a study which is concerned with a causal process in the brain), I must first be able to identify a certain set of psychological doings as reading, and this identification is normative (because reading is normative). Persons read, not their brains. Unavoidably, normativity takes precedence in psychology.

The normativity of psychology is embedded in cultural practices: This is the next conclusion that follows. Psychological phenomena are in other words cultural. At different times and in different places, people “do psychology” in quite different ways. Anyone reading Homer can appreciate this. Psychological phenomena get their meaning from their local cultural contexts. If I may return to the example of bipolar disorder and quote Emily Martin once again, “There is no ‘thing’ called mania that is, apart from its context, invariably on the side of heaven or hell, exaltation or despair” (Martin 2007, p. 229). Any psychological performance demands a social practice of carrying out that performance in order for it to be meaningful—and such social practices vary across cultures.

Many researchers, especially of a social constructionist bent, have celebrated this conclusion, arguing that it leads to cultural relativism. This, I believe, does not follow. The fact that psychological performances vary across cultures (because many norms and social practices vary) does not mean that no general norms exist. The fact that social constructions exist does not mean that no normative preconditions for socially constructed life exist that make social constructions possible in the first place. Indeed, there is good reason to think that the whole range of psychological doings, dependent as it is on cultural normativity, rest on a number of normativities that are not simply socially constructed (but preconditions for the existence of social constructions). The argument here quickly becomes difficult, but Holiday (1988) has argued that three “core language games” (as he called them) are needed in order for linguistic normativity to be in place. They are truth-telling, justice, and respect for ritual, and let me just briefly explain the first one to give an indication of the argument.

In general, we praise truth-telling and condemn and punish lying. We have linguistic practices that function to preserve the value of truthfulness, which, Holiday argues, is not a value that can intelligibly be seen as socially constructed, but rather presupposed by any process of social construction. For there to be social constructions, there must be a language, and language is only imaginable if people are committed to truth-telling. It is a fundamental fact, as Løgstrup (1956) also argued, that a basic trust is primary in social interactions and conversations. We need in most cases to trust that the other is not lying. This basic trust may of course be subdued from time to time, but it is nonetheless ontologically primary. Humans expect each other to tell the truth, for lying is logically parasitic on truth. If humans normally lied, there could be no such thing as language or communication. As Holiday says, paraphrasing Peter Winch, adherence to the truth-telling norm “is not itself conventional, but the condition of there being any conventions whatsoever”

(Holiday 1988, p. 93; the argument is greatly expanded in Brinkmann 2011a). Another way of putting all this (with the risk of sounding like a mystic) is to say that psychology is ultimately grounded in ethics, i.e., in a fundamental and non-negotiable normativity in the dealings that human beings have with each other, which I guess was the crux of Emmanuel Lévinas' exposition of ethics as first philosophy (see Williams and Gantt 2002).

Psychology is a normative science: This conclusion is the third and most foundational one and appropriate to end with. It says that psychology studies a realm of doings, performances by skilled human persons in their social practices, which is a normative realm. In a trivial sense, all sciences are normative, because sciences are human activities that are carried out with reference to norms (of objectivity, honesty, reliability, etc.). But unlike physics, for example, psychology's *subject matter* is also normative. Other disciplines resemble psychology on this point: Logic has a normative subject matter (correct forms of reasoning), and so do law, aesthetics, and ethics, for example. Since psychology is the study of persons' lives as *bios politikos* per se, however, this discipline seems to take center stage in being a science of the normative in human life.

There is one further way in which psychology is normative, and which I do not have space to unfold here: Psychology can—as a scientific activity—influence its own subject matter, and in this way affect the normative doings that it studies. MacIntyre once put the point in a simple way: Molecules do not read chemistry textbooks, whereas humans do read psychology books that affect their self-understandings (MacIntyre 1985b). And, to make matters worse (or, in some cases, better), we are not only affected by the occasional psychology book, but by a host of technologies and social practices in the “psychological society” that has emerged in the last hundred years or so. In the twentieth century, Roger Smith concludes, “everyone learned to be a psychologist, everyone became her or his own psychologist, able and willing to describe life in psychological terms” (Smith 1997, p. 577). A whole Foucauldian school in the historiography of psychology has been developed to study the impact of psychology on human life and subjectivity, and there is much to learn from this, although assessing it is outside the scope of this chapter (the classics in this field include Rose 1999; Hacking 1995; Danziger 1997).

The conclusion becomes that psychology is a normative science in (at least) two ways: It is itself normative—because it constantly fabricates new standards for its subject matter—and it addresses a realm of the world that is normative through and through.

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Chapter 2

Psychology as a Phenomenological Science

Gerhard Benetka and Amrei C. Joerchel

The relationship between psychology and phenomenology is not one that is easily traceable (for a discussion on the difficulties of this see, e.g., Graumann 1991). One of the reasons for this opaque matter is that neither psychology nor phenomenology can be defined as *one* subject area. Both have developed over time with different persons representing varying approaches and others yet again further developing these new and hybrid versions of the former. The aim of this chapter is thus not to give a complete overview of psychology, in its general umbrella-like term, as a phenomenological science. But rather to trace some early relations between psychology and phenomenology and to depict a selection of classic studies conducted in Austria and Germany at the turn of the last century in order to show how the authors of these studies used phenomenological approaches to understand the mind (in the sense of the German term: *Bewusstsein*) and human behavior. Furthermore, in outlining some of the main tenants of where phenomenology and psychology have progressed on common grounds, we pay special attention to specific elements belonging to the person–environment relation with the aim of highlighting the need to reintegrate psychological processes and underlying functions of the *personal living space* in contemporary psychological analyses of every day actions.

With this retrospective analysis, the present chapter intends to show that phenomenological approaches—while rare in today’s mainstream psychological research agenda—has a fruitful history in early psychology. We thus begin with a historical reconstruction. The storyline of this reconstruction, however, is told in reversed—we trace a few ending points back to their beginnings. In the second part of this chapter, we then present three case studies of different psychologists using phenomenological approaches for their investigations—namely Kurt Lewin, Martha Muchow, and Gustav Ichheiser—with which we show how phenomenological approaches have historically been implemented. In the last part, we con-

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clude that these classical studies are still highly useful also in today's research endeavors and should be resorted to for further developing a psychology that aims at being a human science.

Historical Reconstruction of Psychology as a Phenomenological Science

Departing from the Phenomena: Gestalt Theory

At the beginning of what Ebbinghaus called the “short history” of psychology as a science was, among others, Fechner's psychophysics—in many respect of model characteristics, in Kuhn's sense paradigmatic. Let us illustrate the problem: Fechner tried to scale the intensity of sensory perception (*Sinneseindrücken*) via the scaling of physical stimuli (*Reizverhältnisse*) causing these sensations. This approach basically represents a type of image theory (*Abbildtheorie*): The (physically measurable) properties of the physical ideal type are described and then the corresponding mental properties and how these manifest themselves within the mental image are looked for. Very specific and exact identifiable stimuli are thus given. The question now is how the perceived information—the content of this perception—is constituted. But what happens if we reverse the question: Given certain perceptual content, what are the relevant stimulus conditions and to what extent can the properties of perceptual content be lead back to properties of the underlying stimuli (*Reizverhältnisse*)? Of course, reversing the question only makes sense if you assume that the content of perception—the phenomena—can have additional properties that differ from those that can be directly derived from the physical determinable stimuli. Indeed, it is precisely this rather simple idea on which the Gestalt concept from the Berlin (and Frankfurt) Gestalt school was originally based. Max Wertheimer's studies, which he started conducting in Frankfurt in 1910 and then published in 1912 with the title *Experimentelle Studien über das Sehen von Bewegung*,¹ became the experimental paradigm of Gestalt theory. What Wertheimer demonstrated went far beyond the mere experimental representation of apparent motion (*Scheinbewegung*): the *phi*-phenomenon—as Wertheimer called it—occurs when the interval between hiding a vertical bar and displaying a second horizontal bar is slightly reduced below the optimal interval of 0.06 s for the production of the stroboscopic effect: What you then see is something which cannot be explained via physical perceptual conditions alone: a movement without a clearly shaped object, a movement within the background color—a “field fulfillment” (*Felderfüllung*) as Wertheimer called it.

The phenomenal given is thus not simply determined by the underlying stimulus conditions, but rather, what we see results from a perceptual organization which is

¹English title: *Experimental studies on the seeing of motion*.

inherent to the perceptual system. This organizational process generates the perceived information from existing stimulus material in a specific order. This Gestalt formation is not random, but rather subject to specific laws (*Gesetzmäßigkeiten*). To capture these dynamic laws becomes the central problem for Gestalt theoretical research on perception. The overriding principle is simplicity, frugality, and economy: From existing stimulus materials, the form that emerges with the least effort, that which is easiest realized, is phenomenally generated. What always remains to be shown is that the realized total form (*Gesamtform*) is critical for what can be seen at a single location within the whole field. The whole determines the parts of which it is composed—this is the fundamental assumption of Gestalt theory.

From psychology of perception, the new approach of Gestalt theory learned that any psychic activity rests upon the realization of simple forms; this, and nothing else, is the significance of the formula of the “tendency toward good Gestalt” (*Tendenz zur guten Gestalt*)—extended to ever new and broader research problems of psychology: first by Wertheimer (1912, 1920) himself to the psychology of productive thinking, subsequently Köhler’s (1917) spectacular experiments on intelligence testing on apes prepared the way for Kurt Lewin’s action theory. His war landscape text from 1917, which will be further discussed below, provided an early glimpse into his later field theory. Important here is the dynamic aspect: “open Gestalt” (“*offene Gestalten*”) go hand in hand with an energetically charged psychic system. The success of action, i.e., the achievement of an action goal, results in a state of reduced tension. Furthermore, the role of meaning plays of course an important role: in—as it will later be called by Lewin—the life space (*Lebensraum*), the specific form—emerging on the grounds of physical environmental conditions—which shows itself as meaningful, is always that form which necessarily leads to a reduction of tension within the system.

Introspection: The Würzburg School

The emergence of psychology was burdened from the very beginning with a heavy methodological problem: If all modern research science must be based on observation, then a genuine research method for a *science* of consciousness must also be based on observation. For a science of *consciousness*, however, this means that the method cannot be any other than observing one’s own conscious processes: The scientific scholar here functions simultaneously as observer and observed. There was however a serious objection against the possibility of formulating a scientific psychology on the grounds of introspection: In the case of self-observation, as Kant (1786/1977) proclaimed, the act of observation may alter or distort the very process intended to be observed. This argument remained unchallenged for a long time: *Direct* access to experience and to conscious mental processes was considered to be unavailable to psychological investigations. This was the reason for Wundt’s reluctance toward introspection, but also Brentano’s insistence for at least the

possibility of a retrospective introspection—i.e., an introspection based on memory. The crucial methodological realization developed out of the Würzburg circle around Oswald Külpe: According to Ach (1905), the fact that after the completion of mental processes, these very processes remain present, “perseveres,” for a while—a fact that had been confirmed by contemporary memory researchers with evidence-based empirical studies—allows an observation corresponding to an observation of a natural object, precisely due to their perseverance. From today’s perspective, it is interesting to see how Ach, after he based his proceedings on solid grounds, justifies introspection against the accusations of “subjectivity:” namely by stressing the dialogic character of the introspective method, i.e., the fact that the introspective data are requested by an experimenter.

Bühler (1907, 1908a, b) used this method to investigate thought processes. He presented various thought problems or thinking tasks (*Denkaufgaben*) and asked the subjects to report how they arrived at the solutions. The actual “carriers” of any “firmly established and continuous thought content” are—as Bühler concluded, thereby positioning his ideas against basic assumptions of the empiricist tradition of his time—non-imaginary mental units, “cognitions” (“*Gedanken*”) as he called them, that function as transcendental given operators in an organized path of thought processes (Bühler 1907, p. 311). Bühler himself seems to have understood these studies as a kind of transfer of Husserl’s phenomenological method into experimental psychology. It is not surprising that Husserl feels his foundation for a scientific philosophy misunderstood (e.g., as expressed in a letter written by Husserl to Bühler dated June 28th, 1927, archived in Graz Archive for Austrian Philosophy). What is important for us here is to merely point out the following relation: from Brentano’s descriptive psychology, a direct path not only leads to Husserl’s phenomenology, but rather, it also leads to the reintroduction of introspection in the context of experimental psychology: Without an exact description of the inner perception, no Psychology rich in content is possible.

The Point of Departure: From Brentano to Husserl

In order to systematically differentiate between physical and mental phenomena, Franz Brentano stated in 1874 his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* in a passage frequently cited thereafter:

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction towards an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. (Brentano 1874/1995, pp. 88–89)

“Reference to a content” here should not be understood as a relation between two separately existing points of reference (*Bezugsglieder*)—that is, as the relation of a subject to an independently existing object outside of the person: “If I, e.g., think about God Jupiter, merely the one who has a mental representation of God Jupiter exists, but in no case [...] does God Jupiter exist” (Kraus 1924, p. XXVI, own translation). More precisely, this means that nothing but the mental act of representation exists. The object the representation refers to is synsemantically included within the representational act. Husserl, who takes up Brentano’s concept of intentionality and further develops it, bases his new science of phenomenology on precisely this assumption: the idea that the constitution of meaning can be reconstructed from this intentional relatedness to the world. In this sense, Husserl refers to the discipline of phenomenology as “*auf die Sachen gerichtet*,” as “directed towards things themselves.” Here, “*Sache*” or “thing” does not simply refer to “facts”—in a positivistic sense—but rather to “conceived realities” (*begriffliche Wirklichkeiten*) (Fellmann 2006, p. 29) or to our conscious ideas of things versus natural objects: things that—regardless of the mode of their existence, real, or imaginary—are meaningful for us precisely because we are directed toward them, because we have mental representations of them. Important here is that for Husserl, these concepts are understood as something pre-linguistic: as something that already and first takes place in experience and sensation.

For a phenomenological orientation in psychology, references to Husserl primarily lead to methodological consequences (see Graumann 1988). Namely, that the construction of meaning, on the one hand, does not result from within, from the inner psychological constitution of a single individual. But, on the other hand, meaning can also not be reconstructed focusing solely on the outside, as the humanitarian psychological approaches, e.g., in the sense of Spranger, assumed, from the cultural realities, from the conditions of an “*objectiven Geistes*” in the Hegelian sense. In the terminology of William Stern’s critical personalism: the construction of meaning emerges neither subjectively from within the person nor objectively from the things themselves—but from the description of intentional relatedness of the person toward the thing. If the intentional person–environment relation now becomes *the* unit of analysis, a phenomenologically oriented psychology must then inevitably deal with the situational circumstances of meaningful actions. This is also precisely from where the interest in our surrounding space, the special environment—the living space—originates. “Who and how someone is arises from the specific environment he inhabits, interacts with, and explores” (Graumann 1988, p. 540, own translation). Here, the “environment” of a person refers to a constituting and constituted space—to a very particular, and by all means socially demarcated space, i.e., defined by social class: that world which is meaningful to persons—their *Lebensraum* (*living space*).

A second aspect is even more important for understanding the following historical case studies: the methodological approach in phenomenology to “bracket” all questions of truth or reality, in Husserl terms *epoché* or “suspension,” calls for simple descriptions of the content of our consciousness. This is also where the phenomenological approach takes a critical stance: critical toward our own

preconceptions—toward the prejudices of our commonsense knowledge—critical toward all that which is taken for granted, usually implicitly present before a thorough investigation even begins and which therefore eludes the examiners analysis.

Worlds We Live and Persons We Encounter

The world, as we experience it, forms itself through our living it and thus presents a unique and indispensable aspect of each human being. How we experience our surroundings, how these experiences change (us), and how we can make sense of the relation between persons and their surroundings have occupied many scholars during the first half of the last century. In the following paragraphs, three studies are selected, which approach this topic from a phenomenological perspective in an exceptional way. With each study—Lewin’s War Landscape, Muchow’s Urban Child’s World, and Ichheiser’s Image of the other Man—a different focus on specific aspects belonging to the overall experience of a personal world is emphasized and a different methodological approach chosen.

Kurt Lewin’s War Landscapes

Die Gegend scheint da “vorne” ein Ende zu haben, dem “Nichts” folgt.² (Lewin 1917, p. 441)

During his years as a soldier, serving in the First World War, the 27-year-old Lewin noticed how the perception of his surroundings changed. He describes these qualitative changes of the landscapes in a little study published during his furlough in 1917. The appearance of a landscape transforms as the soldier, Kurt Lewin, approaches the front line. When the front and therefore the battlefield—the *war landscape*—is still far away, the *peace landscape* endlessly stretches out. It appears round and seemingly with no end or beginning, lacking in direction—“*undirected*.” The soldier has the impression that he could go on marching forever, never to arrive anywhere. Yet, as he approaches the battlefield, borders begin to emerge. The landscape now that has a direction is “*directed*,” it has a front and a back (*ein Hinten*). Lewin argues that this transformation does not simply emerge due to the individual’s awareness of increasing danger, but is experienced as a characteristic belonging to the concrete outside world. Due to the onlooker’s new needs, physical objects appear in a different quality: in battle, e.g., a soldier *needs* physical safety.

Along these lines, Lewin goes on to describes the difference between *peace things* and *battle things*: Same objects take on different qualities and contribute to

²Own translation: “The area ‘up front’ seems to have an end, upon which ‘nothing’ follows.”

the general appearance of the whole situation in a distinct manner. In addition to single objects, personal perception (who is perceiving the landscape—a soldier or a civilian), geographical space (where is the perception taking place—close to the battle field or far away), and social others (who else is within the vicinity—comrades, the enemy, or civilians) all play a part in how the landscape as a whole will be experienced:

The fact that people become members of this battle world is particularly evident in two phenomena: civilians who, by way of exception, have not fled from the battle zone, are still not perceived as things belonging to the battle world, unless they are suspected to be spies. Their presence is even enough to withdraw the battlefield character from the house or farm position within the battlefield; a bombardment of such a houses is therefore perceived as particularly harsh, as a kind of disturbance of peace. (Lewin 1917, p. 445, authors' translation)

Here, the soldier experiences incongruity. Civilians do not belong in battle zones, they are not “war things,” which is why shooting at and wounding or damaging a civilian and his belongings (e.g., the house) is experienced as especially harsh. Civilians and their houses belong to “peace things,” and peace things are not subject to the same experiences one has during battle.

With this little study, Lewin shows how the same landscape and the same objects are experienced by the same person as very different, depending on numerous aspects that are all part of a complete whole: the experience a person has of his world. Furthermore, with this phenomenological description, the intricate interrelations of persons and environment are clearly visible. Part of what characterizes persons, their acts, what they feel, their ways of thinking, and perceiving the world is their living space and vice versa.

Why Lewin did not further develop the phenomenological approach as methodological tool to further investigate the person–environment relation, we could only speculate on. What we do know is that the insights he gained from this little publication remained central. Many concepts he later developed are visible, e.g., the notion of *boundary*, *direction*, or *zone* (see also Heider 1959). But also the forces of the subjective experience of a *life space* and general Gestaltist assumptions are concepts Lewin never tired to emphasize. Marrow (1969), e.g., describes in reference to Lewin's 1930s work on children's behavior and environmental forces how: “[h]e denied the possibilities of an ‘average’ environment, for the same environment may assume a different quality depending on a number of characteristics, all of which affect the immediate circumstances surrounding the child” (Marrow 1969, p. 60).

Martha Muchow's Life Space of the Child

Once it became understood in psychology that, in an objectively equal life space, the “lived world” could be very different depending on the structure of the person who lived this world, it became necessary to turn to the then-current studies of the “person” and to investigate the “personal world.” (Muchow and Muchow, 1935/2015, p. 65)

About the same age as Lewin, two years his junior, Martha Muchow had almost as flourishing a career until 1933 as Lewin did. About 300 km northwest of Berlin, Muchow first studied under William Stern and later became a faculty member of the Hamburg Psychology Institute conducting her own research. With the subjective meaning construction of the children's personal worlds as main study objective, Muchow's study titled *Life space of the urban child* (1935/2015), postmortem published by her brother, can be viewed as milestone for multiple reasons. The most relevant for this chapter is that it was especially designed to capture the world—the life space—as it is and as it presents itself to the child as opposed to how it presents itself to the examiner. As Muchow is not as well known in psychology as, e.g., Lewin, not only her work but also her life and circumstances deserve special attention here.

Parallel to her work as a teacher in Hamburg, Muchow volunteers to assist during her free time in a study on testing youth's intelligence under Stern's supervision in 1917. For the next two years, she participated in developing observational surveys for testing intelligence in schools (Strnad 1949). Once the University of Hamburg was finally founded in 1919, she enrolled to study under Stern's supervision and within a year started working as a full time research and teaching assistant in the Psychological Laboratory (Wohlwill 1985). After completing her university degree in 1923, she continued to conduct her own studies as well as collaborate with Stern and other colleagues in various studies concerning youth related problems. With the overall aim of contributing to the understanding of how to conceptualize the child's world, the question of how the city environment influences or shapes the child came to be the primary concern due to a lecture series on *The city as life space and ways of life*³ conducted by Muchow and colleagues.

***Life Space of the Urban Child* (“*der Lebensraum des Großstadtkindes*”)**

These lecture series, organized under the mandate of the *Hamburger Volksheim*, were held during the winter months of 1927/28 (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015) and first piloting studies followed in 1928 and 1929. During the pilot studies, it rapidly became clear that the question of how the city environment *influenced* or *shaped* the child's conception of the world was in itself inadequate and contained fundamental flaws in conceptualizing the person–environment relationship. Rather:

The more the person-world relationship was rationalized in fundamental new manners, the more evident it became that, in the child-city relationship, it is not the world of the city that “only enters in contact with the person (child) through a subsequent convergence.” Rather,

³In German: *Die Großstadt als Lebensraum und Lebensform*.

the world “lived” by the urban child, as is the case with any “lived world,” is a particular life that takes place between person and world. Hence, the objective was no longer to investigate how an urban world, as described in a particular manner, influences children who live there, but to show how children transform their “city” into their environment, and how thereupon the “world lived by the child” represents the city. (Muchow and Muchow 1935/2015, pp. 63–64)

With this new research endeavor, Muchow and her team set out to empirically study children’s urban life spaces from 1930 to 1932 from three perspectives: the *space in which the child lives*, the *space the child experiences*, and finally the *space that is lived by the child* (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015, p. 65). About 109 children between the ages of nine and 14 were surveyed in the area of Bamberg and Hamburg, a working class neighborhood. Each child was given a regular map of Hamburg and asked to mark with a letter or a number the place where they lived (current and former), the (former and current) schools they attended, and, if applicable, places such as after school centers, sports clubs, gymnasium, library, and homes of friends and (extended) family members. They were then asked to trace and color public places and streets they often visited and knew very well blue and those streets through which they have passed, but did not know quite as well red.

What became visible from these maps was that the life space dimension a singular child occupies differs tremendously from child to child. One of the main findings was that while boys and girls have similar play space ranges, girls had a much smaller roaming space than boys did, approximately half the size. Muchow first concludes that this remarkable difference may be due to the fact that girls usually had to take on household chores and watch little siblings and thus lacked the opportunity to wander off far beyond the home vicinity. After examining this possibility, which she cannot verify from her data, she comes to the conclusion that girls may inherently not strive towards wandering off into far away places as much as boys do (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015, pp. 82–83).

After mapping out the space that the child experienced, the life spaces were analyzed in a second step with standardized surveys and additional essays. In the surveys, the children were asked to describe in writing the places familiar to them, what they did in these places, and what these places meant to them. For the essay task, children were asked to describe a regular Sunday. From this data, it became apparent that for the participating children, the central living space on Sundays focused on family life at home, while the streets represented the main living space during the week. The analysis of this data focused solely on the different forms of play which indicates, as Faulstich-Wieland and Faulstich (2012) have pointed out, that important parts of the child’s overall living space are not included (e.g., the home space or the school space is not taken into consideration).

The last part of the study, focusing on the space that the child lives, is the most encompassing. With different methods of passive participant observation, the aim was to infer how children transformed urban space from their behavior. Seven distinct spaces were chosen: the loading dock (*der Löschplatz*), a playground, a vacant lot, a residential area, a through street, a main street, and a department store.

Each location and how children use it is described in great detail. In particular, the descriptions of the loading docks are highly revealing in that they vividly depict how children actively live this space according to their own needs. Fenced off from the main road, adults are never spotted on it. As a matter of fact, especially the fence, a simple boundary marker within the adult world, structuring and impeding adult movement (adults are never observed coming into contact with the fence, let alone passing it in order to enter the embankment), is particularly inviting for the children. Almost every child tries to come into direct contact with the fence, which, within the child's world, transforms into a most variable interaction thing: "Therefore, what to us, adults, is an irrelevant and uninteresting object of the surrounding that exists only peripherally, namely our action space, becomes a thing for grasping, jumping, climbing, sitting, and squatting in the world of the child" (Muchow & Muchow 1935/2015, p. 100).

Similar to Lewin's War Landscape study from 1917, Muchow is able to depict the subjectivity, and with it its own validity, of a person's experience of the world. The world of the urban child, as the war landscape of a soldier, has distinct characteristics that are meaningful only in relation to the child or the soldier. To an adult or to a civilian, the same environment will be experienced qualitatively differently. What distinguishes Muchow's study and sets it apart from studies such as the War Landscape (or Ichheiser's study on human misunderstandings discussed below), is that she refrained from using her own introspective reflections to describe a phenomenon as it shows itself, but rather resorted to a multiplicity of research technics—as today would be termed as triangulation—with the aim of capturing someone else's phenomenal experience of the world. This goal remained central throughout the rest of her work: Muchow literally dedicated her whole life to investigating children and youths in Hamburg.

Despite the fact that Muchow was rather successful in presenting her studies to international colleagues in America in 1930 and 1931, she writes to a friend that she would not consider moving there permanently as: "one would have to do other things than she has planned to do. Only Germany provides her with the space she needs for her endeavors."⁴ Not long after that Muchow witnesses the rapidly growing Nazi regime in Germany, now not only publicly approving anti-Semitism, but rigorously enforcing it via legal action. During the same time of her mother's sudden death in 1933, Professor Stern and her colleague Heinz Werner are dismissed on the grounds of the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" (Moser 1991). Muchow nevertheless decides to stay in Germany and, as only Aryan within the Psychological Institute, it becomes her duty to hand over the institute to the newly appointed pedagogue Gustav Deuchler. Due to her remaining close ties and loyalty to Stern, Muchow is under heavy defamation and denunciation (Moser 1991) until she too is finally dismissed in the same year as Stern and Werner on the day of her 41st birthday in 1933. At this point, Muchow has exhausted her energies and decides to take her own life (Wohlwill 1985).

⁴Own translation from a letter cited in Strnad 1949, p. 16.

Gustav Ichheiser's Image of the Other Man

The author aroused our curiosity as a man who is alive to the perplexing and perturbing problems of our time, and a picture of his personality took shape in our minds. (Ichheiser 1940, p. 277)

The final, but equally important, proponent of a phenomenological psychology we would like to introduce here is Gustav Ichheiser. Ichheiser, a contemporary of Lewin and Muchow, started his career as a psychologist in Vienna where he was first inscribed at the Faculty of Philosophy to study psychology. During his years in Vienna, Ichheiser builds his theoretical foundations for all of his later work. The emergence of a Gestalt as dynamically constituted within the interactions of subjective and objective given realities is a field of interest Ichheiser began with his work on aesthetics under Bühler's supervision in 1924 (Ichheiser 1924) and continuously investigated it from various angles and levels—e.g., personal, interpersonal, and group level—until his death in 1969. We here focus on his 1940 publication titled *The image of the other man: Studies in Social Psychology* as his most prominent example. We do not intend to give a full overview of his work here, but rather a brief insight to some work done by an excellent phenomenologically oriented psychologist of the last century, who has largely been neglected.

The Image of the Other Man

In his 1940 publication on the image of the other man, Ichheiser investigates the “so-called phenomena of expression” (p. 279) and differentiates two perspectives that are usually blurred or confused. On the one hand, we have the *expressions* that which person A gives off, and on the other hand, the *impressions*, the image I have formed of person A. Ichheiser points out that while in everyday life, we usually assume that forms of expression are in some factual manner the other person's real character,⁵ professional psychologists often blur these two aspects as well. He thus explicates:

We mean, in the first place, that—to put it in the most general terms—there exist some kind of real relationship between the inner and the outward personality. We mean, in the second place, that the outward forms of expressions of a personality somehow determine the impression which another person receives of that personality; in other words, that the other person interprets and uses them as *symbol* which somehow convey some personal characteristics of that *personality*. (Ichheiser 1940, p. 279)

Ichheiser refers to a personal experience to exemplify this relationship more closely. He describes how he comes across a book by a local author, reads it, and is

⁵Note that Ichheiser's work on attribution goes back to his early works from the 1920s. For a more comprehensive discussion on Ichheiser's contributions to social psychology and attribution theory see Rudmin et al. (1987).

impressed by how much energy and elegance this style of writing displays. An image of the author forms in Ichheiser's mind. A meeting at the author's house is arranged and Ichheiser punctually attends. Yet, at his home he encounters multiple surprises:

[T]he furniture of the room fails to 'correspond' to the image of the man which we should have expected; it does not correspond to the picture which formed itself in our mind on reading the novel. More than that – it really contradicts this picture ... The room disturbs us because it is furnished in bad taste, old-fashioned and overcrowded. (Ichheiser 1940, p. 277)

The confusion Ichheiser experiences continues to grow:

Before we have had time to sort out our conflicting feelings and impressions the door opens and our host enters the room. Our confusion assumes the dimension of a shock. For how can the gentleman who confronts us possibly be the creator of the stirring, powerful work which made so deep and moving an impression on us? Instead of the ascetic figure which we had expected, we find a rotund gentleman of advanced years who greet us with a friendly, good-natured smile. (Ichheiser 1940, pp. 277–278)

At that moment the old man strikes a conversation with a joyful tone and sparkling eyes and Ichheiser's image of the local author is quickly revised, the young demeanor with which the author speaks matches his writing style.

Here, we clearly see the two sides together dynamically forming one phenomenon: the image of a person. The image takes shape and changes over time as encounters with the other man and cues belonging to him are used to match expressions with impressions, forming an overall image. In Ichheiser's descriptions, we can follow these tuning processes continuously and see not only how the phenomena takes shape, but also which mechanisms and facets are involved and how these are all linked: The book itself is youthful and dynamic, the furniture is old-fashioned and somehow seems inappropriate, the physical appearance is old and mild, the actual conversation filled with juvenile spirit, and so on.

The task of the remaining pages of Ichheiser's 1940 publication is to differentiate and analyze underlying psychological mechanisms. The following main components are discussed:

1. *The material of the image of the other man*: All the data, in and by means of which the other man is "given" to us.
2. *Mechanisms of interpretation*: All processes of developing the material, all forms of apperception, all formative tendencies which in one way or another mould [sic] the raw material into the shape of the image of the other man.
3. *Mechanisms of deception*: Mechanisms of all interpretation which function not so much to form, as to falsify and distort the image of the other man.
4. *The image of the other man*: The product and final result of the manipulations of the given material by the mechanisms of interpretation, or in other words, it is the other man as he appears to us when the material has passed through the prism of the mechanism of interpretation.
5. *The consciousness of the other man*: This is the correlative to the image of the other man. It is the form of consciousness which operates in the responsive

social sphere...The structure of the image of the other man and the form of our consciousness of him correspond to each other and are at bottom merely two aspects of the same phenomenon (Ichheiser 1940, pp. 290–291).

Ichheiser uses this phenomenological approach in multiple studies and repeatedly defends it in favor over experimental investigations that dominated psychological investigations of his time. He does this not in order to dismiss experimental methods *per se*, but rather because he believes that many problems are misconceived before investigations even begin and in a second step misanalyzed due to a common fallacy: confusing the description of a phenomenon with the explanation of it. He is convinced that “[o]ur factual understanding is therefore a descriptive (phenomenological) one, which should always be kept in mind” (Ichheiser 1934, p. 130, own translation) and that “[a] last source of deception related to perception psychology can be finally explained with the fact that we are primarily directed not towards describing, but rather towards explaining the phenomenal and that we generally confused descriptive and explanatory method” (Ichheiser 1928, p. 438, own translation).

While Ichheiser managed to escape the Nazi regime in 1938, he struggled until his death to receive recognition from the American scientific community. With the supported of a few colleagues at the University of Chicago, Ichheiser managed to continue to publish throughout most of his life. Without a steady university position and with an interruption of institutionalization for over 10 years on the grounds of being diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia (Ichheiser 1966), Ichheiser nevertheless published outstanding pieces of work that exemplify not only his astute ability to perceive and analyze social problems and human misunderstandings, but also his critical standpoint and his ambitions to proclaim this position at all costs. Not rarely at the cost of his colleagues and friends, whom he himself generally called his “pseudo or quasi friends.”⁶ In 1969, Ichheiser is found dead in his rooms in Chicago with signs of suicide.

Conclusion

For a psychology as a science of the human being, our aim in this chapter was to give a glimpse into the history of psychology, as it emerged in Austria and Germany during the beginning of the last century, in order to show how phenomenological analyses that were rich in content had been included into experimental as well as non experimental research endeavors. After this tradition was brutally interrupted by political circumstances, psychology largely neglected to continue to analyze the intricate processes of person–environment relations through

⁶As can be read in letters kept in the Archives of the University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center, e.g., addressed to Everett Hughes from William Ireland dated February, 1970, in Hughes Everett Cherrington Papers, Box 32, Folder 15.

phenomenological approaches. Yet, psychology, we argue, would gain tremendously in substance if a phenomenological approach is once again embraced and further developed. Cornejo (2008), as fine current example, aptly demonstrates the importance of focusing on the *experience* of relations *between* person, other, and object, within an environment. Directing his attention on the forgotten phenomenological dimension of meaning in language, he argues that:

A minimal communicative situation circumscribes the meaning construction process in micro-social interactions. *It involves: the phenomenological experience of Speaker and Hearer; a social interaction between them; and an environmentally situated Reference.* Approaching the minimal communicative situation therefore requires realizing *that the phenomenological dimension is always implied in any intersubjective encounter.* Intersubjectivity analyses usually ignore this point: Language comprehension is produced *if and only if a common experiencing exists.* (Cornejo 2008, p. 174, our own emphasis added)

Note that the shared experience must exist prior to comprehension. Along similar lines, we would like to bring attention to precisely this phenomenological experience of humans *in relation to their worlds*, to their lived space, and urge future researchers not to neglect the experiential aspect of being a human within an environment. Kharlamov (2012) can be cited as further example of a current psychology scholar who brought forth a developmental model of the experience of spatial encounters. His analysis of city space demonstrates the utmost importance of focusing not only on social, historical/developmental, and object related interactions, but on the lived space that manifests itself between these interactions for understanding the human experience as a whole—as something that goes beyond a simple aggregation of singular (and sometimes conceptualized as unrelated) parts. Such analyses are scarce and present a blind spot in most of contemporary psychology. To join Ichheiser's discontent, we urge the reader to stop and consider turning toward a phenomenological tradition in the sense of a descriptive psychology that is rich in content and to analyze some of the most obvious facts concerning the human condition: the experience of social, historical/developmental, and cultural meaning construction in space.

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Chapter 3

Cultural Psychology of Desire

Sergio Salvatore

With this paper, I set myself an ambitious purpose: to place desire at the core of the semiotic theory of mind pursued by cultural psychology. Think and knowing are what is considered to make the human being human. Yet, one always experiences oneself and others as desiring subjects—we think and know because we believe, we want, we wish, and we need and act towards: *Homo sapiens* is such because it is *homo desiderans*. Thus, the semiotic cultural theory of mind will make a significant step ahead in the moment when it is able to recognize the role of desire in sensemaking.

As one can find in a dictionary, the notion of *desire* is usually understood in common language as the sense of passionate search or of waiting for something, for the sake of acquiring, fulfilling, and accomplishing what is felt as required in order to satisfy our preferences and needs. I propose a different definition that might satisfy our science. According to this definition, desire is not germane to seeking, willing, commitment, need, and so forth—rather, it is the embodied semiotic dynamic providing the condition for making the object available to be the target of the tension we usually regard as desire (and that in this article I will denote with the term “appetite”). In other words—we do not desire what we see; rather, we see what we desire. My thesis is that this change of focus enables cultural psychology to get a better understanding of the micro-genesis of the appetite towards the object.

The Dynamic of Sensemaking

My definition of desire is grounded on a more general view of the micro-dynamic of sensemaking that I have discussed in more detail in some previous works of mine (Salvatore 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015; Salvatore and Venuleo 2013; Fronterotta and Salvatore, submitted). This section is devoted to briefly outlining such a view.

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Presentation

First, I assume a processual ontology as general framework. According to such a view, objects are not self-contained entities, endowed with inner properties. Objects do not pre-exist to sensemaking. Rather, they are the emergent product of the way they are signified. In the terms of Alexius Meinong's ontology (Albertazzi et al. 2001), they subsist. The subsistence of the object is the property of being predicable—namely the quality of having qualities. Existence is the basic quality, which an object can (or cannot) have. Therefore, one has to conclude that subsistence is a more general condition than existence, namely that there subsist both existing and non-existing objects (Valsiner 2009; see also Salvatore and Valsiner 2010). This gives rise to an important consequence: to predicate—i.e. to attribute a quality to an object—is ipso facto to make it subsistent, namely to introduce it into the psychological realm of signification.

This point is highlighted by the Gestalt theories' concept of *presentation*: the subject does not re-present, in the sense that it does not pick up and reproduce in the mind the “thing” that is already out there. Rather, the subject *makes the thing present*—i.e. she/he presentifies it—brings something into focus. Needless to say, this is not the same as saying that the subject creates the object ex nihilo. The subject does not look like God; rather, it looks like the artist who extracts a form from the infinite opportunities that matter allows. A woodcarver turns a block of wood into a sculpture that is no longer a block of wood—yet the material was necessary for its presentation as a sculpture. The world (the whole set of opportunities) provides the *conditions of the presentation*—namely the energy-matter feeding the process of presentation as well as the constraints within which it works.

The World as Neg-Form

The idea of the world as the set of conditions of presentation leads us beyond the idea of it as corresponding to how we experience it, namely as a container of objects, an object in its turn. If it were so, it would not work as the condition of possibility (of presentation) of the experience, but as an object of the experience. Consequently, the world needs to be conceived as having not its own form—if it were so, it would be an object. Yet, it may not be void of form—if so, it would not be able to work as the condition of possibility of the experience. Thus, one has to conclude that the world is a *neg-form*, namely it consists of a *set of constraints* upon the possible extractions of forms (i.e. the presentation of objects): it is in a perennial potential state, available for ongoing dynamics of presentation. In sum, the world has a negative structure—it defines what cannot be and through that—what can be. But it does not determine what *has* to be.

Any presentified object is contingent to a certain subset of constraints—it is made up of a certain dynamic pattern of connections which can be defined only

within and in terms of a specific subset of constraints—connections require constraints: if all possible occurrences were allowed to be linked with each other, no linkage would be possible.

Constraints Make Possibilities

One can define reality as the specific subset of distribution of constraints in accordance with and in terms of which a certain cluster of forms (therefore objects, intended as stable clusters of forms) is made up. Accordingly, reality is a *peculiar pertinentization of the world*, namely the foregrounding of a certain subset of the infinite set of constraints the world consists of. Thus, there are infinite realities, as many forms of pertinentization of the world are possible. Yet the infiniteness of reality does not mean that every reality is possible, because the infinite set of constraints is, however, closed.

In sum, objects and facts are the output of the pertinentization of a certain reality consisting of a given reduction of the infinite neg-form of the world. Any living entity constitutes a dynamic process of reduction of the infinite possibilities, namely a *device of pertinentization of the world*. Any body is endowed with its own self-organization that is perturbed by the interaction with the world. The body's answer to the perturbation is made in the terms of its self-organization, for the sake of maintaining it (Maturana and Varela 1980; Salvatore 2015). The transformation of the body produced by the answer can thus be considered the way of maintaining the identity of the system. At the same time, the transformation of the body constitutes the reduction of the dimensionality of the infinite space of possibilities in which the presentation of the object consists of.

The Micro-Dynamic of Presentation

To summarize what has been stated so far:

- (a) Objects subsist as potentiality of the neg-form of the world;
- (b) Objects come into existence as the content of experience, through and in the terms of the reduction of the infinite possibilities of pertinentization the world provides; and
- (c) Thus, the presentation looks like sculpture: the form is closed (i.e. the object is presentified) by means of taking off what exceeds.

In the final analysis, the central point at stake here is that in order to have experience of something—in order to perceive, interpret and therefore to have the appetite for it, the object has to be presentified, namely the form has to be closed. And closing the form consists, first of all, of the reduction of the possible linkages among the occurrences, in order to foreground just some of them, through the backgrounding of the others.

Thus, the processes involved—foregrounding and backgrounding—are the ones that lead to the completion of the form. To close the form is to enact such an asymmetrization of the field of experience—i.e. to background what, in so doing, is non-pertinent—and therefore enabling the setting of linkages among what remains. Thus, the form is not inherent to the object: it emerges from the interplay of foregrounding and backgrounding.

The inversion of perspective implied in the last statement is worth underlining. The subject does not perceive a figure at first and *then* put in the background what is not relevant. Instead, the process is simultaneous—she/he shapes the field of experience so as to reduce its infinite complexity, and this makes the form emerge. This means that sensemaking, from its basic modalities intertwined with perception, works in terms of a *mechanism of abstraction–abduction*: aspects of the field of stimulation are abstracted (namely, are made pertinent, cf. Bühler 1934/1990) as a result the backgrounding of most of the potentialities and the organization of linkages in the foregrounding occurrences is enabled. As a result, the form is closed. The two processes work at the service of one another—the backgrounding allows the presentation of the form, and the presentation allows the backgrounding to stabilize.

At the basic perceptual level, this mechanism was highlighted by Gestalt theory and so it does not require to be examined in more depth here. I limit my example to a reconsideration of the stroboscopic phenomenon. Given certain conditions (distance between the light sources, duration of the activation of the bulb), what one sees is the same point of light *moving between* the sources (Wertheimer 1912/1961). Now, what has to be considered is that to see such a movement entails fading off all properties of the light sources that are non-pertinent with the closed form (i.e. with the stroboscopic movement). If, due to certain characteristics of the field of experience (e.g. duration of the illumination, distance among the sources) and/or of the observer's attitude (e.g. the attentional focus), bulbs' properties other than the ones enslaved to the stroboscopic movement (i.e. their being on/off) were made pertinent (i.e. properties such as the shape of the bulbs, their colour), then no stroboscopic effect would emerge.

Anyway, the pertinentization of the field of stimulation is a mechanism that works not only at the basic perceptive level. The fact is that any pattern of occurrence in the field of experience is a set of potential properties: to make sense to the pattern consists of selecting a subset of such properties—the object that emerges is constituted by such selected properties. Consider the picture of Fig. 3.1. If one were asked what it is, probably the answer would be that it is a dice—and that would not be wrong, of course. Nevertheless, it is also a piece of a certain material (wood?), a device used in a certain context of games, a cube, a black and white object, a cheap artefact, and so forth. To see a dice requires/consists of not seeing the rest.

The Stroop effect (Stroop 1935) provides an example of the constitutive function of backgrounding. It shows what happens when this function is hampered. A subject is asked to say as quickly as possible the colour of the ink some words are printed in. The name denotes colours. Two conditions are compared: in one condition, the name

Fig. 3.1 What is this?

of the colour corresponds to the colour of the name (for instance, the colour “black” is printed in black ink), and in the other condition, it is not (for instance, the colour “black” is printed in red ink). The Stroop effect consists in the fact that the subject will take longer and will be subjected to more errors in the second condition, namely when the name of the colour is printed in a different colour from the one indicated by the name, than in the first condition, when the ink and the name of the colour coincide. It is well known that the Stroop effect has been considered a demonstration of the automaticity of the semantic processing of the word—the person cannot but take into account the meaning of the word, and therefore, when this meaning is in contrast with the characteristic of the stimulus that the task focuses on—e.g. the colour of the ink to recognize and report—it interferes with the performance. According to the discussion above, such interference shows how the interpretation of a stimulus is a matter of pertinentization: the longer the subject takes to detect the colour of the name is the time that has to be spent to fade off the property of the stimulus concerning with its semantic content, in order to constitute it as an object consisting of its chromatic quality, and only that.

The Field Nature of the Presentation

The discussion on presentation would be incomplete if a further aspect were not considered—namely the fact that the qualities subjected to backgrounding are not inherent characteristics of the pattern of stimulation, but are field properties. This is

evident in the example of the dice provided above. The properties that make such an object a dice or a cube are not within the object, but in the way it is connected with what is around it—the way of using it, the activity it is involved in, and so forth. Consider following further examples. A banknote, a screwdriver, a pen, a car, a book, and a computer: they are all examples of patterns of occurrences whose properties that are pertinentized depend on a certain social system of activity, namely they are object of a certain kind only within and because of a certain cultural world. A Martian coming from a planet where there are no financial transactions would see a sheet of paper where we see a banknote. Screwdrivers exist only in a world where there are screws. The pattern of energy-matter constituting the screwdriver could exist anyway, but not the way of interpreting it as a screwdriver. Searle (1995) considers this characteristic typical of only a certain class of objects. I tend to think that the process of presentation is ubiquitous, even if it can be more or less deep and generalized and therefore that it can be clearer in some circumstances and more latent in others, so that in the latter cases, the objects *seem* to have inherent properties.

In sum, the properties of objects are always relational—in a more or less evident way, they resemble characteristics such as “late”, “too”, “up”..., namely qualities whose meaning consists of a specific position with respect to something else in a certain dimension (space, time, weight, value...). Again, consider colour—it seems to belong to the object, but we know how the chromatic characteristics of the object vary according to the type of light and of the colour of other objects in the perceptual field. Wolfgang Köhler’s experiment with the chicken (Köhler 1918; reported in Vygotsky and Luria 1993, p. 55ff) shows how the contingency of the colour to the situation is not the mere effect of an external source of distortion of the otherwise inherent property of the object. As we know, the chicken was exposed to two sheets of paper, one being light grey and the other dark grey. On both some grains were put, yet only the ones on the former sheet of paper were actually available. So, the chicken learnt to turn to the light grey paper to obtain the feed. Once such learning was acquired, Köhler substituted the other sheet of paper with a white one. Quite surprising, the chicken did not continue to seek the food on the light grey sheet, but turned to the white one. And this shows how the chicken did not treat the colour as an inherent property of the sheet of paper (if so, it should have kept the preference on the light grey sheet), but as a *relational characteristic*: it learnt to seek the food on the *lighter* sheet of paper, a characteristic that corresponds to the position of the light grey paper in the former field of stimulation, but to the white paper in the latter. Thus, a field property is a characteristic that depends on the relation it has with the whole it is part of.

Let me present one last example of the field contingency of the properties, this time concerning the semantic domain. Consider the term “orange”. What does it denote? Of course, one could say that it denotes a fruit. This is not wrong—it is the most frequent answer, but not the only one. In fact, now put the term “orange” in the same set with the following terms: apple, melon, peach, and pomegranate. Actually, the idea of it as denoting a fruit would be thus enforced. But now consider the set composed of orange, potato, corn, aubergine, and cabbage. In such a context,

one is led to consider orange as a food. Moreover, put orange together with ball, moon, balloon, and ball bearing. Its meaning is now changed—it will be seen as a sphere. The term “orange” can be interpreted according to all these qualities, and very many—infinite—others. Field linkages lead us to background some of these qualities and thus to let others emerge as relevant. The indexicality of meaning consists of that field contingency (Salvatore et al. 2012).

Semiotic Scenario

In previous work, I proposed to model the asymmetrization of the field in terms of scenarios, where any scenario comprises a peculiar distribution of probability of association among signs (Salvatore and Venuleo 2013). This proposal is grounded on the Peircian idea of the infiniteness of semiosis, entailing a backward–forward dynamic. According to this idea, the sign does not convey any meaning; rather, on the one hand, it stands for something else, but, on the other hand, it re-interprets the way the previous sign stands for this something else. Thus, the sign does not have an inner content; rather, its meaning lies in the fact that it allows the semiotic chain to reproduce itself. In other words, the meaning of the sign is the following sign, the latter being the way of interpreting the former, namely of interpreting the relation the previous sign has with the sign that comes before it (Salvatore 2015). In the final analysis, Peirce’s notion of infinite semiosis leads to see the sensemaking in terms of the dynamic of connections among signs through time. Accordingly, the meaning is the shape of the trajectory that such connections draw.

This view raises the issue of how a sign is selected as the following sign interpreting the previous. In order to respond to this issue, it is worth observing that in order to understand the combination among signs, one has to avoid any recourse to higher functions—namely, one cannot treat the combination among signs as a matter of choice—evaluation, search, and so forth—carried out by an intentional agent. This commonsensical view is the one everyone adopts in daily life; it is at the basis and is reflected in the fundamental assumption that we are the owner of our thoughts and that we drive our thoughts and way of combining them. Social life could not go on without such a basic assumption. Yet it is not feasible at a theoretical level, when the issue is to model sensemaking. Indeed, the combination of signs is the mechanism through which sensemaking is explained; therefore, the sensemaking (the person’s way of thinking, choosing...) cannot be used to explain it. In other words, the introduction of any explanation implying higher level functions would lead to the homunculus paradox—one would have to explain how the homunculus’ combination of signs (i.e. the combination of signs making up the sensemaking process allowing the homunculus to carry out the selection of the sign) works, and so forth ad infinitum. Thus, one has to conclude that the best way of modelling the dynamic of combination of signs through time is to consider them in terms of *habit*. According to such a view, a certain sign (say A) tends to be followed by a certain other sign (say B) because B has so far been the most frequent

following sign of A. And this is the same as saying that the association A–B is a habit. In the final analysis, this way of seeing the combination highlights the *embodied roots of sensemaking*—the association among signs are instances of procedural knowledge, reflecting dynamic forms of the body, the ones that correspond to the preference to respond to a certain pattern of body modifications (the modifications sign A consists of) with a certain pattern of modifications of this pattern of modifications (the modification sign B consists of). In the final analysis, this view claims that interpreting is no different from kicking a ball—it is a matter of a dynamic pattern of patterns of modifications—a form of procedural knowledge.

Now, the idea that the association of signs is a matter of probability raises an important issue. Consider the occurrence of sign *a*. Consider the infinite set of all signs that can follow—and thus interpret—*a*. According to the view of the combination as a habit, the probability of any sign of the set to follow *a* is a function of the frequency with which each of them followed *a* in previous circumstances. This helps to understand how and why a sign is selected from the infinite class of virtual following signs. Yet it does not explain how and why the sign *a* can be followed—and usually is followed—by very many other signs. If the following sign depended on a certain fixed distribution of probability, the selection of the following sign should always lead to the selection of the same sign (or few signs), namely the one that has the most frequent association with *a*. We know that sensemaking does not work in this way. It is constrained—not everything could follow sign *a*—but it has many degrees of freedom, of polysemy—so as to make the trajectory of sign unpredictable enough.

To summarize—sensemaking works in accordance with a distribution of probability that is, at the same time, symmetrical (if not, no degree of freedom would be possible) and asymmetrical (if not, no selection of the following sign would be possible). The solution to such a puzzling issue is to consider that both aspects are present, yet at a different scale of observation: the distribution of probability has to be seen as globally symmetrical and locally asymmetrical. This is possible if the distribution is intended in terms of meta-distribution, namely as *distribution of distributions*, each of them characterized by an asymmetrical series of values of probabilities associated with signs. To use an image, the meta-distribution is like an overlap of slices, each of them defining a specific set of asymmetrical relationships among signs. Accordingly, the sign that follows is selected from the infinite class of potential following signs due to the fact that a certain component—a slice—of the latter is involved. Any slice corresponds to a distribution of probability—insofar as a certain distribution is made pertinent, the sign that according to this distribution is the most probable to follow is selected.

I propose to consider such a slice in terms of a *scenario of experience*. As intended here, a scenario of experience (henceforth: scenario) is a meaningful unit of subjective experience of the world sustained by a redundant (micro)domain of life characterized by a somewhat stable dynamic network of co-occurring signs and therefore a particular distribution of the probability of their being related. In other words, a scenario is an embodied generalized meaning, corresponding to a way of

activation of the body associated with a prototypical unit of social life (see Salvatore 2015 for a discussion of the similarities and differences that the notion of semiotic scenario has with concepts such as language games, frame, unconscious phantasies, and Generalized Inner Representations).

Desire as the Engine of Sensemaking

Bivalence of Meaning

The notion of scenario entails the view of sensemaking as characterized by a twofold dynamic. On the one hand, sensemaking is the process of selecting the following sign. On the other hand, however, such selection is made possible by the pertinentization of one or more scenarios according to which the following sign can be selected. In the final analysis, the pertinentization of scenario puts a local boundary on the infinite potential associability—interpretability—of the sign, in so doing allowing the possibility of interpreting it.

Various statistical procedures of multidimensional analysis (principal component analysis, multidimensional correspondence analysis) provide an analogy of the process of pertinentization of scenarios: the variability of the whole data set—what can be made in correspondence with the global variability of the field of experience—is reduced by means of fading off components of it. In so doing, some informative relationships among data come to be foregrounded (the one detected by the factorial dimensions kept in the analysis), and this is assumed as a valid map of the information held in the whole data set. The same happens with the pertinentization of scenarios. Each scenario corresponds to a factorial dimension—the reduction of the field of experience to a certain set of scenarios corresponds to the backgrounding of the marginal factorial dimensions, and this allows some association among signs to be carried out.

The twofold nature of the dynamic of sensemaking highlights the *bivalence* of meaning. Meaning is composed by two components: on the one hand, the following sign interpreting the previous. This text is an example of this component: it represents a sequence of sign (words, sentences)—each of which adds a quantum of interpretation to the previous one, and at the same time, it is open to be interpreted by the following. On the other hand, the meaning lies in the scenario according to which such syntagmatic trajectory is made possible, namely the scenario(s) according to which the trajectory represents the most probable form of association among signs. Let me come back to the example of the dice. One can imagine that the following sign interpreting such an image varies according to the scenario at stake—in some scenarios, the association Fig. 3.1—“it is a dice” is more probable than the association Fig. 3.1—“it is a cube” (in a scenario concerned with probability and/or gambling, and/or luck, and/or destiny, hope...); otherwise in other scenarios (e.g. the scenario of schooling, of abstract reasoning...). Thus, to

associate the image with the word “dice”, it is not only a way of interpreting the image in terms of its quality of being a dice, it is also *a way of reproducing the scenario according to which this interpretation is made possible*.

Elsewhere we have proposed (Salvatore and Venuleo 2013) to name Significance in Praesentia (SIP) the first component of the meaning, and Significance in Absentia (SIA) the second. Thus, the SIA is the pertinentized scenario according to which the trajectory of following sign (the SIP) is enacted. With the latter definition, I intend to highlight the dynamic field valence of the meaning. In particular, the meaning of a sign is not held within it but consists of the scenario that the sign requires to be active in order to be selected as the following sign. This means that the scenario is not a frame that exists independently from the combination of signs and that as such guides the selection of the following signs. Rather, the scenario is activated and reproduced through time abductively, as the most efficient way of making the unfolding of the trajectory of signs possible. In other words, the SIA is not a latent meaning that pushes from the outside and in a top-down way the trajectory of signs. Rather, the pertinentization of the scenario (i.e. the SIA) and the selection of the sign work co-extensively.

What has been said above allows us to highlight how the scenario constitutes the *condition of interpretability* of the sign. This point can be expressed in two complementary ways. On the one hand, given that, as we have said, the following sign is selected in accordance with a given scenario, the interpretation of the previous sign is possible only on the condition and in terms of the scenario being active. Therefore, the scenario is the condition of interpretability of the sign in the sense that it is the *conditio sine qua non* of the selection of the interpreting sign. On the other hand, the following sign is interpretable as following the previous sign only if and on the condition that the sensemaker activates the scenario according to which the following sign acquires the value of most probable following sign. According to this point of view, to say that the scenario is the condition of interpretability means that in the final analysis, the meaning of the previous sign is the scenario required to be active in the mind of the interpreter in order to link backwardly following and previous sign.

Consider the following example. A person meets a friend by chance in front of a shopping centre. The friend recognizes him and—with an expression showing both pleasure for the encounter and surprise at its unexpectedness—states: “You’re wasting time and money as usual, aren’t you?”. The person to whom the question is addressed will probably interpret it as an ironic way of saying hello and underlining the causality of the encounter and thus will respond consistently, in a way that will enable a form of attunement. For example, he might say something like: “Yes, you know me too well. I can’t have any secrets from you”. Or he could just return the hello, without prolonging the joke. However, his response will be a following sign that very probably conveys the interpretation of the previous sign (i.e. the question) as a friendly, ironic form of positive connotation of the encounter and somehow underlining the causality of it. Now, the point to underline here is that there is no need to assume the previous salience of a scenario of friendship in order to explain the interpreting answer. Rather, in so doing avoiding any reference to a

hypostatized entity, one can see the answer as an interpretation whose meaning lies in the fact that it requires the abductive activation of a certain scenario of friendship to make sense. Thus, the example shows the complementary nature of terms that is entailed in the view proposed here: the scenario being active allows the selection of the new sign, and at the same time, the new sign triggers the scenario backwards as its condition of interpretability. This complementarity can be conceivable once one assumes that sensemaking unfolds through time. According to such a dynamic aspect, the complementarity can be seen in terms of a recursive loop between the two components.

Free-schema crosswords provide an analogy of this abductive recursion: the local solutions (the words to insert in the schema) are not chosen on the basis of an already available structure; rather, the structure is developed together and by means of the identification of the words, as the global set of constraints allowing the fittest solutions to be identified; from a complementary point of view, the developing structure is used as the condition for producing local solutions. The same dynamic, recursive linkage characterizes the relation between following sign and scenario: the sign is selected according to the scenario, and at the same time, the latter is reproduced as the condition of interpretability that is required in order to treat the following occurrence as an interpreting sign.

The Performative Valence of Sensemaking

At the phenomenological level, the scenario can be depicted in terms of *premise of sense*. As intended here, the premise of sense is the generalized, latent meaning that one has to assume in order to make the linkage between the sign and the following sign *sensical*. Such a generalized, latent meaning shapes a world with respect to which the interpretation produced by the linkage is thinkable. I adopt the neologism “sensical” in order to underline that the premise of sense does not make the sign agreed on in its content, but—in a more basic way—it makes it something to be subjected to interpretation, namely something assumed as standing for something else: the interpreter can disagree with the interpretation conveyed by the linkage; however, this disagreement may be just because the interpretation is an interpretation, namely because the linkage is recognized as endowed with a meaning. In the final analysis, to say that the premise of sense is the condition of interpretability is the same as saying that the premise of sense is the world within which the linkage between the sign and the following one acquires semiotic status, a certain following event comes to be treated as the following sign. In sum, *the premise of sense is the condition thanks to which the experience is semiotized*.

Consider the following example. A person feels in deep trouble and turns to God for help. Suddenly, the cloudy sky opens and a ray of sun appears. He interprets it as the sign of the benevolence of God and feels comforted. Well, the point here is that the sun’s appearing is not a sign always and however; it is treated as the following sign of the person’s discomfort (something like: |my discomfort is not

absolute because God is caring for me])—in so doing entering the semiotic chain—only on the condition that the interpreter assumes he lives in a world where God exists, is benevolent, and is willing to communicate with human beings. It is only in (on the condition of) such a world that the ray of sunlight can come to be charged with meaning, namely to be made sensical—namely, to be semiotized. If the person assumed a different world (e.g. a world where God does not exist), the ray of sun could not be linked to the semiotic chain.

The idea of the premise of sense as a generalized meaning instantiating a possible world allows the sensemaking's abductive and performative way of working to be highlighted (Salvatore 2015). The premise of sense is the equivalent of the event C whose past occurrence makes the fact A (i.e. the sign) a matter of course.¹ Thus, as the detective reconstructs backwardly the scene of crime (C) from and through the clues (A), the interpreter reconstructs the possible world from/through A—in both cases for the sake and according to the rule of making A a matter of course.

The performativeness of the sensemaking lies precisely in this—the world of meaning (the premise of sense) is activated by means of the enactment of A: the sign is produced, and in so doing, the condition of its interpretation is produced as well. The act (i.e. the production of a sign) is not triggered by meaning; rather, it comes before the meaning and produces it—as the condition of its (i.e. of the act) interpretation (Salvatore, forthcoming). The meaning is the effect of the action.

Desire as Pertinentization

My definition of desire is based and descends from the dynamic view of sensemaking I have outlined above. I propose to consider desire the act of pertinentization allowing a scenario to emerge. Accordingly, desire is the embodied enactment enabling the subject to inhabit a world where certain occurrences are endowed with *sensicality*, namely they acquire the status of signs being prone to feed a certain semiotic chain of interpretation rather than another.

If we proceed through this definition, desire is not the appetitive yearning to grasp the object; rather, it is the process of the semiotic construction of it as content of experience, and thus able to have properties, therefore the quality of being

¹It must be remembered that abduction, although it is very little hampered by logical rules, nevertheless is logical inference, asserting its conclusion only problematically or conjecturally. It is true, but nevertheless having a perfect definite logical form.[...] The form of inference, therefore, is this

The surprising fact, C, is observed;
 But if A were true, C would be a matter of course,
 Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true. (Peirce 1902/1932, CP 5.188–189)

appealing. Thus, as intended here, desire has to be considered as the “engine” of sensemaking, the dynamic of presentation that transforms the ongoing here-and-now immersion in the flow of experience into the experiences of discrete things in semiotic relation among them, namely in things endowed with qualities, meaning, and value.

One might wonder if it is worth adopting the term desire for this process. Why should one change the definition of a concept that has a clear reference in the daily experience of each human being? The reason is that the mission of psychology is to build models that can explain the human experience and in order to that has to go beyond the experience. Culture already provides systems of meaning enabling people to understand their experience from within it; the task of the psychology is to understand such systems of meaning in their capability of regulating and substantiating experience, rather than to adopt them (Salvatore, forthcoming). To say this with regard to desire, all people somehow believe they know their own desire and understand what triggers it and how it affects their choices and acts. No one could live without this basic belief. Nevertheless, the understanding of one’s own (and others’) desire is not an exercise of psychology, but the commonsensical, culturally grounded and guided interpretation of experience. Thus, it is a phenomenon that has to be modelled from a psychological point of view (Salvatore 2015). My definition of desire as pertinentization works in such a perspective: it provides a tool for modelling the phenomenology of the appetitive tension (what a person experiences as desire) from a semiotic viewpoint.

On the other hand, I have allowed the term desire to denote the semiotic process making up the experience of desire because the two aspects are intertwined—or rather, they are sides of the same gestalt. More specifically, on the one hand, as we have said above, desire is the modality of sensemaking that constitutes experience. One may want/tend towards the object because of the process of pertinentization that has made it possible to experience such an object: in order to feel the object as endowed with desirable qualities, the object has to be present in the field of experience. Thus, from this point of view, desire as pertinentization is a ubiquitous dynamic that grounds any form of relation with the world—seeking as well as avoiding, consumption as well as knowledge, and so forth. This is so because desire is at the core of the very possibility of experiencing the world. Accordingly, the appetite towards the object—the experience of desiring—is the phenomenological reflex/index of the desire. On the other hand, however, according to the performative valence of sensemaking (see above), the experience of appetizing is (one of) the ways desire is enacted: the scenario of being related to something good is enacted by means of the act of desiring the object. When one seeks something as/because of its being interpreted as endowed with the quality of fulfilling, such an act needs to be inscribed in a premise of sense of the object’s goodness in order to be sensical. Thus, the act of seeking makes such a premise pertinent.

Incidentally, such performative function of the relational attitudes towards the objects was recognized by psychoanalysis, in particular by Melanie Klein. According to her (1967), when the baby expects/seek to be nourished by the object (namely, when he “appetites” the good object), it is presentifying the object. In

other words, the object does not exist before its affective connotation (enacted in terms of behavioural attitudes and feelings); rather, the object comes to be experienced (from the point of view of the baby: comes into existence) through and in the terms of the affective connotation. And this highlights the paradoxical ubiquity of desire: it is enacted through the presentation of good objects as well as of bad ones. In Klein's terms: the baby experiences the absence of the mother as the presence of the bad mother—that is to say that the baby presentifies the mother through charging her with bad qualities. In the final analysis, the sufferance as well as the pleasure is a form of enactment of desire. The sensibility is for our mind like what oxygen is for our body—it is the basic condition of experience. We have to make and keep it regardless of how much it costs for our existences, just as the lungs that cannot help pumping air, even if it is poisoned.

Implications and Perspectives

The definition of desire as the core of the semiotic process of the constitution of experience has several theoretical and methodological implications.

From a theoretical standpoint, it entails several relevant changes in the psychological way of modelling human experience. First, as defined here, desire is a *process*—the backgrounding of non-pertinent scenarios, rather than a mental content. Second, this process comes before and grounds the experience—therefore, it is inherently unconscious, in a structural sense, namely not because it is unaware, but because it is the mechanism from which consciousness emerges. The semiotic and processual model of desire helps to bridge cultural psychology and psychoanalysis, in particular the areas of these disciplines that share the interest in modelling the micro-genetic dynamics of subjectivity (Salvatore 2006; Salvatore and Pagano 2005; Salvatore and Zittoun 2011). Third, the semiotic definition of desire discussed above entails a view of otherness as constitutive of the subject. Indeed, the pertinence of the scenario is fed by and is comprised of the act of the other. It is fed because the pertinence is triggered by the following sign, therefore by the sign that is produced by the other (even when this other is the same person, it is, however, other with respect to the previous sign, because any interpretation entails a difference); it is comprised of the other because the scenario is a prototypical pattern of experience consisting, in the final analysis, in a form of engagement with an object (be it a person, a class of event, and so forth), namely with something other than the subject (Salvatore 2013). Thus, the semiotic view of desire can be seen as the process of “otherizing” the subject.

The semiotic model proposed above raises several issues that need to be addressed. One important issue concerns the stability of the field of experience. Let come back to a point discussed above: the relational and field nature of qualities. As we said, from it derives the recognition of how the process of presentation is contingent to the field of experience: the subject asymmetrizes the field, and this allows a form to emerge. Now, what has to be highlighted is that this form can

stabilize as an object endowed with persistent enough characteristics to be treated as if they were an inherent property of it (i.e. firstness can develop into secondness and thirdness, to use Peircian terminology) only if such characteristics remain invariant enough. Consider the change of field position that the sheet of paper in Köhler's experiment was subjected to: by changing its position—from lighter to darker—the empirical qualities of the element changed, and therefore, the object changed in its (broadly speaking) meaning for the chicken. Thus, one is led to conclude that the presentation of the object requires stability of the field grounding the process; more specifically, it requires that the asymmetrization of the field in pertinent and non-pertinent aspects keeps somehow constant for a long enough time. This is true both at the level of perception, where the perceptual field has to be stable in order to enable the closure of the form and at higher levels of sensemaking: the semantic field has to keep its stability in order to allow the interpretation of signs. This issue is a very important point for the scientific agenda of cultural psychology—the stability of the field of experience is a basic assumption grounding the interpretation of many psychosocial phenomena. For instance, the usage of concepts such as emotion, agency, and representation entail a frame of stability of the experience. Yet, such stability needs in turn to be explained. Thus, we need—as it were—a theory of the semiotic Big Bang, namely a theory modelling the micro-genesis of experience, its stable enough emergence from the domain of the not experienced.

A way of addressing the issue of the stability of experience is to consider it the recursive product of the ongoing dialogical dynamic of attunement. According to such a view, the premise of sense is reproduced insofar as, and thanks to the fact that the world it instantiates enables the reciprocal interpretation of the acts enacted by the participants in the dialogue. In other words, insofar as the other lends itself to be semiotized, the premise of sense is kept alive. In the final analysis, this is not so different from Jesus' statement: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matthew, 18, 20). The object is—its presentation keeps working—insofar as two or more people share a code, namely a certain premise—to be gathered in my name—grounds the reciprocal coordination.

The last considerations open intriguing methodological perspectives. From such a point of view, the issue is how to detect desire. The semiotic model of desire outlines meaning as emerging from a dynamic of deselection (i.e. of backgrounding) of potentialities. Thus, it requires a new methodological way of thinking. Empirical analyses are usually based on data intended as representative of presences. The test of the null hypothesis is based on the calculation of the probability of occurrence of a certain event, intended as being significant in itself. The view of psychological process as emerging from the dialectical tension between what is and what could have been (Salvatore et al., in press) requires us to go beyond such a view. We need a logic of investigation that is able to recognize the absence as a constitutive component of psychological phenomena—the meaning of what occurs is not in what occurs, but in what does not occur as a result of the fact that what occurs has occurred: any occurrence is the instantiation of a possibility against the non-instantiation of many others. In the final analysis, this is the deep meaning of the temporality of psychological phenomena—a characteristic that is shared with

several sciences—history, biology, and also astrophysics (Barrow 2011)—which pushes us to take abduction as the way of knowledge building (Salvatore and Valsiner 2010). In sum, desire is an act of blindness challenging psychology to move from the infancy of being the echo of what the subject already knows of itself—to the adulthood of being the science of the emergence of what develops from what could be.

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Chapter 4

The Centrality of Aesthetics for Psychology: Sciences and Arts United Through Poetic Instants

Olga V. Lehmann and Sven Hroar Klempe

Beauty will save the world.
Fyodor Dostoyevsky

When Alexander Solzhenitsyn received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970, he referred to Dostoevsky, who highlighted that words of truth and words of beauty will save the world.¹ By this reference to Dostoevsky, the Russian laureate emphasized that the arts and the literature in particular reconcile the dissonant rhythms of humanity by means of harmony in values, where all the tensions and polarities of existence discover themselves in felt intensities of communion.

Culture is both a product of man's capacity to improve and cultivate life through social interaction, and a response to the felt uncertainty combined with an awareness of the impending finitude. Beyond being cultural tools, arts make life worth living; they give sense to the contradictions and paradoxes of existence; they transcend communication in order to evoke in affective resonances many different responses to uncertainty. Thus, within impending finitude, transference of values to our offspring manifests as an ambivalent tension between traditions and innovations that cross human life. This is the case of aesthetic experiences, whose emotional resonance has the power to transform the values of a person, awaken social manifestations and even defy political systems.

What psychology has contributed with for the last two hundred years is exactly to demonstrate how the experiences of forms and tensions have shaped in a broad and fundamental sense the basis for all types of communication and bonds. This implies that communication runs on different levels with different means, and with different types of experiences at the same time. Yet, words are later steps of sign

¹We thank the poet Åsmund Vonheim Seip for the reference to the Nobel discourse of Solzhenitsyn.

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functions; they are shaped perceptions and bodily experiences, conditioned to the wording of others with whom we share moments of development. Sense-making of experience is a response to the understanding of feelings, so language is the outcome of a twofold desire: knowledge and communion. However, desire enables the tensions between the ephemeral and the eternal, which makes the existential “angst” real as the basis for the unbearable search for love. What is love, after all? Decision, delirium? Epiphany or condemnation? Encounter or creation? When does love end? Through suffering or pleasure? Through unbearable words or unbearable silences? Whatever it is, both the love and the rupture of love are the points of departure of language, religion, mythology and poetry, which are at the same time “the objects to which human knowledge is truly commensurable” (Cassirer 1932/1968, p. 54).

The capacity of transferring legacies to the next generation through social interaction implies that knowledge is not just a question of telling or having been told, but even more a result of guided experiences with a diversity of values. Even the process of acquiring language itself is more a result of experiential processes; hence, language is rather to be understood as a product than the basis for man’s uniqueness, which is transformed during the course of life through the interpretation and reinterpretation of the value given to certain meanings. This places cultural psychology at the core of studies of identity. Furthermore, beyond human’s ability to speak stands as a symbol of humankind, there are many additional capacities that define the position of human beings in the universe. The aesthetic experiences question the importance of language. Certainly, language as a field of signs as well as its sociocultural guidance is crucial, but at the same time psychology has ignored that it is just one out of several systems the mind works with, such as musical and mathematical ones.

In this chapter, we explore some aspects of the aesthetic dimensions of higher and lower mental functions of human beings in an attempt to penetrate deeper into the foundations of human culture. This brings us immediately to the aspects of forms, which basically are about analogies. Hence, forms are at the same time about imagination, which demonstrate the close and intimate connection between scientific, aesthetic and mythical thinking. However, the connections suggested here are exactly what will be pursued from an aesthetic point of view. There are four factors that form the basis of the aesthetic perspective: *forms*, *creativity*, *imagination* and *sensation*. Yet there is a fifth factor that goes along with these, and that is the aspect of *feelings* and *affects*—“feelings” understood as immediate bodily reactions to unexpected experiences and “affects” as lasting bodily reactions that might be put into words. “Emotions” will be applied as a generic label that makes it possible to refer to both feelings and affects. We bring up the notion of forms from gestalt psychology, connecting it with creativity through the notion of *poetic instants* highlighting the role of sensations bridging psychology with modern aesthetics at the core of contemporary challenges for theories and methodologies in cultural psychology.

Understanding Forms and Structures: The Multiplicity of Meaning in Gestalt

The diversity of meanings that the notion of *Gestalt* involves responds to the need of understanding phenomena that exceed the sum of elements—as it is the case for the field of emotions transcending mere sensation.

Within the perception of ground and forms, we walk through life allowing ourselves to grasp or not experience and existence intensely, which makes the notion of gestalt so close to aesthetics. For example, von Ehrenfels (1890/1988)—founder of the gestalt notion as a psychological factor—focused on the notion of melody in music. Following these ideas, Wertheimer (1924/1944) suggests any melody both played in C and C# major. He stands that the reason for recognizing a melody of six tones played in different keys is an additional element, i.e. the “Gestalt Quality”, which in this case would be a seventh factor.

In simple terms, a melody is a compilation of diverse tones, yet something beyond them. During a symphony, the theme of the masterpiece is played in different keys that transform the tones, making it evident that the melody does not depend on them. One hypothesis, the one followed by Ehrenfels (1890/1988) is that the melody stands on the relationships among the elements and the meaningfulness of apparent “voids” or “silences” such as musical intervals. In this sense, what gestalt conveys to sensation, perception and further processes of sense-making and decision-making is the systemic dynamic between forms, landscapes and wholes, where human life develops. Even more, the focus on the aesthetic qualities that such relationships can lead to, and all the forms in the score delimit a whole sensational experience that can evoke very intense feelings in the musicians themselves, as well as on the audience.

Ehrenfels underlines that “if we can sense only that which is *simultaneously* present to us, then a melody, which is played out *in time*, cannot serve as an object of sensation” (Ehrenfels 1890/1988, p. 82). This early statement well related the interdependence of lower and higher psychic functions that have been often bifurcated in psychology. Precisely, for Ehrenfels the term gestalt referred to the inextricable relation between emotions and sensation (Ehrenfels 1890/1988). In contrast, Koffka deliberately left feelings out of his focus, which was based on the notion of “phi-phenomenon” that Wertheimer discovered (Koffka 1922). For Wertheimer (1924/1944), the basic thesis of gestalt emphasizes dynamics of the field, where contextual processes have an inner structure as a whole, which affects each of the part of the whole, while the whole is not determined by isolated characteristics of its pieces.

However, Wertheimer acknowledges a dilemma that might explain in a way why gestalt theory became a foundation for the sort of cognitivism that dominated psychology from the 1950s until today, in which the aspect of emotions and affects has been either put aside or completely cognitivized. The dilemma regards the boundaries of science, which leads as well to the awareness of the many ways in which science is blind to what human beings encounter throughout the course of life, making evident that *acknowledging the dynamics of experience does not imply*

its understanding and explanation, which cultural psychology is attempting to do. This fact is at the core of discussions regarding aesthetic experiences where both the focus and expansion of the notion of chronological time are required in order to study affective phenomena.

Fortunately, this holistic perspective also influenced some directions in psychology, leading for example to the so called Gestalt Therapy founded by Fritz Perls, who in fact dedicates his book “Ego, hunger and aggression” which appeared in 1942 to Max Wertheimer (Velásquez 2001). In fact, Gestalt Therapy itself differentiates between the word *gestalt* and the verb *gestalten*, which appears to shape or give structure to the development and maintenance of harmony in life in a holistic perspective (Ginger 2007), where the forms of the human (i.e. psyche, body, spirit) and the *being-in-the-world* are much more than the sum of its parts. It does so by focusing on the present experience of feeling life, and assuming through awareness the responsibility for making decisions or avoiding to do so (i.e. deciding not to choose).

Gestalt dynamics emphasize the attempt of cultural psychology to understand the processes of labelling emotions and making sense, making decisions, developing and transforming life philosophies. This type of theory building, which implies a change from a reduced to a more complex understanding, is what Valsiner has described as a movement from schematization to pleromatization (Valsiner 2006). This can be easily understood with the metaphor of the ocean—which would be the pleroma, and the schema being the drop (Valsiner 2010; Wallis 1973 in Valsiner 2013). From a semiotic perspective, this process concerns primarily iconic signs, but “pleromatic signs are hybrids that can include a combination of iconic, indexical and symbolic features within one *gestalt*” (Valsiner 2006, p. 8).

If we understand the term in a more figurative sense, we may say that the *gestalt* itself is a result of pleromatization. However, many scholars use the notion of *gestalt* appealing different aspects of the term, which includes the transcendence of a narrow understanding of a phenomenon, but also a kind of reduction by focusing on just one factor. The *phi*-phenomenon is just one example, which on the one hand expands our understanding of perceived movement, but on the other hand restricts this understanding by not including emotions. This counts also for Vygotsky, as he presents the symbol activity as going far beyond language, but on the other hand presents the symbol activity as if the speech forms the model for how the symbol activity is to be understood. Thus, the pleromatization and schematization dynamics involve a paradox for linguistic, musical and mathematical systems, where aesthetic experiences occur.

The Paradox of the Whole and the Almost Forgotten Notion of the “Aestheticological”

Historically, there has been a long and occasionally intimate connection between psychology and aesthetics (Allesch 2006), which goes back to the founder of modern aesthetics, Alexander Baumgarten and his two volumes of *Aesthetica*,

published in 1750 and 1758, respectively. The bases for those two volumes were his preceding publication of a thesis on metaphysics from 1739 and his close connection with the enlightenment philosopher, Christian Wolff.

Precisely, one of the most important contributions Wolff made was to emphasize the importance of empirical psychology as a basis for scientific activities and it belongs to metaphysics (Klempe 2014). Furthermore, empirical psychology has been traditionally defined in terms of perception in a broad sense of the term, so that the Aristotelian phrase; “Nothing is in the intellect which was not first in the sense”, can be recognized as the “psychological axiom” (Cassirer 1932/1968, p. 99). Thus, what psychology and humanities convey is the transcendence that experiences such as arts—both for the artist and the public—enable in terms of affective resonances, which we recall as poetic instants in a later section.

In fact, this is the apparent contradiction that the neologism of “aestheticological” (Baumgarten 1750, 1758/2007, p. 407, §427) highlights. It refers to a type of logic, which is not based on concepts, but rather on sensual experiences. Seen from a Cartesian type of rationalism, which dominated continental thinking in the eighteenth century, this neologism appears as rather absurd. Logical reasoning is of course solely about making inferences based on general terms and concepts, as we have learned from Aristotle. Yet Baumgarten’s point is that reasonable thinking also includes experiences that are ineffable; experiences that are not so clear and obvious, but still reasonable. This is the main difference between the Cartesian and the aesthetic understanding of reason, which Baumgarten introduced. According to Descartes the truth is what “occurs in my mind with [...] clearness and distinctness” (Descartes 1637/1975, p. 111). This is an either/or; what is clear and distinct in my mind is true, and what is not so is not true. It was rather Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz who changed this idea when he “held that ordinary perceptions are the summation of countless smaller perceptions each of which we cannot be aware of” (Whyte 1962, p. 93). In other words, there are many true events in the world that we may perceive without being completely aware of doing so. The best example Leibniz came up with is music, which is based on numbers and calculations in both metrics and its harmonies (Dammann 1967). Although we are both counting and calculating while we dance to music and enjoy its pleasure, we are not always aware of all the calculations it actually does include.

When we learn to dance, we start with counting the steps and guide them in the specified directions. However, that is the beginner’s syndrome, which normally ends up with a kind of wooden body and clumsy dancing. Good dancers rather let the body fleet along with the music. It is the same when listening to music; the more one thinks of specified elements in music, the more restricted are the experiences of the piece of music. This is the destiny of the abstract conceptualization of a sensational experience: The words are not able to grasp the experienced totality, but just some general aspects of it. When we put something into words, which we normally do, we are not into the situation but are rather distancing ourselves from it, as might happen when one writes down a poem out of a poetic instant, which according to Octavio Paz conduces both to the evocation of the lived-experience and to the silence of what remained ineffable.

The chronological moment of a specified experience will never come back. On this basis, the philosophers already in the Greek antique and through the mediaeval time applied the formulation “*individuum est ineffabile*”—the singular is not to be grasped completely (Mathisen 2005). Yet Baumgarten is interested in emphasizing the importance of the particular experiences as an epistemological basis for knowledge as well because, as he formulates it in the *Aesthetica*: What then is an abstraction, if not just a loss? [“*Quid enim est abstraction, si iactura non est?*”] (Baumgarten 1750, 1758/2007, §560, p. 538, translated by the authors). This is what empirical psychology opened up for in the eighteenth century when it was specified as a part of metaphysics. Empirical psychology paved the way for letting observations and experiences form the foundation for the knowledge we have. Yet with his *Aesthetica*, Baumgarten tried to bring this a step further by emphasizing that experiences of the ineffable whole, like we have through music and poetry, are not less rational than the abstract concepts, which miss all the details in the particular. This is the content of the neologism “aestheticological”, which highlights the rationality of the experiences of art and other sensational events in general—no matter how unique they might be.

Precisely, this connection with the whole brings us back to gestalt. It is not a coincidence that Laura Perls used the term aesthetics when describing what gestalt therapy is about, making a specific reference to Baumgarten, in the sense that a psychotherapeutic practice might follow aesthetic and philosophical orders that allow the person to make sense of life through the art of thinking with beauty, rather than appealing to techniques that dominate cognitive therapies. (Robine, n.d.).

An Aestheticological Approach to Form

“Form” is a term that points in three very different directions. It is highly associated with gestalt psychology, but also with positivism, when referring to Ernst Mach, for example. The third direction is a type of formalism, which is associated with the Immanuel Kant’s ideal of “pure sciences”. All three aspects of the term “form” constitute the tension that psychology deals with, which is about including experiences that go beyond what is positively given, yet at the same time is about the immediate experiences. Along these lines, the different perspectives on aesthetics throughout history may tell us something about the will to get a complete understanding of the dynamics of human experience. Here, we see the tendency both to expand the understanding and reducing the whole by highlighting one of its parts.

This is exactly what happened with Baumgarten’s aesthetics, which has been reduced to a modern foundation for the understanding of art experiences. Although he aimed to formulate a general science about the total human experiences and opened up for a process of pleromatization—figuratively understood—his project ended up in a kind schematized understanding. In this sense, positive sensational experiences have for the last few centuries been understood as if such experiences were reserved to the experiences of literature, music, paintings, etc. When this

reduced understanding of aesthetics has been combined with the aspect of form in art, the schematized understanding of sensational experiences has been obvious. However, this was not in accordance with Baumgarten's use of the term "aestheticological" because unfortunately he did not complete his aesthetic project. He died just after the publication of the second volume, and those two volumes were just intended to be an introduction to his aesthetics.

If we look at the pre-modern understanding of aesthetics, we may conclude that the situation is rather similar. On the one hand, the Platonic understanding of beauty is primarily related to something that is extra sensorial and intelligible and therefore can be understood as a kind of formalism. The sensorial experiences we have with art point to the idea of the beauty, which is general and rather given through our idea of beauty than the actual experiences we may have (Mathisen 2005). However already with this perspective, we see that Plato regarded art as being much more than just a random ephemeral sensational experience. The beauty is associated with ontology, and in this sense is regarded as real and with great importance. Moreover, if we go to the dialogues that discuss the beauty in art, like *Hippias Major*, *Ion*, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, we find also the dramatic process that leads to the conclusions. This is a feature of Plato's dialogues; specifically that his philosophy is presented as a piece of art, in which the process and dramaturgy within the dialogue and between the persons involved are essential ingredients in his philosophy. In other words, even in the Platonic understanding of aesthetics, there is an epistemological process presented, which rather points towards a kind of pleromatized and not necessarily to a schematized understanding of art. The process Plato depicts is of course first of all logical, but the experiential aspects of the dialogues also refer to experiences, which are close to what Baumgarten referred to when he introduced the term "aestheticological".

The almost forgotten Austrian philosopher Robert Zimmermann (1858) provided a perspective of aesthetics, which shared the aims of Baumgarten in terms of expanding the logical understanding of it through an emphasis on sensations, which makes science—*Wissenschaft*-complete. Nevertheless, even if highlighting aesthetics as a major science, his formalism excluded emotions from its actual development. Thus, Zimmermann represents in many ways the missing link that brings the pleromatized aspects of the aestheticological into a kind of reduced and schematized understanding of forms, which also ends up in a certain connection between aesthetics and positivism.

The Aesthetic Experience of Poetic Instants

Aesthetic experiences have been baptized with many names attempting to grasp their nature, causality and the intensity of the emotions that arise in ways that defy time and space and the meaningfulness of existence. In particular, the notion of *poetic instants* involves a complex landscape that coincides with the current efforts of cultural psychology—as a bridging theory—to expand the understanding of the confusing and sometimes ineffable nature of affective life.

According to Bachelard (1939/2013), poetic instants are lived-experiences of diverse depth and height of emotional intensity that involve a “rupture” of chronological time, and awareness about the ambivalences of existence, being an experience of antithesis of opposites that is just possible in vertical time, a time that is diverse from the one of every day opposites make both completion and separation possible, and within such dynamics of time and space, aesthetic experiences convey what existence is about, discontinuities and ruptures that we weave with meanings and the evocation of emotions, with the risk enough to step back forever in an instant, or keep going even after it is gone. That is, there are some instants of life perceived as eternal, and poets emerge willing to evoke them, come back to them, remembering as well the ephemeral quality they have once they are gone, and they do go away (Paz 1956/1994). Precisely, one could stand that “Discourse and reason are to prose what imagination, sensibility and aesthetic feeling are to poetry” (Fernández del Valle 2002, p. 49, translated by the authors). In this sense, one of the reasons we recall the notion of poetic instants at the core of the understanding of affect is due to the extension of the notion of time that it involves and the moment swells into spatial dimensions, which is a contribution of Bachelard since his early works (Bachelard 1932/2013). This is why we may say that poetic instants bridge aesthetic experiences with our awareness of existence.

Precisely, attempts to understand the dynamics of aesthetic experiences within the complex systems where human beings develop bring to the core of humanities and social sciences the interest regarding the interdependence between bodily experiences and high mental functions. That is to say, the dynamics of affect happen within layers of generalization where we differentiate experience and make sense of it, labelling specific emotions and exploring the resonance of general feelings through which we relate to the inner and external environment where life occurs (Valsiner 2007). Although, our act of labelling emotions and relating to feeling intensities through language is a risky compromise that relates to the tension within angst and love. We create and narrate of ourselves in ways that perhaps are not faithful enough to our deep human searches, creating impermeable borders against the playfulness of experience and existence.

The process of labelling emotions influences the processes of sense-making and decision-making as well, where the boundary between conformity and risk of exploration is very tiny. For example, as Frankl (1975/1994) wisely clarifies, the difference between cosmetics and aesthetics in true art is that true art has not the goal of making either manifesting the beauty of reality, but of accepting the fatalism of life that turns possible rejection and collapse into activism. That is, holding creative attitudes that transcend the tragic nature of life making life worth of living, no matter the conditions. In his bestselling book *Man's Search for Meaning*, he relates to the aesthetic experience of an attitude that reflects human decision-making through conditions. He says that human beings have created gas chambers, but human beings can get into them giving strong steps and singing and/or praying (Frankl 1946/2009). Could we as well, turn our face towards the future and try to reach again the mystery and the mastery of love, through sorrow, through longings, but also beyond them?

Through the intensity of feelings that resonates in a person, objects of experience become values and may even transform different layers of identity. This fact brings aesthetic experiences to the core of any attempt of understanding the systemic layers of affective life within the dialectics of destruction and transformation of environment, rebellion and revelation, eternity and death. Psychology therefore is challenged to breakthrough its own traditions by rather corresponding to human life instead of bringing pieces of humanness to fit into the shadows of causality and determinism.

Back to Solzhenitsyn (1970)—the creation and construction of the world are seen by the artist in the harmony built upon opposite—yet not contradictory—directions that form the experiences of an individual in the depths of its own existence, in which ugliness, misfortune, sickness that belong to humankind are also recalled. Science can be faithful to human phenomena when focusing on the ambiguous nature of life, which is not solved with the meanings we convey to it, either canonical or idiosyncratic (Clegg 2010; Freeman 2011).

Luckily, aesthetics are gaining nowadays more and more space and legitimation as methodologies of research, expanding our comprehension of perception and high psychic functions. Indeed, Denzin (2000) appeals to the need for aesthetics within qualitative inquiry, adding that:

The boundaries that have traditionally separated ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology are erased. We write moral texts, works that bring the world into play. These texts present specific problems, anchoring them in their historical, cultural, and biographical contexts. A narrative or story line is imposed on the details and facts of this situation, for nothing ever tells itself, nothing stands outside representation. The poetic, performative text translates remembered and observed experience into narrative truth. (Denzin 2000, p. 261).

In the same line of ideas, when emphasizing on the notion of poetic instants, Paz (1956/1994) suggests that it belongs to humankind, even if few of those writing poems call themselves poets. Aesthetic experience involves different actions, from the act of creation of a masterpiece to the contemplation of it, from the passive role of the public to the active performance.

Metaphors for Verticality: The Tree and the House

In “The poetics of Space”, Bachelard (1957/2000) appeals to the metaphor of a house in order to let memory and imagination speak of poetic experience through an expansion of the notions of time and space, where deep and high emotional intensities are sensed and perceived through layers of consciousness. The poet, he continues, needs both experiences—of the poor hut and the fabulous castle—for configuring a poetic masterpiece that gives the reader both security and dream expansion. Think of the house where you spent your childhood and the feelings evoked by the diversity of the rooms within, even the almost forgotten places of it; this house might be different from the house of your dreams, as the former is representing a past reality and the latter a hopefully coming future. In this sense, the awareness of polarities and the compromises among them enable the emergence of

meanings and values. Furthermore, the author emphasizes such experiences can be understood by phenomenology, psychoanalysis and psychology, with the phenomenological approach as the main instrument for taking into account all types of experiences, no matter how contradictory they may appear.

This order becomes a milestone for current advances in the hardly developed field of psychology of imagination, which cultural psychology is bringing into focus nowadays (see Zittoun in this volume). Precisely, Bachelard (1957/2000) developed the basis for architecture of values through the *house of the soul*, dealing with apparent oppositions such as material and abstract entities within human experiences. This is also what Freud highlights when he attempts to define the unconscious, comparable with the different historical layers of Rome (Freud 1930/1973). Thus, poetic experiences bring space and time in a vertical sense that expands both the perception of reality and the apperception of affective resonances. Such verticality involves a tension of pleasure and reality, which in fact leads to aesthetic experience at the foundation for processes of grasping values in daily life, and how to deal with the cultural guidance of this.

Now, after having focused on poetic challenges in psychology, we may return to daily life experiences and tensions people face in making decisions, making sense of life and grasping values. Maslow (1970) recalls the attention on how the search—and rush—for having peak and plateau experiences leads addictions, radicalism in religion, esoteric practices and so on. That is, in the search for peak experiences, the search for the beauty of life in high and deep emotional intensities, spontaneity and acting outs may confuse the distinctions of flowing either forcing the course of reality and the interpretations of it. This produces many affective tensions between the polarities of love and angst, which calls for psychological attention. In this sense, the notion of poetic instants links these experiences within learning processes and aesthetics, opening up for analysing masterpieces of art as a tool for cultural understanding, but also for detecting the values that make existence worthwhile. Furthermore, it brings to psychology precisely the awareness of the intense sensational moments that emphasize the bounds of chronological time and give space for unspecified notions of spiritual engagement. This issue leads us back to Buber (1950), and the notion of *encounter*, by which the self is both involved and transformed.

Such as Solzhenitsyn (1970) would recall, what arts and especially literature bring to the world is precisely such transcendence of sociocultural guidance to come into the lived-experiences, the core of what make us human and yet unique beings. Solzhenitsyn appeals to the power of the word as sacred and representing a higher value, appealing to the evocation of resonances by means of vibrations and rhythms. In this sense, words appear in the scenery of psychology when its attempt is—as it is for the semiosis in cultural psychology—to understand affect. Furthermore, what makes poetry so inexorable, though, is the awareness of the insufficiency of words, appealing to a psychology that takes the benefits of language, but also transcends its boundaries.

Psychology needs to remember which processes are building her as a science. From sensation and perception towards memory, imagination, attention and

cognition, we make senses and meanings of the world—we create our identity, having affect at the core. Back to the discussion of notion of gestalt quality, von Ehrenfels quotes Ernst Mach on exemplifying it with the metaphor of a tree, saying that: “The tree, with its hard, rough, grey trunk, its many branches swayed by the wind, its smooth, soft, shining leaves, appears to us at first a single indivisible whole” (Ehrenfels 1890/1988, p. 83). Mach’s metaphor of the tree illustrates how an impression is put together in an indivisible whole. Yet this metaphor can now be turned into an analogy in terms of a model that stands for how to approach human experience (see Fig. 4.1). Hence, the tree appears at first to us as an indivisible whole, united by more or less visible branches, which bring the higher and the lower parts together in a continuum from the bottom to the top.

The blooming peach tree is an extraordinary metaphor for pleromatization in terms of affective experiences. In Chinese, they have the expression: “the peach springs beyond this world”, which refers to an extraordinarily beautiful place that goes beyond all imagination, described in a utopian Chinese paper from 421AD (Chang 1986). The peach tree has invaded both language and traditional narratives in very poetic manners that make it a dense symbol for love, life and beauty.

This growing peach tree mirrors the interdependence between sensational and cognitive reflections. Within the continuous line between them, there is an



Fig. 4.1 The tree model for the gestalt of emotional experience. *Note* (Photograph Sven Hroar Klempe)

interdependence of higher–lower functions. The aesthetic enjoyment might be rather low, but it forms at the same time the basis from which the higher functions grow and flourish. Hence, the basics of the sensation of beauty one arrives to abstractions such as the existential meaning of life in terms of poetic phrases. This is the aesthetic power of nature as well as works of art created by man: searching immortality within the ambivalence of impending finitude, a window that opens in the awareness of being both creatures and creators, in the search for clarity about our being and becoming, where religion and spirituality are often key features. Psychology today needs to remember its origins, who and what is the psyche, and in which movement of air and breath do we discover our will of eternity. A will of communion.

The peach tree reminds psychology to focus on processes rather than states, and in particular, we speak about the core affective process of human beings: existential angst and love. According to Lockwood and Coston (n.d.), the peach flower is pure because it does not have leaf tissues while blooming. This change from producing vegetative tissue, turning into reproductive tissue is still poorly understood in botany, in parallel to the challenging case with affective processes in humans. Furthermore, this process lasts many months and requires special cooling conditions given by the seasons before summer, such as processes of emotional tonalities (Bollnow 1956/2009). It is not by chance that peach trees, and especially their red flowers without leaves appear in Chinese culture as a strong symbol of love, of the blossoms of life that have been gestalted—even if we do not notice often how long they have been there, cooling enough to produce the physiological changes (Lockwood and Coston, n.d.) which allow us to contemplate such a marvel of nature. Humans strive to find a chance for love, and when the flourishing period vanishes, in the sorrow of a search that seems lost we run away, or we break down in memories that seem to never come back into presence, although they may. Such affective resonance never leaves us if we find the way, through creativity involved in actions and imagination, to make this lived-experience a path towards summer again. Winter is the oldest season, says Bachelard (1957/2000), bringing age to memories, bringing us back to the past. Although, if we were more aware about the seasons of life and the seasons of emotions (Van Deurzen 2012), the more could we cope with the inherent anxiety of life guiding ourselves towards authenticity.

In fact, the tree model is a parallel to Bachelard's house metaphor (1957/2000). Such a house is to be understood in a twofold sense: the unconscious–conscious processes, and also the notion of vertical time. The house appeals to the day-dreaming where the immemorial and memories are synthesized. The house is associated with intimacy, but the metaphor is full of links to memory and imagination, where the poetic use of language is the bridge. The house appeals to verticality and concentration, centrality. This has a strong relation with high cognitive functions, in the intimacy of the being. Furthermore, when describing the analogy to the house, Bachelard mentions seeds still to blossom, as a metaphor for intimacy and daydreaming, saying that houses do not have roots, which trees do, and the model aims at highlighting that the aesthetic experience is first of all a sparkling drop of love.

The tree-metaphor for the gestalt can be used in many ways. Ehrenfels on the other hand has some troubles with it because it does not bring in the aspect of time, which is his argument for defining the gestalt quality as an interaction between sensations, feelings and higher mental activities. Vygotsky follows up this broad perspective when he says, “the higher functions of perception, memory, attention, movement and others are internally connected with the development of the symbolic activity of the child” as a result of “the process of cultural history” (Vygotsky & Luria, 1930/1999, p. 39). Thus, the factors that go beyond the elements are multiplied by bringing in the symbolic activity and the culture in addition. Vygotsky highlights that the symbolic activity of a child is “not just speech” (loc. cit.), but their “psychological nature seems to be the same as the nature of the speech activity” (loc. cit.). This is crucial because it exemplifies on the one hand that he regards the speech activity as a model for all communication. Yet on the other hand it is just meant as an analogy, placing the development of subjectivity as the interdependence between emotion and intellect (Guitart and Moll 2014), being the prism of emotional experiences the modulator of the effects that environment has in human beings (Vygotsky 1934/1994). Still now, fields in psychology influenced by the Russian scholar recognize affect at the core of human experience and psychic activity (Valsiner 2007), and parallel contemporary developments of psychology are aware of the emphasis that studies on affect and the nature of emotions need to give to interdisciplinary studies of the development of regulation processes, given the complex notions involved in research, and the misleading communication and understanding of such notions and processes among scholars (Dennis, O’Toole & DeCicco 2012).

The notion of verticality is a path back to musical experiences, especially when it comes to polyphony, which has been already highlighted in psychology. Bakhtin (1929/1984) first introduced the term as a methodological tool to analyse Dostoevsky’s novels, which also follows up Vygotsky’s distinctions between the inner and the outer speech and the dialogical interaction between them (Børtnes 1993). Dialogical self theory has nowadays developed polysemy into the dynamics between inner and outer I-positions that configure the landscapes of environment and mind (Hermans and Geiser 2012). Polyphony appeals to the verticality of musical systems, where different pitches are simultaneously present (Klempe 1996), and applied into human phenomena, evokes the multiple—even if most of the cases unknown—directions of voices that are united in the oscillation between tensions and relaxations that can conduce to harmony.

Bakhtin used the term “refraction” for depicting how an intended word or sentence has the potential to be split up in different meanings, in the same way as white sunlight is split up in the spectre of colours seen in a rainbow (Holquist 1981). This term also reflects the verticality in language that makes the language more similar to music. Yet, this is not a quality that characterizes the prosaic use of language, but rather what the Russian formalists called the “poetic” function of language. This is the meeting point with music, but it is at the same time an aspect of the gestalt quality that exceeds what is immediately perceived.

Conclusions

Even though different scholars have attempted to broaden the perspective on human life, there are at the same time strong forces that narrow the perspective of its wholeness, down to a more reduced and schematized understanding. The greatest challenge for psychology in the future is not only to be aware of these tendencies, but also to let psychology be guided by fields that actually broaden the perspectives, out of which we would say aesthetics is probably the best example. Nowadays, cultural psychology is bringing into focus both theories and methodologies that emphasize the uniqueness of the person through historical, social and cultural guidance among processes of identity such as sense-making, decision-making and value-grasping. That is, implicitly and explicitly, cultural psychology is emphasizing the gestalt processes of human existence in the world. As Denzin (2000) describes regarding performing arts, researchers/artists could direct themselves to grasp the beauty of daily life among social conditions, where aesthetic intuitions are both a search for communication of understandings and a source of transforming and improving the world.

Psychology needs to stop emphasizing the importance of feelings and emotions without focusing on the dilemmatic processes in which affective life occurs, which require an extension of our phenomenological understanding of the dynamics of space and time. Back to the history of psychology and humanities, forgotten scholars, such as Baumgarten, Wertheimer, Ehrenfels, Bachelard and Paz, provide theoretical clues for the development of theories and methodologies that appeal to the ambivalence and ambiguity of affective fields to border inner and external processes of experience. This is what the metaphor of the tree conveys. Furthermore, we have introduced the term “poetic instant” as a way to grasp the very moment in which everything seems to interlock and build up a totality of meaning. Yet, the term “poetic” becomes even broader in the sense that the Greek root originally means “to create”. Thus, the poetic instant does not only concern the recipient, but also concern the sender, and it is not restricted to poetry and literature, but all types of art.

In addition to “poetic instants”, other notions from arts, such as melody, polyphony, harmony and verticality, are aspects that may defy language, and contemporary psychology has to reconsider the gaps between the systems the mind—and the soul—work with. In other words, the biggest challenge psychology is facing for the future is to break its own traditions in schematizing and reducing the human factors, and rather put the elements together by means of the strategy of pleromatization, in which the details expand the understanding of the whole in terms of interchange and cooperation. This is the core of aesthetic experiences, which might be rational and clear, but also include ineffable moments of indefinable and unconscious awareness. Although these latter moments might appear as irrational, they form the basis on which our culture is built, hence the only part of psychology that can take the full richness of life into account is a culturally based psychology.

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Chapter 5

Memory and Creativity: Historical and Conceptual Intersections

Vlad Petre Glăveanu and Brady Wagoner

Creativity and memory are typically considered opposite processes in psychology and contemporary culture. Memory is often conceptualized as simply a register of the past and is evaluated based on accuracy. Conversely, creativity is seen as a future-oriented process, typically breaking with the past and generating new and useful products. However, if we are to consider the historical development of these concepts, we will find that, in ancient Greece, creativity was classified under memory and memory itself was associated with divine inspiration (*Mnemosyne* was the mother of the nine muses—the liberal arts). In contrast, modern psychology operates with a rather clear distinction between the two. Memory has typically been understood in terms of the literal reproduction of some material or experience; the prototype of this is rote learning in formal schooling. Meanwhile, creativity became the process leading to new, original, and useful outcomes; its prototype—the lone genius creating products that revolutionize culture and society.

The aim of the present chapter is to reconnect these two phenomena by situating them within a broader historical and cultural perspective. For this purpose, we will explore the conceptual histories of memory and creativity from ancient Greece to the present day. In particular, we will focus on how the emergence and development of technologies of reproduction (starting from writing, then printing, and up to the digital revolution) have actively shaped both the actual dynamic of memory and creativity and their conceptualization in the humanities and social sciences. While the appearance of printing reinforced an image of memory founded on the idea of reproduction, it simultaneously offered the very antithesis of creativity: exact replication as the ‘non-creative.’ The implications of this divergence will be explored

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in this chapter, as well as modern-day possibilities for synthesis through the accelerated development of the digital age. In this contemporary historical context, a vision of ‘repetition’ as reconstruction aids sociocultural efforts to theorize memory and creativity as the two sides of the same coin.

Memory in Antiquity: From Divinities to Inscription

In ancient Greece, the goddess Mnemosyne was the personification of memory. According to legend, after having slept with Zeus nine consecutive nights, she gave birth to the nine muses on which all human culture rests. The muses represent knowledge and the arts, such as poetry, music, dance, history, theater, and astronomy. Thus, this story puts memory at the beginning of all human culture and knowing. This concept of memory dominated the ancient world and the Middle Ages before it began to be displaced by a notion of memory that was opposed to creativity in the Renaissance (see next section). There are, however, also some important conceptual changes that appear during this period, which set the stage for latter developments and will be pointed out here. In this section, we will focus on how memory was understood and used from antiquity until the Renaissance. At first, memory was assumed to be something imparted to one by Mnemosyne or the muses, an idea that would continue to exist in the notion of ‘divine inspiration.’ Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* begin by evoking Mnemosyne or the muses. Thus, memory was seen to be something that comes from the outside, as a kind of social relationship with nonhuman agents. This conceptualization continues to be the case in many non-literate societies around the world (e.g., see Vitebsky 1993), where the model of a written text with fixed and unchanging information is absent. Frequently, memory is located in the dynamic communication with dead ancestors, who must either be appeased or aided with deeds performed by the living. ‘Dia de los Muertos’ in Mexico is a good living example of this tradition. It was also still being practiced in Europe up until the Reformation, at which time Luther successfully argued to move cemeteries out of cities and thereby distance them from the everyday lives of the living. However, the immediate effect of this change was to transform benevolent apparitions into malevolent ones.

The decisive change in the conceptualization of memory occurred in the Western tradition with Plato, who in his *Theaetetus* reconceptualized memory as an individual and general capacity to retain the past. To do this, he used the metaphor of writing, which was at that time becoming a widespread social practice with standardized technologies (e.g., the wax tablet). He famously said,

Imagine that there exists in the mind of man a block of wax... When we wish to remember anything we have seen, or heard, or thought in our own minds, we hold the wax to the perceptions or thoughts, and in that material receive the impression of them as from the seal of a ring. Whatever is so imprinted we remember and know so long as the image remains (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 191D-E).

Memory as a kind of writing on some surface would become the dominant metaphor from antiquity to the present day (Danziger 2002, 2008). Though we no longer speak of wax tablets, the root metaphor persists in modern psychological terms such as ‘encoding,’ ‘storage,’ and ‘retrieval,’ paralleling Plato’s phases of ‘writing,’ ‘storing,’ and ‘reading.’ Even the well-known concept of ‘engram,’ describing the trace of some event left in the brain, literally means ‘that which is converted into writing.’ But we are getting ahead of ourselves. There were many centuries and conceptual steps before memory became exclusively defined in terms of a literal and exact reproduction of the past. In antiquity and the Middle Ages, the ability to passively receive and reproduce items exactly as they were presented was seen as inferior to the active use of the past to build something, whether it be a speech, text, or personal ethic. Plato’s wax tablet was for him more about making memos to oneself, as one would make a to-do list today, than with important topics such as truth, beauty, and morality. In Plato’s terms, these involved the recollection of ideal forms, which was facilitated by dialogue—Socrates is metaphorically described as the ‘mid-wife’ of the truth. This was a key distinction for Aristotle as well: *mnēmē* (memory) was considered to be passive and natural, while *anamnesis* (recollection) was understood as active and artificial. The latter was fundamental to the ancient art of memory, taught as an essential component of rhetoric in the ancient world.

The Ancient and Medieval Art(S) of Memory

The art of memory (Carruthers 1990; Yates 1966) has its mythical origins in an incident at an ancient Greek dinner party. As was commonly practiced, a poet by the name of Simonides was paid to deliver a speech, for which he began by praising two Gods. His patron interrupted and said he would only pay half for the speech, as he should have been praising him. Simonides then got word that someone had a message for him outside the dinning hall. When Simonides left he found no one there but, in his absence, the roof of the hall collapsed killing everyone inside and mangling their bodies such that they were unidentifiable for burial. He found that he could remember who was who by imagining their placement around the table. Thus, the art of memory is born from death! Any mnemonic technique works by using something easy to remember in order to retain something difficult to remember. The ancient art of memory exploits familiar places and vivid images as being particularly memorable. A technique was developed, called ‘the method of loci,’ in which one first imagines a familiar place and then places symbolic images of the items to be remembered in the discrete loci of the place. One then simply has to imaginatively walk through the place in order to read off the items from the images placed there. It should be stressed, however, that the items to be recalled were initially not so much factual pieces of information but themes to be remembered for the purposes of giving a speech, for example, in a court of law. Building a

speech from memory was a dynamic and improvisational process rather than a word for word reproduction of something already made.

The art of memory was further developed in the Middle Ages, but its function shifted from aiding rhetoric to becoming a part of ethics. At the beginning of *The Book of Memory*, Carruthers (1990) points out that while contemporary culture tends to praise geniuses for their ‘creativity,’ in medieval society ‘memory’ was the most desirable attribute. Einstein is the prototype of a genius in the twentieth century, whereas Augustine was in the medieval world. Yet these figures share much in common in regard to their personalities and working habits; it was their contemporaries that choose to emphasize different, seemingly opposing characteristics of memory and creativity in each figure. However, memory was not in the medieval era thought of as a literal reproduction of the past, but rather as embodying invention from tradition, not creation out of nothing. If today we have a stereotypical view of the medieval world as not being conducive to creativity, it is simply because we look for creativity in the wrong places! Although counter-intuitive in contemporary culture, we must search for it in the practices of memory. In her latter book *The Craft of Thought*, Carruthers (1998, p. 4) pleads with her readers to set aside their prejudices about memory and think about it as a kind of foundation for imagination and invention, developed across one’s life:

I must ask of my readers considerable effort of imagination throughout this study, to conceive of memory not only as “rote,” the ability to reproduce something (whether a text, a formula, a list of items, an incident) but as the matrix of a reminiscing cogitation, shuffling and collating “things” stored in a random-access memory scheme, or set of schemes—a memory *architecture* and a library built up during one’s life with the express intention that it be used inventively.

This ‘memory architecture’ was something developed through one’s own life that provides a structure for placing and locating the knowledge one has accumulated. Again, it should be stressed that it served as a foundation on which things were constructed and not an end in itself. It provided the framework for a ‘craft of thought,’ where new insights were dynamically constructed from one’s previous experience. Thus, this idea situates new insights and ideas within a cultural tradition of previous knowledge internalized by the individual. As such, it shares with the social–historical school of thought coming from Vygotsky the notion that higher mental functions such as thinking depend on the social and cultural environment for their development. The idea of a memory architecture updated across one’s life and dynamically used also comes close to Frederic Bartlett’s notion of schema (Wagoner 2013), which he defined as the massed effects of previous experience. However, it differs from contemporary understandings of the term in that the medieval art of memory required an interpreting agent, whereas recent theories tend to talk as if the schema itself remembered. For now, suffice it to say that in the medieval era memory was a skill developed through one’s life in order to more effectively construct new ideas. The medievals were not concerned with reproducing memory as factual knowledge from rote, as would happen in the centuries to follow.

From Renaissance to (Late) Modernity: The Dawn of ‘Creativity’

The Renaissance built the foundation for the ‘creative ideal’ of modernity, perfected by Romanticism and Enlightenment in subsequent centuries. The Renaissance was marked by a return to classical forms, a return that placed man, instead of God (or the Gods of antiquity), at the center. Since God is, arguably, the ultimate prototype of creativity (Sternberg and Lubart 1999), de-centering its role meant first and foremost discovering man as a creator. But how was creativity explained, if not by divine inspiration? The new grounding of the capacity to create became genetic inheritance (Dacey 1999, p. 310). This made possible not only to recognize human creativity but also to locate it within the special qualities of the individual creator. This process of individualization allowed celebration of a creator’s achievement in both art and science. Initially, during the Renaissance, there were no strict boundaries between the two and great creators excelled in both areas (hence, the ideal of being a polymath, a ‘Renaissance Man’). In time, however, these became two distinct forms of creative expression, ‘the secular, rational scientific discovery and the emotional, spiritual creativity of the artist’ (Liep 2001, p. 3). The radical individualization of creativity continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under the auspices of Romanticism (the exaltation of the arts) and Enlightenment (the exaltation of the sciences). The first brought to the fore ideas related to inspiration, imagination, and free expression of the self, while the second focused on ingenuity, invention, and problem solving capacities (Weiner 2000; see also Cornejo 2015).

Despite clear discontinuities between pre- and post-Renaissance conceptions of creativity, particularly in terms of the source of this capacity (its divine or human origin) and its expression (by communities such as guilds, versus by celebrated masters alone), both periods were united by a common belief that true creativity resembles the act of God. It was the capacity to create ‘out of nothing,’ to bring something completely new and revolutionary into existence, the mark of the genius. ‘The genius was perceived as someone acutely innovative, original and superior, set apart from ordinary mortals, and as a creator *ex nihilo*, seeming to be close to the very forces of creation’ (Negus and Pickering 2004, p. 138). By the end of the eighteenth century, the genius became a distinct human type, as noted by Negus and Pickering. It was the symbol of extraordinary individuals accomplishing extraordinary deeds almost singlehandedly. The basis of its exceptionality was, by the end of the nineteenth century, strongly rooted in genetic inheritance; indeed, Francis Galton offered one of the first theories of the genius focused on biology (see Galton 1874). The social and cultural construction of what it meant to be recognized as a genius escaped Galton and his followers, for example, the fact that this category was largely reserved for male creativity (see the He-paradigm of creativity in Glăveanu 2010). The genius approach to creativity is described by exclusivity, elitism, and disconnection. The essence of the genius was his capacity to ‘break the set’ (Weisberg 1993, p. 7), to escape conventions and habit and stand apart from common culture and society. In fact,

(...) a romanticized (and pathologized), reductionistic view of creative genius established a fundamentally negative relationship between creative individuals and community that actively perpetuates precisely the kind of stereotypical problems creative individuals have to suffer by establishing for them almost a priori a pathologized role in the context of society. (...) 'It's the fate of the genius to be poor/misunderstood/weird/problem-ridden/anti-social, and so forth'. Granted, creativity and creative individuals may at times be all of the above (as numerous people who are not particularly creative at all), but not by necessity (Montuori and Purser 1995, p. 76).

From the genius as hero we are moving toward an understanding of genius as myth. This view does not aim to downplay the existence of great creative achievements or deny recognition to their authors. What it does, however, is deconstruct the 'special' status of their qualities. For Weisberg (1993), the works of genius and everyday creative acts are not that different; for both, 'creativity is firmly rooted in past experience and has its source in the same thought processes that we all use every day' (p. 3), including memory. This conception is part of a larger shift in perspective about creativity that took place in the second half of the last century. Well summarized by Liep (2001, p. 5), 'whereas creativity was formally located in the elevated circles of science and the secluded atelier of the artist, it now seems to be everywhere.'

How did this change come about? What encouraged the 'democratization' of creativity after the 1950s? In the psychology of creativity, this change is largely attributed to the 1950 APA address of Guilford, when he urged his colleagues to study the creative potential of each and every individual and try to educate or foster it. What Guilford did was place creativity firmly on the agenda of psychology by claiming that 'the psychologist's problem is that of creative personality' (Guilford 1950, p. 444). Moreover, he also was one of the first to offer ideas about how creativity, or rather creative potential, can be evaluated. The unusual uses test (asking people to generate as many uses as they can for a common object) is rooted in Guilford's model of the intellect and the association he proposed between creativity and divergent thinking (as opposed to convergent thinking, or the thinking that strives to discover the correct answer to a problem). There are both scientific and societal grounds for this new paradigm of creativity. The first are represented by the emergence and large-scale use of psychometrics. New testing instruments made it possible, for the first time, to quantitatively assess creative potential as a psychological (rather than biological) trait. Second, the socio-political climate in mid-twentieth-century USA made this discourse about creativity not only possible but also necessary. At a time during the Cold War when the USA seemed to be lagging behind,

'creativity' could no longer be left to the chance occurrences of the genius; neither could it be left in the realm of the wholly mysterious and the untouchable. Men *had* to be able to do something about it; creativity had to be a property in many men; it *had* to be something identifiable; it *had* to be subject to the effects of efforts to gain more of it (Razik 1970, p. 156).

The history of creativity from Renaissance up to modern times was thus one of great transformations, the latest being the transformation of creativity into a social

value to be cultivated in schools, families, and at the workplace. It is also a history of creative individuals, from the Renaissance genius to the Romantic artist and Enlightened scientist, and up to each and every person (at least in potential). Creativity might have been ‘democratized,’ but it certainly was not, historically, ‘socialized.’ It is mainly in the last decades that more social accounts of creativity emerged due, again, to radical societal changes. On the whole, these conceptions tended to oppose creativity and memory, so much so that creativity seemed to require a kind of ‘social forgetting’ of conventional ways of knowing and doing things. However, the development of the Internet and, more recently, social media made collaboration the rule rather than the exception of working, living, and creating. In the inspired words of Barron (1995, p. 3), after the second half of the last century, ‘Creation was the work of an ensemble. Brains had been organized into superbrains, tools into gigantic mechanisms. Places were suddenly closer together. Conglomerates became the rule’ (Barron 1995, p. 3). Together with the social focus came the realization that to create means not to bring something completely new into existence but, fundamentally, to re-create (Tanggaard 2014). With this, a new historical intersection between memory and creativity came to the fore.

Memory and Creativity in the Age of Reproduction

As discussed in the previous two sections, memory and creativity have been closely tied during Antiquity, when great poets and orators of the day were the very embodiment of both. Similarly, nowadays, creative people mix and remix elements of their culture to achieve recognition, making use of the unprecedented capacity of storing and sharing information offered by the Internet and particularly by new social media (Wagoner et al. 2007). For centuries, however, the course of creativity and memory seem to have been running parallel to each other. Moreover, they were and still are, to some extent, considered exclusive opposites: memory looks toward the past and is grounded in repetition and imitation, while creativity anticipates the future, one that is different from what is or existed before. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact historical ‘moments’ or events which accentuated this false estrangement, and perhaps even misleading to even think in terms of moments or single events. It was rather great historical changes that contributed to the vivid separation between creativity and memory and, key among them, was the emergence and proliferation of mechanical forms of reproduction. Paradoxically, as we argue here, it is precisely the use of modern technologies of reproduction that, later on, facilitated the rapprochement between remembering and creating.

The difference between creativity and memory can be thought about in terms of the distinction between the original and the copy; in other words, the difference between production (‘creativity’) and reproduction (‘memory’). What is being (re) produced? The philosophical roots of this debate direct first our attention toward images. Plato’s treatment of images contributed to the mimetic theory of creation whereby art is a perishable imitation or replica of eternal essences and, ‘whenever

human imagination departs from any of these three structures, it is to be condemned without hesitation and without reprieve' (Kearney 1988, p. 105). According to Kearney, the first paradigm of the creator was that of a craftsman, modeling his or her activity based on the 'original' of divine creation. This conception, largely considering any act of production a reproduction, dominated Greek and Roman Antiquity and the medieval period. After the Renaissance, the prototype of the creator became, according to Kearney, the inventor, replacing theocentric with anthropocentric creation. The inventor does not reproduce an original; it creates it for others to follow. Interestingly, Kearney also believed this prototype was overthrown in our postmodern culture by what he calls the *bricoleur*, 'someone who plays around with fragments of meaning which he himself has not created' (Kearney 1988, p. 13). The *bricoleur* does not create the original anymore simply because there is no original to be created. The world of contemporary culture is that of copies made constantly anew.

Importantly, the 'shift' from the craftsmen to the inventor took place around the time the first printing presses appeared (credited, in Europe, to Johannes Gutenberg around the year 1450). What the possibility of creating 'perfect' copies did was, simultaneously, to offer the old view of memory as imprinting a concrete illustration and to offer creativity its reverse—the mechanical reproduction of the past. The transition from script to print had, of course, much wider societal implications, including a faster and more 'accurate' spread of knowledge (Eisenstein 1979). One of the main thinkers to theorize these implications, particularly for the field of art, was Benjamin (1936/2008). His well-known essay, 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction,' was understood by some as a strong defense of the romantic idea of the original in art. However, he mainly pointed to the fact that new forms of reproduction lead to new ways of understanding and relating to art. For Benjamin, a reproduction does not simply follow the original but offers it another type of life for its different audiences; it actively re-creates it for them. He noted that the practice of reproducing artworks has a very long history. Replicas have always been made either by pupils learning the craft, by the masters themselves in order to diffuse their own work, or by third parties in pursuit of financial profit. Old technologies of reproduction included founding and stamping and, later, woodcut graphic art was among the first to become mechanically reproducible. Later on, lithography also made its appearance; a few decades after, photography emerged as well. It is precisely the spread of these 'mechanical' forms of reproduction that initiated a revolution in art. Initially, even replicas could be said to be, in some ways, unique. Mechanical reproduction meant, among other things, reducing considerably the distance between original and copy. It also made copies much more widely available. For the first time, 'high art' became integrated into everyday life and started to change both its function and form.

Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authority; not so vis a vis technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction. For example, in photography, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the lens,

which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will. (...) Secondly, technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room (Benjamin 1936/2008, p. 4).

Benjamin was thus fully aware of the fact that a replica is never just a copy of the original. It is the original transformed. At the same time, he believed that authenticity is threatened by the act of mechanical duplication; what is lost by works of art is their ‘aura,’ their mark of uniqueness. Is this, however, something to be lamented? Subsequent scholarship was inclined to celebrate this change. For Rehn and Vachhani (2006), novelty and originality are not the ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ of an innovation; these are revealed through the way in which the ‘original’ lives on, in continuous processes of reproduction. For them, ‘the truth of the innovation thus lies in the way it becomes post-original, in the way it realizes an afterlife’ (Rehn and Vachhani 2006, p. 315). Challenging the very distinction between the original and the copy, the two authors discussed three modes of the post-original: derivation, knockoffs, and remixes. Greatly facilitated by the digital revolution, these modes of existence are not inferior economically to innovations; they are innovations in their own right. For each of them, ‘producing’ and ‘reproducing,’ ‘remembering’ and ‘creating’ are not separate; with them, creativity and memory become indistinguishable.

‘Creative’ Approaches to Memory in twentieth-Century Psychology

Memory has been increasingly reconceptualized as a creative and constructive activity in contemporary psychology. Rather than being like reading old writings imprinted inside the head, remembering is better seen as an adaptation or improvisation in the face of the indeterminacy of our actions in the world. The fact that memory is creative means that the past is in a constant process of being reconstructed (which is not the same as being ‘distorted’ as many psychologists now claim). At a collective level, it means that traditions are renewed through their use in responding to new influences, while at an individual level it means that we are not determined by our past but have some agency in re-defining ourselves and our orientation to the world. At both levels, memories are not isolated traces of the past but are complexes of experiences continuously woven together in novel ways, as the medieval art of memory saw it. From this point of view, it makes perfect sense that the muses (i.e., creative divinities) were the daughters of Mnemosyne (i.e., the Goddess of Memory). In this section, we will consider how certain trends in memory research have shifted the focus from how memory accurately reproduces items of information (like copies of a text) to how it enables people to meet the challenges of a changing world and an indeterminate future. Moreover, we will highlight why this notion of

remembering should be conceived of as a social and cultural process. Culture will be shown to be both the means and product of this activity.

Frederic Bartlett made the most important early advance in the reconceptualization of memory in psychology in his landmark book *Remembering: A study in experimental and social psychology*. The title already signals a fundamental change in perspective: firstly, that he aims to study the *activity* of ‘remembering’ rather than a *substance* or faculty referred to as ‘memory.’ Secondly, remembering is considered part of a social rather than simply individual process. Bartlett aimed to develop a theory of memory in contrast to the idea that memories are stored as individuated traces in the organism. In contradistinction to Plato’s metaphor (see first section), Bartlett argued that remembering was an active and ‘imaginative’ reconstruction of the past, based on the massed effects of previous experience and what is selected out of it in the form of images. Thus, the researcher can no longer simply study memory by comparing inputs and outputs, stimuli and responses. Memories are in fact constructed in the moment of remembering. This is a dynamic in which the person will ask questions to him or herself and bring other experiences into play (see Wagoner and Gillespie 2014, 2016). Each time a past experience is remembered, it will be re-elaborated in a new way depending on the situation and what has happened since. In contrast to many contemporary conceptualizations that frame this as a process of memory distortion, it was for Bartlett an essential virtue of remembering, because it meant that the person was capable of flexibly meeting new challenges and developing new cultural forms with the aid of past experience.

Interestingly, contemporary neuroscience has increasingly shifted toward this Bartlettian conceptualization of memory. Earlier in the twentieth century, neuroscientists had set out in search of what has been called the ‘engram,’ where memories are presumed to be stored in the brain (a definition that betrays the Platonic view of memory as inscription). Karl Lashley already questioned this idea in neurology in the mid-twentieth century. Lashley (1950) created lesions in different parts of rats’ brains and tested its effect on their ability to learn how to go through mazes. Incredibly, it did not matter so much which part of the brain was destroyed, but rather the quantity of the tissue destroyed. These experiments, Lashley concluded, ‘yielded a good bit of information about what and where the engram is not’ (pp. 477–478). We now know that specific brain regions serve particular functions, but Lashley’s idea that we need to consider the brain as a dynamic whole has stuck. The brain is nowadays considered a dynamic and distributed system, which never returns to the same state twice. Neurologists emphasize that memory consolidation in the brain is an ongoing process in which memories only become relatively stable after a considerable time frame and that any re-activation starts the process again (Dubai 2004). Moreover, it has been found that the same regions of the brain will light up on an fMRI scan when you ask people to remember their last birthday and imagine a future birthday (Schacter et al. 2007), thus providing further evidence for Bartlett’s (1932) conceptualization of remembering as an ‘imaginative reconstruction.’

If these conceptualizations are correction, memory can no longer be considered a static register of some experience. Principally it functions to orient us within a

changing world and toward an indeterminate future. If memory actually operated according to the ideal of literal recall, as if it were a printed text, it would in fact be highly dysfunctional, as we know from bizarre cases like the mnemonist Sheresheveskii (see Luria 1987). Instead, memory provides a flexible scheme that enables us to imagine new possibilities and create novel ideas, as the medievals had theorized. Thus, remembering is an inherently constructive and creative process which weaves together experiences from diverse sources. The literal reproduction of the past, like an imprint on a surface, is not only impossible but undesirable for adaptation to the world. The past is instead remolded to new situations and demands, in the process of which new ideas and cultural forms emerge. The great contribution these processes make to creativity is discussed in the next section.

Creativity and Memory in Contemporary Psychology

Creative ideas and discoveries often provide new information and perspectives that were not apparent in the past. In contrast, the concept of memory is typically associated with ideas that are not novel or original. Indeed, the act of remembering is an attempt to recreate events and experiences that have occurred in the past. From this perspective, memory and creativity appear to involve very different kinds of activities (Stein 1989, p. 163).

In the above, Stein gave voice to common conceptions about creativity and memory in contemporary psychology. However, this was not the conclusion of his own review of the two fields. On the contrary, he was of the opinion that, although memory and creativity often have different goals, they might actually draw on very similar processes. Other authors considered as well that ordinary thinking intermingles remembering and creating and is fundamentally based on continuity with the past: dealing with new situations on the basis of what we know from our previous experience (Weisberg 1993, p. 21). Such a conception brings knowledge and expertise to the fore in creative acts; and this despite the air of novelty or spontaneity these acts might have. Dewey (1934, p. 75) metaphorically compared this process in the work of artists with a volcano's eruption: the act itself seems unexpected, but it is based on a long period of prior compression, and it implies merely a transformation of original raw materials. In his words, 'new ideas come leisurely yet promptly to consciousness only when work has previously been done in forming the right doors by which they may gain entrance' (p. 76).

The question of if and how memory or, more broadly, previous knowledge, helps creative activity has been one of the first interrogations in the field of creativity studies. Old strands of scholarship like psychoanalysis supported the role of memory. In his analysis of creative writers, Freud (1970, p. 133) considered that a strong present experience can awaken in the writer the memory of an earlier (childhood) experience from which a wish emerges, one that finds fulfillment in creative work. More commonly, however, psychologists pointed to the essential role of previous knowledge for creativity. As Amabile notes, 'clearly, it is only possible to be creative in nuclear physics if one knows something (and probably a

great deal) about nuclear physics' (Amabile 1983, p. 70). Nevertheless, can one accumulate 'too much' knowledge or expertise? Isn't there the risk of developing habits, routines, or scripts that actually end up preventing creative expression? Hayes (1989) and others hypothesized, based on research, that at least a decade of work is required before making a master-level contribution to a field of knowledge (what came to be known as the '10-year rule'). And yet, many psychologists support the idea of an 'optimum' of knowledge one needs to acquire in order to be creative; in other words, they assume an inverted U relation between creativity and knowledge (creative performance is weak in the absence of knowledge but, equally, when the optimum has been exceeded; for details see Weisberg 1999; Scott 1999). In support of this claim, cases are cited in which previous experience creates expectations that do not allow our behavior to become flexible. Functional fixedness (Duncker 1945) is here a good example of negative transfer of knowledge. But the picture is much more complex, as Stein (1989) shows, with both positive and negative transfers occurring depending on a series personal and social factors. According to Nečka (1999, p. 198), there is ground to assume that the memory of creative individuals differ qualitatively than that of less creative people.

Current research into the relation between creativity and memory is mostly cognitive and neuro-psychological. The latter tries to relate observations of brain activity during working memory and creativity tasks (Takeuchi et al. 2011) or observe how working memory and brain structures like the cerebellum collaborate to produce creativity (Vandervert et al. 2007). Cognitive studies give memory an even more fundamental role for creative production. This is exemplified by associative memory models of creativity, applied to both individuals and groups (see Brown and Paulus 2002). What they fundamentally assume is that information (concepts) is stored in long-term memory in the form of semantic networks. In these networks, concepts that are 'close' to those already active become more easily accessible. Creativity is conceptualized, according to this model, as a process of searching solutions or ideas within semantic networks. The more diverse the outcomes of these search are, the more creative the outcome. This is why Brown and Paulus (2002) believe that brainstorming groups can be beneficial for creativity: they give participants the opportunity to 'search' within the associative memory of more people. The generation of ideas by others prompts different searches within the semantic networks of fellow brainstormers.

Despite this focus on brainstorming groups, this theory of creativity and memory remains thoroughly individualistic. It is within the individual that both memory and creativity are located. Such a reductionist understanding does not consider the role of the social or the material world for both these processes, neither theorize them developmentally. However, the discussion of memory within the creativity literature has been approached from other theoretical perspectives than cognitive (including sociological, anthropological, and developmental) albeit using different terminologies. The notions of habit, imitation, and tradition represent only three examples, briefly introduced as follows.

A common belief opposes habit and creativity. For Borofsky (2001, p. 66), creativity involves 'going beyond the habituated (...), the standard, repeated

routines of everyday life.’ However, this conceptualization of habit draws on its appropriation by physiology rather than its understanding within social psychology and sociology (Glăveanu 2012). For Bourdieu (1990), however, the habitus represents merely ‘dispositions acquired through experience’ (p. 9) and, as such, are not rigid but flexible (within limits). The habitus as the ‘feel for the game,’ ‘is what enables an infinite number of ‘moves’ to be made, adapted to the infinite number of possible situations which no rule, however complex, can foresee’ (p. 9). These dispositions are equally generative, ultimately creative, a quality Bourdieu insisted on in his later work. More than this, people become creative in their daily lives because they acquire and develop a habitus. Creativity emerges from routine activities which, at all times, require improvisation (Dalton 2004, p. 620). ‘Nothing is simultaneously freer and more constrained than the action of the good player’ (Bourdieu 1990, p. 63).

Habits are generally acquired through imitation and this, once again, is generally considered by many the opposite of creativity. Nonetheless, the developmental work of Baldwin (1894) gave it a fundamental position in the process of relating to one’s environment. Baldwin distinguished between simple and persistent imitation (see also Valsiner 2000). Through circular reactions, infants introduce novelty in their action and repeatedly ‘test’ this novelty, effectively imitating their own innovations in a process of constructive experimentation. If simple imitation is mostly sensory motor and tends to reproduce its own stimulus (approximate the model), persistent imitations reflect the ‘try, try again’ of early volition and creativity (going beyond the given model). Both these forms of imitation are widely found in play during childhood. For Baldwin, there is no gap between adapting something through imitation and (re)creating it. On the contrary, ‘every new thing is an adaptation, and every adaptation arises right out of the bosom of old processes and is filled with old matter’ (Baldwin 1900, p. 218).

Finally, tradition is another concept that, at least on the surface, seems to be in ‘perpetual conflict’ with creativity (Weiner 2000, p. 12). But how could creations exist out of any form of tradition? Feldman (1974, p. 68) rightly notes in this regard that, ‘all creative thought springs from a base of cultural knowledge and is therefore, by definition, part of a cultural tradition—even when it breaks with tradition.’ We would not even be able to recognize novelty except with reference to the ‘old’; ‘without rules there cannot be exceptions, and without tradition there cannot be novelty’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1999, p. 315). The main challenge for those who want to relate creativity and tradition is a general understanding of the latter as static, incapable of change or transformation. This misconception is of course contradicted by the careful study of existing traditions. Their vitality stems precisely for the fact that they constantly adapt to changing circumstances, they innovate in order to keep or continue. In this sense, any tradition is, ultimately, a neo-tradition, a space of both creativity and memory or, rather, of creativity through memory. In the words of Negus and Pickering (2004, p. 104), ‘tradition acts as the bridge between memory and imagination, meaning and value, theory and practice, it is a bridge that is always being built.’

In summary, when considering memory from the standpoint of creativity studies one can easily notice that we are not talking about two sharply distinct processes,

little less opposing activities. Creativity does not break with what already exists but actively builds on a wide, individual and social, basis of habits and traditions. Imitations and copying are not simply memory-driven processes; they play a fundamental part in creative work as well (see also Ingold and Hallam 2007). There is plenty of creativity when it comes to copying or reproducing the ‘original.’ Moreover, the ‘original’ itself is, at all times, a ‘copy’ transformed.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we have presented a potted history of memory and creativity, their intersections and divergences through the centuries, and reflected on their present-day rapprochement. In doing so, our aim was to problematize a simplistic understanding of memory as oriented toward the past and creativity as directed toward the future and, instead, offer a view in which these two processes are thoroughly intertwined. Human beings are not simply determined by their past, but neither are they constantly reinventing themselves and their future. Rather, they draw on the past in order to construct new means of existing in the present and living forward. In light of this, creativity and memory appear less as two distinct functions and more like an integrated process of *mnemo synthesis*, in which we create through remembering and evoke the past creatively.

Vygotsky’s (1971) discussion of art points precisely to the importance of synthesis for the emergence of novel meanings, feelings, and forms of action. He belongs in this regard to a long historical tradition in psychology dealing with the conceptualization of this fundamental process (for details see Valsiner 2014). This history is yet to bear fruits, however, as most previous accounts of synthesis, including that of Vygotsky, stopped short of explaining how novelty comes about. Integrating, creating, and remembering within the same type of action can be the basis of synthesizing new understandings but for this to happen a catalyst is needed: affect. The same emphasis on affect is found in Vygotsky’s (1991) analysis of imagination and creativity in the adolescent. In his view, a higher synthesis of personality and worldview is achieved through the intertwining of emotional and thought processes. Affective abstraction and generalization were central for Vygotsky’s conception and, considering further their role in acts of *mnemo synthesis*, can lead in the future to exciting theoretical developments in this area.

In concluding we are, at once, reproductive and productive in the ways in which we relate to ourselves and to the world around us. Human beings are situated in history by preserving the frameworks and traditions of their group and, through the same processes, transforming them. Any discussion of creativity and memory in psychology needs to be grounded in history in order to put contemporary definitions (and new theoretical proposals) into perspective. At the same time, we should also be aware of the fact that our conceptions of memory and creativity are not inconsequential; they actively shape the ways in which we remember our history, create a place within it, and imagine a future for ourselves, our community, and the society we live in.

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Part II
Marking Signs—Creating Ourselves:
The Realities of Imagination

Chapter 6

Affective Semiosis: Philosophical Links to Cultural Psychology

Robert E. Innis

The matrices and fields of meaning-making are the shared focal concerns of a philosophical semiotics and of a cultural psychology informed by broad-based semiotic categories. The central claim, or premise, of both is that “minding” in all its ramified dimensions is dependent upon and oriented toward both the apprehension and the creation of meaning-bearing forms, making sense of the world through webs of signs or sign-functions. Semiotics puts signs or sign activity at both the lower and upper thresholds of life, extending from where matter becomes self-organized at the level of sentience to the panoply of diverse phenomena that make up the cultural world as a whole.

For semiotics, sign processes condition, structure, and transform, according to their respective powers, our modes of access to the world. Such structured dynamic processes issue into an open spiral of signifying activities which we carry out and in the products of which we are embodied. They make up the “roots” of what Michael Polanyi (1958, 1966) called our “indwelling” in the world, a vast field of semiotic probes upon which we rely to extend ourselves toward the world and to which we have assimilated to ourselves. They, along with all the other artifacts produced in our engagements with the world, make up our “exosomatic” body. Semiotics is based upon the central notion that signs, whether internal or bodily, or external and in the public world, have to be in some sense *perceived*, or more generally *felt*, and as a result have *material felt qualities* proper to them which inform their syntactical, semantic, and rhetorical properties. These felt qualities, however, are not restricted to the mediating instruments themselves but to the features of the world, and ourselves, that they connect us with. These features are made accessible to us by different types of sign processes and captured in sign-configurations with different logical properties.

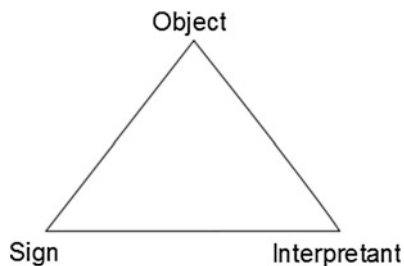
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Peirce on Consciousness and Signs

C.S. Peirce, a central source of one major semiotic tradition, claimed in an early essay that “the content of consciousness, the entire phenomenal manifestation of mind, is a sign resulting from inference ... the mind is a sign developing according to the laws of inference” (1868b: 53). Peirce thought of mental life, and a fortiori cultural life, as an unlimited process of sign production and sign interpretation, with each sign and sign-configuration giving rise to further signs or “interpretant signs,” what he called the “proper significate effects” of a sign. Peirce schematizes in a compact text semiosis or sign-action as involving five factors.

A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen. (CP 2.228)

The three main factors of sign, object, and interpretant make up the “semiotic triangle” that is the core of Peirce’s theory of signs. The sign connects us, the interpreters, to its object—or more generally the world—through its interpretant.



Semiotic Triangle

Peirce’s classic schematization of signs distinguishes three fundamental classes of signs, based on the relation of a sign to its “object.” This classification of signs is well known, but for the sake of the following discussion, it needs to be summarized briefly and the grounds for the differentiation of sign-types foregrounded. The intricacies of Peirce’s metaphysical categories can only be alluded to without extensive discussion.

First of all, with relation of a sign to its object, a “logical” relation, Peirce distinguishes three “pure” or unmixed ways or modes. A sign can be related to its object by resembling, or sharing a defining quality or pattern of relations with, its object. So, images of all sort, diagrams, and, on Peirce’s reckoning, metaphors, with their pictorial envelopes, even mathematical equations, belong to a class that Peirce calls “icons,” exemplifying and realizing the semiotic modality of *iconicity*. Further, a sign can be related to its object by having some sort of connection, existential or otherwise, with its object. Bruises, signposts, the pointing finger, nods of the head

in a specific direction, ways of behaving connected with occupations, blushes, scars, all physical traces, personal pronouns, and so forth are instances of “indices,” exemplifying the semiotic modality of *indexicality*. And, as the last ultimate category, a sign can be related to its object purely by convention or effective mutual agreement, with no reliance upon resemblance or real connection. Such are “symbols,” the principal semiotic modality operative in human language, which, however, has incorporated the two other semiotic modalities into its own modality of *symbolicity*. Iconicity and indexicality, however, are not foreign to the symbolic dimension of meaning-making. Symbolicity is Peirce’s way of categorizing in some respects the “arbitrariness of the sign” that is the fundamental principle of the tradition of sign-theory deriving from F. de Saussure’s *Course in General Linguistics* with its central assertion that language is fundamentally a system of differences on the phonic or expression plane correlated with a system of differences on the content plane, with the later plane dependent on the prior, in spite of their inextricable union. But Peirce is not a nominalist and his “symbol” is dependent upon the “real” even if it is a creative semiotic instrument *par excellence*.

Peirce encapsulates his position in the following passage:

A regular progression of one, two, three may be remarked in the three orders of signs, Icon, Index, Symbol. The Icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness. But it really stands unconnected with them. The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, except remarking it, after it is established. The symbol is connected with its object by virtue of the idea of the symbol-using mind, without which no such connection would exist. (CP 2.299)

Peirce did not divide the semiotic continuum by means of purely logical considerations but derived it from a schematization of what he called the ultimate categories of consciousness. Peirce claims that the “contents of consciousness” involve three kinds of psychical elements: “their qualities of feelings, their reaction against my will, and their generalizing or associating element” (CP 8.144). These elements are, according to Peirce, “constant ingredients of our knowledge” that are due to “congenital tendencies of the mind” or can even be considered as “three parts or faculties of the soul or modes of consciousness” (CP 1.374).

Peirce characterizes these three categories of consciousness in the following way: first, feeling, the consciousness that can be included with an instant of time, passive consciousness of quality, without recognition or analysis; second, consciousness of an interruption into the field of consciousness, sense of resistance, of an external fact, of another something; third, synthetic consciousness, binding time together, sense of learning, thought. (CP 1.377)

Cognitional structure for Peirce is complex, for “every kind of consciousness enters into cognition” (CP 1.381). Although, as Peirce puts it, feelings “form the warp and woof of cognition” and “the will, in the form of attention [to the other], constantly enters,” cognition, or experience, is neither feeling nor the polar sense alone. It involves “consciousness of processes” and cannot be “contracted into an instant.” It is the “consciousness of synthesis” (CP 1.381). Peirce claims that the

three categories are comprehensive and exclusive. They characterize “three radically different elements of consciousness, these and no more” (CP 1.382).

Let us make more explicit and full differences between the three categories of consciousness: feeling, reaction, and thought.

Peirce describes feeling as “simply a quality of immediate consciousness” (CP 1.307), a “state of mind having its own quality, independent of any other state of mind” encompassing “all that is immediately present” (1891a: 290) and “perfectly simple, *in itself*” (1891a: 290). It is not in itself an object of introspection. It is *had* or, rather, *we are had by it*. The *object* of a feeling appears as a quality, and for Peirce, every object, perceptual or otherwise, is defined by a qualitative unity: “the colour of magenta, the odor of attar, the sound of a railway whistle, the taste of quinine, the quality of emotion upon contemplating a fine mathematical demonstration, the quality of feeling of love, etc.” (CP 1.304). Hence, a quality is the monadic element of a phenomenon made known through an indecomposable and *sui generis* feeling attendant upon presentation of the phenomenon. Feeling is a *sign* of quality and also the iconic element or moment in consciousness.

The mental element of reaction for Peirce is “a sense of something happening to us, by no act of ours” or “a sense of resistance, that is, of our expanding feeling upon something without” (1891a: 291) which forces our attention. What, more precisely, is this sense of reaction? Peirce says that it “is thus a sense of connection or comparison between feelings, either (a) between one feeling or another, or (b) between feeling and its absence or lower degree; and under b we have, first, the sense of the access of feeling, and second, the sense of the remission of feeling” (1891a: 291). This is the *felt* indexical element or dimension of perception and of consciousness in all its modes. It is first and foremost, in the case of perception, a recognition of the functioning of the indexical component in the material thing itself. When Peirce says that “any individual is a degenerate index of its own characters” (CP 2.284), we can understand this to mean that the characters themselves are indices or have an indexical function. They are vectors that point to and constitute the circumscribed wholes they are existentially connected with and are inseparable from.

The mental element of a general rule or concept makes up the third element of consciousness of an object. This is the element that mediates, effects, and recognizes objective unity in the phenomenal manifold. It institutes, as I have pointed out, the *form of combination* that joins a “first” to a “second” and thereby completes the circumscribed wholes appearing in the circle of the perceived. Thus, Peirce can remark that “thirdness pours in upon us through every avenue of sense” (CP 5.158). In this way, Peirce pushes symbolicity down to the perceptual field itself and does not restrict it to the realm of external signs such as language circulating in society and culture.

Now, as Peirce put it, sign-action creates in the mind of the person, or persons, addressed by a sign, which can be oneself, an equivalent sign. This is the proper significate effect of the sign that determines the mode of access to the “object,” whatever that should be. As expected, Peirce distinguishes, in one of his principal classifications, with which we will be concerned in this essay, three different classes of interpretants corresponding to the three psychical elements. The *emotional* or

affective interpretant accesses or links a person to the object through a feeling, the *energetic* interpretant links a person to the object by means of some complex of action/reaction, and the *logical* interpretant links a person to the object by means of a thought or “idea.”

As to the object of the sign, speaking abstractly and in simplified form, Peirce holds that in the case of icons, it is a *quality* accessed in and by feeling or the feeling component of sign-use or semiosis. In the case of indices, the object is a particular factor or set of factors in a perceptual situation that elicit and constrain or direct our attention, but is there independently of any intentional activity on our part. The object of a symbol is a lawful regularity or structure grasped in an act of abduction, a creative leap across what Polanyi called a logical gap to recognize or impose the form of combination that holds the experiential array together, a process, Peirce says, with “characters that are proper to *interpretations*” (CP 5.185).

These distinctions can be seen in a simple example taken from what Peirce called the “parish of percepts” (CP 8.144) or what Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as we will see, called “the circle of the perceived” (1942: 212). Peirce writes that the perceptual judgment within which an object such as a face or a mood appears aims to “reduce the phenomena to unity” (1868a: 16) and such a suggestion “comes to us like a flash” (CP 5.184). The perceiver “does not have to make separate acts of inference, but performs its act in one continuous process” (CP 5.185, texts from 1903 Harvard “Lectures on Pragmatism”). In the case of a face, the perceiver is presented with a phenomenal array the constitutive factors of which have to be apprehended and brought into a unity by a complex attending to structure in which all three elements of consciousness make up a “natural mental sign” (CP 8.256) that links us to the factors that constitute the object: singular qualities, indexical features internally pointing, as vectors, toward a focal unity, and the form of combination or synthesis that joins them together. It is *this unique face* that is apprehended. *Uniqueness* is the felt sense of a quality, *thisness* marks its singularity as composed of features defining George or Birgitte, and *faceness* defines the object as a *type* of thing. So, even on the level of perceptual mediation, as Peirce put it, “thirdness pours in upon us through every avenue of sense” (CP 5.158). George’s or Birgitte’s face is a unique qualitative whole and while each face is a token of a type, that is, an instance of something, namely a face, it has an irreducible suchness to it, even if we do not thematically attend to it in the stress and strain of our perceptual struggles.

Turning to Affective Semiosis: On Thresholds of Sense

So, Peirce’s semiotic triad of icons, indexes, and symbols and the categories of consciousness is meant to model the fundamental features of sense-giving and sense-reading. But there is an important consequence of Peirce’s theory of quality that bears upon the theme of “affective semiosis,” a concept that still remains to be defined in a satisfactory way. By putting the iconic element “first” in his analysis of semiosis, Peirce in effect foregrounded feeling or the affective dimension as the

original core element of our grasp of complex wholes, what pulls us toward, or repels us from, the object. Feelings for Peirce have “objects,” to be sure, but they are *qualities* of these complex wholes and of the situations in which these wholes are themselves found. But, more importantly, *every configuration of signs has itself a distinctive quality of feeling*. Sign-configurations have a kind of double-face: they enable us to attend to what is not themselves and in that sense are relatively transparent but they also have what Peirce called their own “material quality” grasped in feeling, akin to Damasio’s notion of a bodily “feeling of what happens” (2000) or the shift in feeling highlighted in Polanyi’s account of our subsidiary awareness of a probe. Our bodies as the locus of our fundamental non-objectifiable somatic tonus have a distinctive feel that marks their difference from moment to moment and from condition to condition. And the material qualities of any external sign-configuration have, as experienced, their own distinctive feel and in their role as signs can have a distinctive affective configuration or constellations of qualities as *its* object. There are sign-configurations that are constructed first and foremost (a) to be perceived in their material reality as signs, (b) to give rise to a distinctive form of feeling or affective interpretant, and (c) to bear upon an object that is not a thing but a “form of feeling.” It is in this realm that affective semiosis is most clearly exemplified, although the feeling of signs, their palpability, extends all the way from opaqueness to seemingly utter transparency, which is itself a distinctive kind of feeling, as in the “feel” of scientific prose.

But we must return to the problem of the lower threshold of awareness and see whether semiotic categories alone are sufficient to encompass it and whether the concept of affective semiosis, looked at in this way, is sufficiently “thick.” Clearly, an iconic sign on Peirce’s reckoning realizes a kind of affective semiosis, that is, sense-making through a feeling-sign giving rise to an affective interpretant. Still, the notion of affective semiosis is not restricted to the iconic level alone. Indeed, any class of signs has, as I have pointed out, an affective or feeling dimension and can effect a thorough revolution in affect. Affective semiosis, in a strong or thick sense, must involve semiosis in all its dimensions and scaling of factors, since on the human level the iconic, indexical, and symbolic are not so much separate levels as differentially weighted factors, the weight depending on which factors are determinative for the sign-configuration, something that gives them their distinctive feel and defines the kind of semiotic work they are doing.

The perceptual level for Peirce, the fundamental level of our cognitional being in the world, arises from an actual dynamic and unbroken process of synthesis, giving rise to a percipuum in a perceptual judgment. The perceptual object, for Peirce, has a semiotic structure, with iconic, indexical, and symbolic elements. These are the analytical “primitives” of Peirce, the ultimate notions for thematizing the thresholds and frames of sense in such a way that we can establish the viability of the idea of affective semiosis.

But are they our only analytical choice? They do not go unchallenged.

With respect to that lower threshold of consciousness or sense-giving, where the world is first meaningfully engaged in this dialectic of receptivity and activity, what Umberto Eco called the “lower level of semiotics,” Maurice Merleau-Ponty, no

stranger to psychology's deepest concerns (*The Structure of Behavior* and *The Phenomenology of Perception*), wrote in a problematic laconic working note from his uncompleted *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964: 191) that "to be conscious = to have a figure on a ground—one cannot go back any further."

Here, we encounter what appears to be a kind of irreducible opposition of "signification" to "structure" or "Gestalt," what Merleau-Ponty called in his *The Structure of Behavior* "the joining of an idea and an existence which are indiscernible, the contingent arrangement by which materials begin to have meaning in our presence, intelligibility in the nascent state" (1942: 206–207). Intelligibility in the nascent state is rightly located by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in "the circle of the perceived" (1942: 212). Such a figure on a ground, however, is not for him a "meaning" in any thematic sense but a "form." For him, a chair, an exemplar of a physical object, is an emergent form that unifies the various aspects into a structure that arises on, and incorporates, its base. More generally, the relation of aspects to the total object, he says, is not "a logical relation like that of sign to signification: the sides of the chair are not its "signs," but precisely the sides" (1942: 213). The perspectival appearance of an ashtray, or any object, is not related to the ashtray itself the way "one event is to another event which it announces, or what a sign is to that which it signifies" (1942: 187). Paradoxically, these two examples, while generally valid, are taken from the realm of artifacts, of cultural objects with culturally defined functions not reducible to material properties alone, a characterization essential to our understanding of signs.

Merleau-Ponty's general position is echoed by Wolfgang Köhler in a well-known passage from his classic *Gestalt Psychology* where he clearly formulated one of the main issues facing the attempt of any semiotics and cultural psychology looking to semiotic models for analytical tools to extend semiosis or signification "all the way" down to the lower threshold of meaning-making.

Gestalt psychology holds [that] sensory units have acquired names, have become richly symbolic, and are now known to have certain practical uses, while nevertheless they have existed as units before any of these further facts were added. Gestalt psychology claims that it is precisely the original segregation of circumscribed wholes which makes it possible for the sensory world to appear so utterly imbued with meaning to the adult; for, in the gradual entrance into the sensory field, meaning follows the lines drawn by natural organization; it usually enters into segregated wholes (Köhler 1947: 82).

Semiotics, in its focus on the lower threshold of semiosis, must be concerned with the nature of this relation between a putative supervenient meaning, no matter what its form, affective or otherwise, and the segregated wholes into which it enters.

However, adding to the complexity of the problem, in *The Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty writes, following Husserl, that "the relationship between matter and form is called in phenomenological terminology a relationship of *Fundierung*" (1945: 127), or of "founding." And in a rich and allusive passage he continues:

Form integrates within itself the content until the latter finally appears as a mere mode of form itself ... But conversely, even in its intellectual sublimation, content remains in the

nature of a radical contingency, the initial establishment or foundation of knowledge and action, the first laying hold of being or value, whose concrete richness will never be finally exhausted by knowledge and action, and whose spontaneous method they will ceaselessly reapply. This dialectic of form and content is what we have to restore ... (1945: 127)

It is precisely the task of semiotics to explore how it is that form can integrate itself with content and yet hold that content is a source and locus of inexhaustible concrete richness, established by a “spontaneous method” that avoids “intellectualism” or merely causal thought. Is this method subsumable under semiotic categories and an instance of semiosis in some sense? In another passage, Merleau-Ponty gestures in that direction in a way familiar to psychology and in a dialogue with Ernst Cassirer, whose great project of a philosophy of symbolic forms bears upon the deepest themes of a comprehensive cultural psychology:

We must recognize as anterior to ‘sense-giving acts’ (*Bedeutungsgebende Akten*) of theoretical and positing thought, ‘expressive experiences’ (*Ausdruckserlebnisse*); as anterior to the sign significance (*Zeichen-Sinn*), the expressive significance (*Ausdruck-Sinn*), and finally as anterior to any subsuming of content under form, the symbolical ‘pregnancy’ of form in content (1945: 291; with citation of Cassirer 1929, p. 80 in German edition)

This anteriority for Merleau-Ponty does not in itself contravene the validity or value of the “later,” more “ideal,” forms of sense-giving and sense-reading, but merely specifies the overarching matrix within which they emerge and which they never leave behind. Symbolic pregnancy is the point of entry of American philosopher Susanne Langer’s contribution to specifying the nature and scope of “affective semiosis” as a viable category.

Lessons from Langer

Langer, with a profound knowledge of psychological methods and themes, reflected throughout her whole career on the admitted philosophical scope and nature of the notion of Gestalt in ways that resonate with the foregoing. Already in her first book, *The Practice of Philosophy* (cited in text as PP), which anticipated many of the themes taken up in her classic *Philosophy in a New Key* (cited in text as PNK), she made a fundamental and permanent connection, not distinction, between the “logical” dimension of “meaning,” belonging to the semiotic domain, and the “perceptual” dimension of segregated wholes, which putatively underlies it. Gestalt, for her, characterizes at the most basic level the mind’s “ability to *find meanings*.” Instead of depending on chance associations to make a sign out of a sensory stimulus, we are able to apprehend the stimulus as a form, and make of it a *symbol* for experiences which follow the same pattern” (PP 132). Langer’s notion of a symbol is broader than Peirce’s.¹ The stimulus is not some atomic element but

¹See my ‘Peirce’s Categories and Langer’s Aesthetics: On Dividing the Semiotic Continuum’ (2013) and my *Susanne Langer in Focus: The Symbolic Mind* (2009).

clearly a whole with a pattern that is symbolically pregnant. The common background for both Merleau-Ponty and Langer is Cassirer's great work (see my 1994, pp. 98–126 on 'Sense-Functions and the Vortices of Consciousness' and my 2013, pp. 271–274).

In the first volume of her last work, the great trilogy, *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*, Langer further claimed that "all conscious experience is symbolically conceived experience; otherwise it passes 'unrealized'" (M-I 100). According to her,

As most of our awareness of the world is a continual play of impressions, our primitive intellectual equipment is largely a fund of images, not necessarily visual, but often gestic, kinesthetic, verbal or what I can only call 'situational' ... [We] apprehend everything which comes to us as impact from the world by imposing some image on it that stresses its salient features and shapes it for recognition and memory. (M-I 59)

In this way, Langer puts the *symbolic image* at the very origin of meaning and pushes symbolization, understood as symbolic transformation, "down" to the primary stratum of awareness, at least of human awareness. The "stimulus" on her reckoning appears as a *meaningful form* and her whole philosophical project hinges on exploring the implications of the notion that "meaning ... accrues essentially to forms" (PNK 90). For Langer, there is no conflict between meanings and forms. The two notions are inextricably bound together, as Langer will do with her category of a "form of feeling." This is one of the keys to understanding the notion of affective semiosis and establishing its analytical viability.

A sign must have, or be, a form in order to be perceived, and it must have a "meaning" or "sense" in order to be a sign. Langer proposes to see experiential forms themselves as making up a potential plenum of signs of a specific sort, what she calls *presentational symbols*. Langer's basic contention is that "all ... things in the world exemplify some form, which might conceivably be exemplified by some other materials. And this *form*, regardless of the *content*, is the thing that concerns us in logic" (PP 88). Exemplification of form in different materials is the keystone of her intellectual project. By "logic" here, Langer means something close to Peirce's notion of a logic of signs, or semeiotic as logic, that is, their specific formal signifying power independent of any correlation with a specific content, the basis of Peirce's great triad of icons, indices, and symbols. Semiotics for Langer, on the logical plane, is concerned with "recognizing relations, systematic form, and analogies" (PP 102). Langer asserts that for the discovery of meanings, there is required a recognition of *order* quite generally. In as much as for her meaning is "expression" or "articulation of some sort it depends of order, indeed on the *order of perceptual forms* themselves which have the symbolic pregnancy that Merleau-Ponty, following Cassirer (who himself followed Goethe), ascribed to a specific kind of intentional, but not thematic, act of sense-giving or sense-recognition. Langer's main theorem is that "the art of expressing very subtle ideas is the art of seeing very subtle forms, very delicate patterns in nature, thought, and feeling." (PP 102). Forms of feeling are the result, object, and matrices of affective semiosis.

Langer's core procedure is to develop a way of treating experiential configurations themselves as symbolic vehicles and to validate them as genuine carriers of meaning beyond the discursive. Her major classification of symbols is into presentational and discursive, but her classification of semiotic modalities is into symbolization and indication. In *Feeling and Form* (Langer 1953; hereafter FF), Langer defines a symbol as "any device whereby we are enabled to make an abstraction" (FF xi). "Abstraction ... is the explicit recognition of a *form* which may be variously exemplified" (PP 130). On Langer's account, "every entity has some logical form." (PP 123) And such a notion of logical form is extended by her to the notion of Gestalt which refers to "a conceived form where it is expressed in nature." Langer, in agreement with Köhler and Merleau-Ponty, thinks of Gestalt as a "new primitive notion" (PP 132) and in this way puts it on the same level as her notion of a symbol. Both are linked by a nuanced conception of abstraction. For Langer, the very foundation of human rationality is *abstractive seeing*, "the power of seeing *configurations* as symbols" (PNK 73). Langer is clearly right that the main message of Gestalt theory is that sense experience is "a process of formulation" (PNK 89) and that "... a mind that works primarily with meanings must have organs that supply it primarily with forms" (PNK 45). Moreover, with respect to the issue of the ultimate threshold of sense, Langer, like Peirce and a Peirce-based biosemiotics, pushes minding down to the ultimate level: "all sensitivity bears the stamp of mentality" (PNK 90). In the case of humans, this sensitivity takes on the property of symbolic transformation, which, rather than being something that breaks the continuum of nature, is, in Langer's conception, a "natural activity, a high form of nervous response, a characteristic of man among animals" (PNK xiv). For Langer symbolic transformation in the presentational mode, the abstractive seeing that uses experiential configurations of all sorts to articulate ideas which no definition can render, expresses "ideas that haunt the human mind, yet are never satisfactorily stated in words" (PP 156). Such symbolic transformation is a something we do, not something imposed on us by any form of causal efficacy. As an action "the *human response* is [is] a constructive, not a passive thing" (PNK 24). And being constructive it is a construal, an interpretation of the significance of forms with what Langer calls vital import. Thus, she claims, "symbol and meaning make up man's world, far more than sensation" (PNK 28) and "*our sense-data are primarily symbols*" (PNK 21), that is, experiential configurations with symbolic pregnancy.

What are these pregnant forms symbolic "of"? Langer's answer is: "the endlessly intricate yet universal pattern of emotional life" (PP 161). Certain types of perceived forms are configurations that can institute or ground a distinctive sort of meaning relation that Langer calls "presentational," an analogue to Peirce's "iconic." Both of these symbolic modes have feeling qualities as their objects. But these modes, while not discursive and hence not subject to any kind of adequate translation, are by no means a way of accessing the irrational. For Langer rationality is "embodied in every mental act" (PNK 99), since mental acts are oriented toward making sense in the most general terms. So, when Langer asks, "*just how can feelings be conceived as possible ingredients of rationality,*" her answer is, "*feelings have definite forms, which become progressively articulated*" (PNK 100). This

progressive articulation occurs on the perceptual plane of recognizing the symbolic pregnancy of the great “life symbols” that inform the great mythic and religious narratives and rituals and are *presented* in works of art of all sorts that themselves have such a pregnancy as forms. Life symbols, on Langer’s account, then, are first and foremost apprehended and constructed as *pregnant images*. Here is the point of entry of Langer’s pivotal idea of a *form of feeling*, which is exemplified and made available in external sign systems that cultural psychology can investigate in their psychological reality. Feelings, Langer argues, depending on their sense modality, have definite structures, qualities, or physiognomic properties, and these are captured in distinct sign-configurations, namely those that have the form of images and which are able, by their formal felt features, to exhibit the very nature of minding itself. Affective semiosis lives paradigmatically in the realm of the affective charged images, but not exclusively since the images can be produced by not image-based sign systems.

Minding, from the point of view of a naturalized semiotics, is felt as the intensified process of “the experience of being alive” (PNK 147), and on the human level, it embodies and stabilizes itself in external forms, thus constituting a new type of symbolic transformation, the presentational.

The rise and development of presentational symbolization was a new departure in semantic... The recognition of vague, vital meanings in physical forms—perhaps the first dawn of symbolism—gave us our idols, emblems, and totems; the primitive function of dream permits our first envisagement of events. The momentous discovery of nature-symbolism, of the pattern of life reflected in natural phenomena, produced the first universal insights. Every mode of thought is bestowed on us, like a gift, with some new principle of symbolic expression. It has a logical development, which is simply the exploitation of all the uses to which that symbolism lends itself. (PNK 201)

It is a defining character of presentational symbolism that it “does not lend itself to analytic and genuinely abstractive techniques” (PNK 201) of the kind which Langer discusses under the rubric of generalizing abstraction, especially in the great chapter on abstraction in the first volume of *Mind*. Generalizing abstraction is the core of discursive symbolization exemplified in language and its offspring, in which Langer groups, perhaps a bit contentiously, science and philosophy. Langer’s fundamental principle is that presentational symbolization is a new symbolic form “ready to take meanings and express ideas that have had no vehicle before” (PNK 203) in such a way that the only access to these ideas is through the very form itself, from which it cannot be separated. These “meanings” and “ideas” are assimilated to *import* rather than merely discursive *concepts*. Music for Langer is of extraordinary epistemological and methodological importance for framing the notion of affective semiosis because its very sonic presence and form offer us a key to a “semantic of vital and emotional facts” (PNK 235). By this, Langer is alluding to the presence of “significant form” in the artifact. But the significance or import of a presentational symbol is not primarily what it is *about*. It is not the “aboutness” of the presentational form that is determinative, its orientation toward an “object,” but its felt “*what-about-ness*,” its mode of presentation, not its presented “subject-matter.”

The main lesson we can learn from Langer, however, in the case of the topic of affective semiosis, is not specifically aesthetic. It concerns the existence of objective forms circulating in and making up whole networks of cultural meanings and sign-configurations which do not signify in the discursive manner. Rather, we encounter objective forms through which we apprehend the world as a panorama of *affective tones* and not just ideas, concepts, or enabling and constraining frameworks of action. The forms are embodiments of forms of feeling and do not simply affect us in any simple manner. Feeling for Langer is a Janus-faced notion: It encompasses *anything that can be felt* and any way anything can be felt. Langer shows us that it is not just in art that the idea of “vital import” is central, but in mythic narratives, civic, and other rituals, and in the built forms of cities and villages, which embody the felt values of an “ethnic domain.” Peircean semiotics also, as we have seen, holds that everything that we experience or are forced to experience displays a quality that is felt and this quality is embodied in objective forms that exemplify what Langer calls a “pattern of sentience—the pattern of life itself, as it is felt and directly known” (FF 31).

Although Peircean semiotics seemingly “starts high” with a logical analysis of signs, the role of feeling and quality in his semiotics should not be thought of as something merely schematic or formal. John Dewey considered Peirce’s theory of quality as his fundamental philosophical discovery, a discovery that “has opened the road which permits a truly experiential philosophy to be developed which does not ... cut experience off from nature” (Dewey 1935: 376; hereafter QT). It does so by foregrounding a “sheer totality and pervading unity of quality in everything experienced, whether it be odor, the drama of King Lear, or philosophic or scientific systems” (QT 371). For Peirce, “... everything has its quality” (CP 1.531), which he called “firstness.” Dewey exploits the insight that it is this “total undivided quality” (QT 372) that marks not just every individual thing but every individual situation in which the meaning-seeking organism finds itself. This quality is not only undivided but it is, in Dewey’s words, a “totalizing unifying quality” (QT 373). It is something active, something that allows the thing or situation to have a kind of agency. In his essay “Qualitative Thought” (Dewey 1931; hereafter QT) developing the Peircean insight further in his own voice, Dewey writes: “the world in which we immediately live, that in which we strive, succeed, and are defeated is preeminently a qualitative world. What we act for, suffer, and enjoy are things in their qualitative determinations” (195).

But Dewey does not think we begin with isolated objects with qualities. Rather he sees the acting and meaning-seeking organism as first and foremost being in a “situation” that is the lived in and through a background out of which objects are precipitated. The “situation,” a notion that applies to perplexity on the intellectual and scientific levels, too, can itself never be made into an object itself that can be experienced without being embedded in another experience with its own quality (see my 2014 for a further discussion of this topic in the context of cultural psychology). In this sense, the ultimate background of our ever moving experience of the world is “ineffable.” This is the qualitative matrix in which we always dwell and, as Dewey puts it, “enables a person to keep track of what he is doing, saying,

hearing, reading in whatever explicitly appears” (QT 198). According to Dewey, this background is felt rather than thought and, indeed, is “the background, the thread, and the directive clue in what we do expressly think of” (QT 198). The upshot of Dewey’s position is clearly Peircean. “The existence of unifying qualitateness in the subject-matter defines the meaning of ‘feeling’” (QT 198).

Feeling “affects” the whole organism at every level. Dewey develops this key theme in many places in his work, but especially insightfully in his *Art as Experience* (Dewey 1934) where it is not just art that is at issue but an adequate account of experience quite generally. There he writes in a way that is in fundamental agreement with Langer:

It is not just the visual apparatus but the whole organism that interacts with the environment in all but routine action. The eye, ear, or whatever, is only the channel *through* which the total response takes place. A color as seen is always qualified by implicit reactions of many organs, those of the sympathetic system as well as of touch. It is a funnel for the total energy put forth, not its well-spring. Colors are sumptuous and rich just because a total organic response is deeply implicated in them. (127)

On this account, intensified interactions with the environment culminating in a “total organic response” in systems of perceptual interaction or transaction have their own intersensory “feels”:

When we perceive, by means of the eyes as causal aids, the liquidity of water, the coldness of ice, the solidity of rocks, the bareness of trees in winter, it is certain that other qualities than those of the eye are conspicuous and controlling in perception. And it is as certain as anything can be that optical qualities do not stand out by themselves with tactual and emotive qualities clinging to their skirts. (129)

In *Feeling and Form*, Langer speaks in a similar manner and shows the general scope of an examination of the aesthetic dimension for determining the nature and scope of affective semiosis as the fundamental stratum and permeating quality of the self-world relation.

Sentient beings react to their world by constantly changing their total condition. When a creature’s attention shifts from one center of interest to another, not only the organs immediately involved... but hundreds of fibers in the body are affected. Every smallest shift of awareness calls out a readjustment, and under ordinary circumstances such readjustments pass easily into another.

... It is perception molded by imagination that gives us the outward world we know. And it is continuity of thought that systematizes our emotional reactions into attitudes with distinct feeling tones, and sets a certain scope for an individual’s passions. In other words: by virtue of our thought and imagination we have not only feelings, but a *life of feeling*. (FF 372)

Such a life of feeling is “a stream of tensions and resolutions” (FF 372), congealed into, and transforming reactions into, attitudes or habits, which can be rational or not. It is “in” this stream that we live. This foregrounding of tensions by Langer encompasses “all emotion, all feeling tone, mood, and even personal ‘sense of life’ or ‘sense of identity’” (FF 372).

The realm of feeling tones that different cultural systems, with their embodied meanings and artifacts of all sorts, carry is a key point of intersection between social

semiotics and the concerns of cultural psychology, concerns that are phenomenological as well as a normative, critical task, as Sven Brinkman and Jaan Valsiner have argued. Culture arises, as Langer has shown, even in its earliest forms, from the root phenomenon of abstraction and symbolic transformation, a spontaneous and natural “comprehension of form itself, through its exemplification in informed perceptions or ‘intuitions’” (FF 378). When Langer writes that it is not only the artist who “learns from the perceptible reality before him possibilities of subjective experience that he has not known in his personal life” (FF 390), an astute reader can see that there are general implications of this statement that go far beyond aesthetics, which serves as its base. As embodied symbolic animals, we cannot not be deeply affected on the level of *feeling meaning* by the situations in which we find ourselves, situations which have their defining qualities, as Dewey has made so clear. If an artwork presents us with an image of felt life with vital import and in this way functions as a lure for feeling, could we not consider cultural psychology as examining in detail the whole social world of forms and structures as itself an image of felt life? But while art works lure us on to contemplate them and their content and in this way, even when what is presented or made to appear symbolically is horrendous, can be objects of deep attachment, the cultural world often in many cases forces us to engage forms and structures that *turn us away* or repel us. The cultural world is not just a world of contents that can be discursively accessed in their totality, but a realm of *affective valences*. Semiotics, as well as cultural psychology, will thus need to accept the challenge that Langer specifies when describing the effect of an artwork: “All the forms of feeling are important, and the joyous pulse of life needs to be made apparent as the most involved passions, if we are to value it” (FF 405)—and so we have to build a world in which the joyous pulse of life is fostered and the most involved passions preventing such a pulse minimized even if, in light of the ineluctable tragedy of human existence, they cannot be eliminated. The cultural importance of art is something that cultural psychology must also recognize, since, as Langer puts it, art formulates “felt life” and in this way “molds the objective world for the people” (FF 409) and thus is in a position to be a “defense against outer and inner chaos” (FF 409).

The cultural psychologist must have the eye of an artist. “The artist’s eye sees in nature, and even in human nature betraying itself in action, an inexhaustible wealth of tensions, rhythms, continuities and contrasts... those are the ‘internal forms’ which the ‘external forms’... express for us” (M-I 87). Cultural psychology, in a way analogous to a philosophical aesthetics’s approach to art, sees all cultural forms as the objectification of feeling, and the subjectification of nature, “one vast phenomenon of “felt life” stretching from the elementary tonus of vital existence to the furthest reaches of mind” (M-I 151), marked by what Langer calls “gradients” that inform the flux of experience and the objects that animate it. Cultural psychology, looked at with the philosopher’s eye, as I do, would supply to a critical semiotics valuable studies of felt animation, or de-animation, of the world in which we live. Such a world, Langer writes, involves an “endless rhythm of individuation and involvement” (M-I 354). Individuation is a sign of increasing interiority and consciousness of the creation of a unique self, the development of the awareness of

being a “subject” of acts that determine who we are and who we want to be. Involvement is the inextricable social web in which we are caught and the constraints on, as well as the enabling conditions of, our actions.

Langer points out that these two poles of building the human world through symbolic transformation remain in perpetual tension and as a consequence are subject to wild swings and imbalances.

Society, like the spatiotemporal world itself, is a creation of man’s specialized modes of feeling—perception, imagination, conceptual thought and the understanding of language. The rise of his typical way of life as a member of a continuous recognized society, built up on the ancient and gradual separation of the evolving Hominidae from all other, differentially evolving primate lines, in its advance constantly epitomizes the great shift from beast to man. (M-II 355)

What Langer calls the “ethnic balance” is an equilibrium between agency of the individual and the individual’s responsibility to its group, whatever that would be. How is this to be attained? “The primal and perennial work of social organization is not to fix the bounds of behavior as permanent lines, which would make all evolutionary process impossible, but to retrieve the vital balance every time some act, public or private, has upset it” (M-III 125).

Symbolization gives a vast range of powers to human beings, not all of them cognitive, to be sure. Cognitive power, exemplified in the construction of interpretive frames embodied in sign and symbol systems, furthers interiority, what Langer calls “intensified life,” but attachment to frames generates forms of attachment that are hard to free oneself from or let others free themselves from, as Peirce so clearly analyzed in his “Fixation of Belief” essay. Intensified life stands in permanent tension to the ideal of “sheer power” whose vital import is embodied in the pyramid, lingam, and stupa (M-III 150–151)—or weapons of mass destruction or rampant pursuit of wealth. We are caught between a drive for power and a desire for more life, where the problem of an equilibrium between power and life is no longer between an “upper world” of Supernaturals and humans but, as Langer sees it, within society itself.

What Is Constantly Upsetting the Balance?

Langer describes, in paradoxical and insightfully ambiguous fashion, the rise of civilization as a “breaking.” It is a breaking of tribal consciousness by the rise of cities and the consequent breaking with ethnocentrism by openness to foreign influences. But such a breaking is not a one time event and, in fact, seems to be a permanent condition of humankind. It results, Langer shows, from the very semiotic logic of the mind. Minding on the human level is oriented toward and creates an “open ambient,” and ethnocentrism directly contravenes this drive toward openness. While openness is openness to difference, encountering difference leads to existential and conceptual imbalance and the temptation to retreat back to “tribal consciousness.” At the same time, it is only through encountering and dealing with external hardships on the conceptual level that life and thought attain their “dialectical form” (M-III 194).

Thus, for Langer, the speciation of the human race takes place through a sequence of crises: speech, fantasy, ritual, and the “breaking” of tribal consciousness and commitments, crises that, in a kind of analogue to the Hegelian ruse of reason, mediate the “cultural move to civilization” (M-III 194). Is not the study of these crises a principal task of cultural psychology in the broadest sense of that term?

Conclusion

Civilization engenders not just new ideas but new ways of feeling. It is not just differences in ideas but differences in life practices and their embodiments that mark the ways of meaning-making which we depend upon and commit ourselves to. In being affected by the world, we respond to it with appropriate affects or forms of attunement. But that these forms of attunement are appropriate does not entail that they are necessarily positive or accepting. They can be deeply critical of the problematic situations in which we find ourselves. Cultural psychology must study these systems of negative affects, too. It must engage not just the ways we feel the world, but how we feel about our feelings of the world and why the world is so constituted as to give rise to these feelings. There are normative implications to cultural psychology’s descriptive and explanatory tasks. This is another essential link between a philosophical semiotics and a cultural psychology that engages the whole spectrum of meaning-systems and meaning-situations in which humanity finds itself.

All of these meaning-systems and meaning-situations are exemplifications of the universal linkages between feeling, form, and qualities that define and underpin all our transactions with the world. *Quale*-consciousness expands to encompass the whole lived world of meaning. In the words of Peirce: “The *quale*-consciousness is not confined to simple sensations. There is a peculiar *quale* to *purple*, though it be only a mixture of red and blue. There is a distinctive *quale* to every combination of sensations so far as it is really synthesized—a distinctive *quale* to this moment as it is to me—a distinctive *quale* to every day and every week—a peculiar *quale* to my whole consciousness” (CP 6.223). In as much as consciousness is itself a play of signs, we can see why cultural psychology joins with a philosophical semiotics in sketching, in the words of Arthur Bentley, “the living behavior of sign-using men in a long-time world” (In Dewey et al. 1964: 73).

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Chapter 7

The Self Rises Up from Lived Experiences: A Micro-Semiotic Analysis of the Unfolding of Trajectories of Experience When Performing Ethics

Alberto Rosa

*The world contains my body.
My body contains me. I contain my world.
Where then is the world and where am I in it if it also is in me?*
Ciarán Benson (2001 p. 16)

How do I manage when within a situation? How do I figure out what is going on? How do I choose what to do, judge what should be done, or what should I have done? These are questions referring to behavior, cognition, and emotion, and also to ethics. It seems as if when facing a situation and choosing among different alternatives a trajectory of experience unfolds, in which what one feels about what was done becomes instrumental for new choices. But, who is the one that chooses? What or who proposes the alternatives?

It is usually taken for granted that it is *me* who works out what it is happening, takes decisions, judges what is proper to do, and feels remorse or pride as result of what *I* did. It is as if *me*, the acting *I*, were a real entity that actually does something, and so can be made accountable for what gets done. To accept this without hesitation would be to confuse the *self* with the *agent*, as well as to let all the burden of *agency* to fall onto the shoulders of the performing *actor*, and so make him or her *personally* responsible for what actually was done. But is it the self who actually acts? What is meant when one refers to a *person*?

The self is important for understanding the behavior of an individual, but it is far from exhausting the explanation of the actions performed by the actor. There are many psychological processes upon which the self develops. The self is not to be confused with the psychological subject, with the agent. The self is not a substance nor an attribute, but a sense of location (Harré 1993), a device for the navigation of human worlds (Benson 2001) that gets constructed through social interaction throughout life (Martin and Gillespie 2010) and has a dialogical (Hermans 2001) and narrative (Bruner 1990; Ricoeur 1990) nature. The self emerges within interactions and coordinations nested in social practices and conventions where we

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recognize ourselves as actors (the *I*) and objects (the *me*) upon which to act (Mead 1934). In other words, the self is a mediational tool humans construct in order to govern their conduct. It evolves by mastering the abilities demanded by the means provided within a sociocultural milieu in order to deal with the demands of life. It is only when the self gets developed that a human agent becomes a full person, and so can be made accountable for his or her deeds.

But what is one to be taken accountable for? What is what should be done in a particular occasion? Is it clear what a situation was like, and what should have been done there and then? Who is to decide that? These are the pragmatic and ethical questions. They are about what the agent does, about the demands of life and the others, about what to do, about understanding what one faces and about governing one's own actions.

Self, Agency, and Ethics

Governance of one's actions and accountability are ethical matters that cannot be addressed without taking agency into account. Rose (1996) takes agency to be "a distributed outcome of particular technologies of subjectification that invoke human beings as subjects of a certain type of freedom and supply the norms and techniques by which that freedom is to be recognized, assembled, and played out in specific domains" (p. 187). So viewed, in our contemporary Western culture "agency is part of an 'experience' of internality—it appears to well up and rise out of our depths, our inner instincts" (p. 187). But, where does agency come from? Nikolas Rose claims that if one wanted to look for the origins of human specificity, rather than going into the examination of signs, meanings, and communications, one should turn to analyze techniques, intensities, authorities, and apparatuses and pay attention to how they assemble practical regimes of things, bodies, and forces; and how this results in regimes of signification. It is within these regimes that the construction of the self appears rather differently.

"The human is neither an actor essentially possessed of agency, nor a puppet of cultural forces; agency is produced in the course of practices under a whole variety of more or less onerous, explicit, punitive or seductive, disciplinary or passional constraints and relations of force. Our own agency then is the resultant of the ontology we have folded into ourselves in the course of our history and our practices" (Rose 1996, p. 189).

Agency is then distributed among humans and non-humans, objects (alive or not), practices, rules, and discourses. Psychological interiority, the way in which we relate to ourselves, is a result of the way these relations and linkages assemble subjects and give rise to the phenomena that make us "desiring selves, sexed selves, labouring selves, thinking selves, intending selves capable of acting as subjects" (Rose 1996, p. 172). But this does not imply to leave the human individual naked of agency, rather

[t]hese rationalities are regimes of thought, through which persons can accord significance to aspects of themselves and their experience, and regimes of practice, through which humans can ‘ethicize’ and ‘agent-ize’ themselves in particular ways (...) (p. 173).

Such a view can be understood as a development of the mirror image of the idea that personhood results from the actions of agents, who acting through meditational means (Wertsch 1991, 1998), transform themselves and their capabilities for acting. It also acknowledges agency to non-human objects (Latour 1987), which operate through the (physical and social) affordances of artefacts that shape human action and reify meaning (Costall 1995, 2013). But Rose (1996) takes the issue beyond. He borrowed from Foucault (1986, 1988) the term *governmentality* to refer to the multiple ways authorities of many different kinds put into play in order to conduct the conduct of human beings; ways that operate through institutions, in which particular technologies shape practical rationalities, and so delimitate ethical fields as modes of evaluating and acting upon oneself. “Ethics are thus understood as means by which individuals come to construe, decipher, act upon themselves in relation to the true and the false, the permitted and the forbidden, the desirable and the undesirable” (Rose 1996, p. 153).

Ethics, so viewed, are for the agent to govern itself. It is a result of the application of “technologies of the self,” the “self-steering mechanisms” through which the individuals experience, understand, judge, and conduct themselves (Foucault 1986, 1988). These technologies provide techniques to know, master, or care for oneself, and are not independent of psychological theories and practices, of the beliefs humans have about themselves. Rose, following Foucault (1988) and Deleuze (1988), considers four axes for the analysis of these ethical technologies: (a) *ontology*, elements relevant for the individual (what is felt, desired, dreaded, etc.); (b) *ascetics*, the rules according to which the relations between entities become a relation to oneself (natural, religious, aesthetic, etc.) and so produce fields of forces; (c) *deontology*, the relation to oneself as result of subjectification of knowledge, and therefore, the kind of relationship chosen to truth (theological, philosophical, etc.); and (d) *teleology*, the realm of hope (salvation, freedom, detachment, etc.). “Subjectification, then, is the interplay of the multiple variability of these folds, of their diverse rhythms and patterns” (Rose 1996, p. 190). The agent, thus, is not devoid of agency, although it can only operate within the spaces allowed, and with the available tools.

Self-Consciousness Going to and fro Through the Looking Glass

Humans are autopoietic agents (Maturana and Varela 1987) who act with socio-cultural meditational means in concrete settings (Wertsch 1998). If we want to understand their behavior, we cannot dispense to look at the means they employ in their performances, nor can we leave aside the operations they carry out to make

better what they do. This requires taking into account what sociocultural tools they put into use when acting, but also how the use of these tools transforms the structure of their psychological operations. If we also look at how these transformations produce and transform experience as the performance develops, with the effect that the agent can monitor the outcome of its actions, we will venture into the examination of how the agent may increasingly gain control over its own actions, go after goals, give meaning to actions and outcomes, and judge their success or failure. If agents also have means to monitor the change in their own internal states, they will also become able to turn their operations upon themselves so that their own performances, outcomes, and abilities could be appraised in succession, as well as their own capability and worth to persist toward the *telos* pursued. In other words, the self is a set of psychological processes the agent develops for its self-governance, when operating with the mediation of sociocultural tools.

So viewed, the self is a sort of virtual internal instrument human agents develop to monitor the mastering of tools with affordances tailored to perform actions addressed to achieve worthy goals. But human agents are also concerned about their self-preservation. Emotions and feelings are bio-psychological processes that inform about the internal states of the agent, and how they change following changes in the environment, so that actions can be calibrated in order to achieve satisfactory internal states. For the latter to coincide with the goals of the sociocultural performance demanded, individuals have to transform the way their emotional processes appraise their own states. These internal states should be transformed so that they refer to something else than physical comfort and also reflect the degree of achievement when attempting to reach the goals addressed. In other words, the self is a reflective device, a looking glass, in which the agent looks at him/herself so that the reflection perceived (of her/him own figure, but also of the background and the ongoing performance) offers a reverse image that shows an actor playing a function. The result is a sort of dialogue between the internal states felt in first person (the *I*), and a figure, background, and performance contemplated from a third person position (the *me*, as another for the *I*), who then can be commanded by being addressed as a second person (the *me* as a *you* for the *I*). The self, then, is a reflective device, inherently dialogical, without which an agent cannot turn into an accountable person.

If we want to go into an examination of how the self develops from the mediated actions of the agent in a situation, we have to cross through the looking glass that divides what is experienced in first person and what can be observed and explained from a third person perspective. This is not very different to what an individual does when monitoring and governing him/herself by alternating between two second person positions in which the *I* and the *you* change places, while always referring to a third—the *me*. As Varela and Shear (1999) say, there is no way to pass from first to third person, and viceversa, without going through the use of the second person. In other words, we need to resort to reflexivity as a methodological device to transit between idiographic and nomothetic strategies of study (Rosa 2015). If we want to transit between both sides of the mirror, we need to fix our gaze on elements that could appear on either side and also to apply tools of knowledge well fitted to

model the transformations that show in each domain, even if they get reversed or transformed when going from one side to the other. This requires considering, first, the sociocultural tools applied for shaping mediated actions; second, the effects these tools have on the psychological operations of the agent; and third, the results that show in the recursive experiences and behavior of persons in concrete settings. In sum, to go into the task of modeling the processes that make the self to develop, which also will show as it unfolds in action, once a psychological structure for self-governance is already shaped and operational. In other words, to follow the unfolding of the trajectories of experience, moving to and from between the first and the third person.

A semiotic analysis of how cultural artefacts and psychological processes together produce meaningful experiences when acting is a strategy well fitted for this purpose. Signs afford to imagine the absent and the possible and so are able to produce an imagined future, a sort of remembrance of something to come, as well as representing goals to strive for. Signs, thus, are indispensable instruments for the guidance of present actions. It is through semiotic processes that actions get sense, *teloi* can appear and moral feelings make sense. Ethics cannot be conceived without meaning.

Semiotics of Experience

Experience is a fuzzy concept we need to clarify (for a discussion on the term, see Rosa, 2015; Rosa and González 2013). It may cover from very simple phenomena, such as sensing a quality—whiteness or warmth—or an affection—pain or joy, to much more complex states of mind—such as finding something comforting, desirable, moving or dreadful, or sensing oneself as comfortable, unsettled or eager. Whatever the case, experiences are ways of knowing and feeling; they always refer to something else, or to oneself taken as another, and so they are signs indispensable for the guidance of conduct, for ethics.

The task of semiotics is to supply formal devices for the explanation of the shaping of signs. This makes semiotics a valuable instrument for the study of how experiences evolve throughout the development of behavior. Figure 7.1 presents the basic structure of semiosis and shows how this structure is isomorphic with that of action and experiences (for a discussion, see Rosa 2007a, b).

The term semiosis refers to the conditions for something to act as a sign. Peirce conceives it as a triadic structure, so that signs cannot be taken as fixed entities, but as an outcome from relational functions.

A sign or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen. (C. P. 2.228; Peirce 1932).

Isomorphic structure of semiosis and action

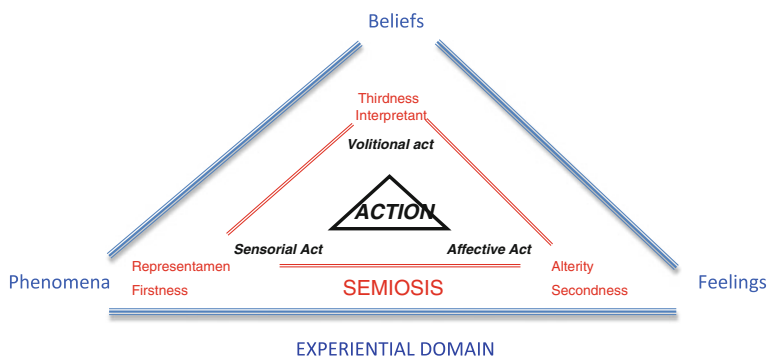


Fig. 7.1 Action and semiosis collapse in the same formalism. Action has semiotic properties and produces interpretative experience. The outcome is the production of beliefs (habits) that regulate action (rule systems) and create new experiences

So viewed, anything can be used as a sign of something else, so far as there is some respect or capacity relating the sign and its object. In any case, when something plays the function of a sign, it is because somebody makes use of that function for some particular purpose.

A sign is “anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on ad infinitum.” (C. P. 2.303).

Semiosis, then, are recursive (Fig. 7.2). The end product of a semiosis is something (the *interpretant*—the situated interpretation somebody does of the way the first sign refers to its object) that can become a sign (a new representamen) for the next semiosis. Semioses are triadic; they include something (that has the capacity of acting as sign—a quality, a presence, or a habit) which acts as *representamen* (first); the representamen has the capability to refer to an alterity—the *object*—(second) because both (the representamen and that alterity) show to have something in common (form for *icons*, presence for *indexes*, or some conventional value for *symbols*), so that the relation between representation and object can be interpreted (third) as a possibility (*rhema*), a fact (*dicent*) or a habit or reason (*argument*). Semioses, so viewed, are triadic and cannot be reduced to a dyadic sign-object referential relation, particularly because what the object is (or may be) cannot be taken for granted.

Real objects (whatever they may be) are not directly accessible for cognition. We can think of objects only because they are presented by signs. Any semiosis has an *immediate object* (an alterity) standing *to somebody* (the interpreter) *for something in some respect or capacity* (that allowed by the kind of relationship the

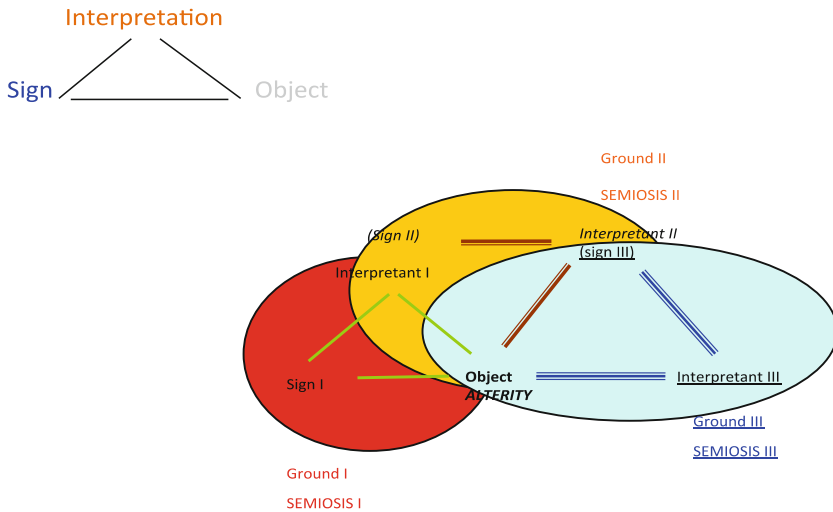


Fig. 7.2 Triadic *semiosis* and recursion

representamen has with the object), which requires another kind of sign Peirce called the *ground* of the semiosis (e.g., a raven can act as an iconic sign of a stove, because of their shared “blackness”—the *ground*). The last element of the semiosis is the *interpretant* (the sense of the relation between the others), which then gets ready to become a *representamen* for a subsequent semiosis. This does not mean that the knowledge of the object is exhausted in one semiosis. The object appears in every semiosis as an *immediate object* (an immediate property), but beyond what appears in each semiosis is the *dynamic object* that appears in different fashions as it is presented by other semiosis (the stove can also be represented by different signs referring to its heaviness, hardness, hotness, etc.). The object itself cannot ever be directly accessed outside a semiosis. It may have a transcendental *ontic* nature or not (e.g., ravens, stoves, leprechauns, hobbits, Don Quixote, phlogiston, obscure matter), but its *ontology* is provided by semioses. This does not mean that objects cannot be conceived. The objects, as presented in our experience, are the result of a series of semiosis, which go on until the interpreter fulfills his/her goals or gives up. The *final interpretant* so produced is the conception one gets of the object, which then becomes a *semiotized object*. Semiotized objects always result from chains of particular semioses (Rosa and Pievi 2013).

This has an immediate consequence. The objects that populate our consciousness, and we take to be real—as either material or cultural entities, forces, institutions, rules, events or myths—are representations produced by semioses. Thus, a semiotic analysis of experience will be of help for understanding how new objects, such as the self, can appear as experience develops.

Semiotic Mediation and Trajectories of Experience

Experiences arising from basic psychological processes, such as sensation and feeling—whiteness, softness, loudness, pain, pleasure—provide the most basic signs (qualities, indexes) of alterities, which made up the most elementary kind of experiences. But the experiences that interested us here are of a much higher complexity, are the experiences of oneself in a situation, experiences about what the situation means, about what to do in the situation, and how one feels about what to do, should do, or ought have done. These are experiences which synthesize many other together and are better expressed by words that do not exist in English, but do in German (*Erlebnis*) or in Spanish (*vivencia*), which could be dubbed by the expression *lived experience*: an experience significant for the self that also provides a life lesson. Without this kind of experiences, the self cannot be conceived as an object of cognition, and less to be imagined as the subject of affections, cognitions and behavior, as the representation of one's own agency to the extreme of making us feeling accountable (and be held responsible) for what we do.

Lived experiences could seem straightforward at first glance, but they are far from being simple or immediate. They are product of a lengthy process of development that requires simpler experiences to be gathered together and synthesized in habits, so that the product resulting from enacting that habit (a gesture, a sound, or a physical mark) can be turned into a new sign. Once this happens, symbols (conventional signs) are born and get ready to be used among people who share that habit. When conventional symbols get known within a group, they become able to signal something absent, so that a first person experience can be communicated to somebody else. Different symbols can also get combined so that iconic displays, words, utterances, arguments, and discourses can be produced. The consequence is not only that conventional meanings can be communicated and shared, but also that new experiences can develop. Intersubjectivity, social representations (Rosa and Pievi 2013), and interobjectivity (Moghaddam 2003; Sammut et al. 2010) can thus appear, and with them enculturation and instruction, social morality and personal ethics. It is because these cultural mediators are put into use that the range of possible experiences grows beyond what is felt at the present, and imaginary entities, such as goals, rules, or beliefs can appear, and with them, new capabilities for the guidance of conduct. But for this to happen a new entity also needs be conceived: the self, an imagined entity that encompasses the capabilities of government the agent has mastered. Lived experiences can only appear when the experiences of objects and situations refer not only to how the agent feels, but also to the goals, hopes, beliefs, and ideals of the person—not just about her or his life, but to his or her biography, past, present, and future, as well as how is embedded within the temporal drift of the community of belonging.

A trajectory of experience begins when an *alterity* is encountered and is to be understood and identify. Then, a series of semiotic process follow addressed to understanding what qualities, objects, situations, and events one is facing, what position to take vis-à-vis the on going events, what rule to apply to behave, at the

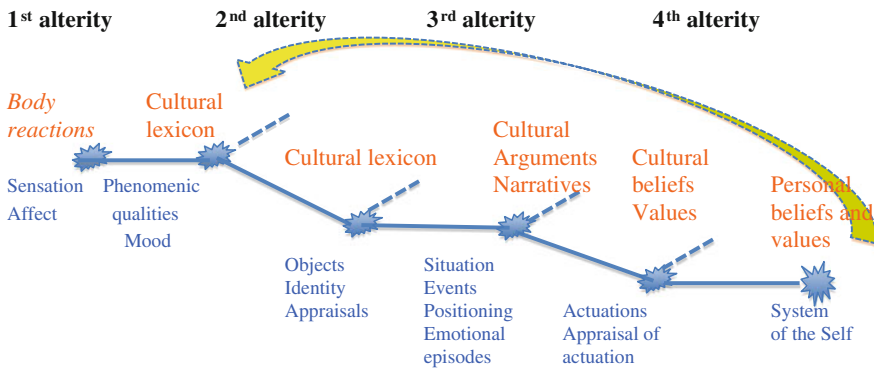


Fig. 7.3 Substitutive semiosis and bifurcation points in trajectories of experience. The arrow represents the feedback of previous trajectories of experience on how new experiences are understood

same time that affections, appraisals, and activations are felt at each moment. Figure 7.3 shows the basic structure of a trajectory of experience with its bifurcation points.

Table 7.1 presents the simultaneous development of increasingly complex experiences, and the unfolding of different components of the self-system, when an individual has to face the demands of a situation lived. Each of the stages there presented refers to bifurcation points that mark the end of a series of recursive semiosis which final interpretant can be substituted by one kind of cultural tool (symbol or argument) that opens up the way to a new set of semiosis, which again starts a new cycle.

Understanding and identification go together at the end of each cycle, when the final interpretant gets assimilated to a category taken from the cultural symbolic (lexical and argumentative) toolkit. These processes, then, are linked in series of *substitutive semioses* (Magariños de Morentin 2008), in which one kind of cultural tool takes the place of the final interpretant of the previous set of semioses, so that this interpretation is taken to present some particular kind of semiotized object already known (a new alterity to be understood turns into a social representation). Such substitution opens the way for different interpretations of experience, so that the change from one kind of symbol to another marks a bifurcation point. The consequence is that different trajectories of experience could fork in each of these points, so that a group of people facing a shared situation can have different experiences as their interpretations branch off in bifurcation points (for empirical examples, see Rosa and Gonzalez 2013a).

The *me*—and also the *I* as the agent of my actions—rise up from these processes (Mead 1934) as new semiotized objects for the representation of oneself in the situation and for the governance of one’s actuations in the understood situation. The end result is the rising up of the self-system, which in turn can be transformed, following appraisals of one’s own actions (changes in self-concept), opening the way for further developments of the capabilities for self-governance.

Table 7.1 Alterities and bifurcation points in trajectories of experience

Trajectories of experience			
Points of bifurcation	Biological and cultural tools: signs for substitutive semiosis	Individual experiences	Function
First alterity: reaction to novelty in the environment	Body responses to changes in the environment	Core affect Proto-self	Noticing changes
Second alterities 1st substitutive semiosis (threshold of consciousness)			
(2a). Representation of phenomena and mood	Cultural lexicon	Phenomenal qualities, mood, and reactions	Identifying qualities. Appraisal: affective valence and activation
(2b). Constitution of objects and identity	Cultural lexicon (nouns, pronouns, adjectives)	Objects and Individual identity	Identification of objects and one self <i>(What is this? What it means?)</i>
Third alterities 2 nd substitutive semiosis			
(3a). Positioning	Utterances, arguments, narratives	Objects, ambivalence among situations, emotional episodes and repertoire of I-positions	Positioning and position taking vis-à-vis the interpretation of the situation <i>(What happens?)</i>
(3b). Position: <i>Simultaneous construction of situation, actor, and event</i>	Role taken	Construction (identification) of situation and event I-position	Appraisal of the situation <i>(What shall I do?)</i>
Fourth alterity: actuation as an entity. Actuation as sign of the self. Moral judgment	Sociocultural systems of sense (myths, religion, philosophy, etc.) social values	Actuation Moral feelings Self as an object	Actual behavior Appraisal of one's own action <i>(did I do it right?)</i> Self-concept
System of the self. The <i>actor</i> turns into <i>author</i> , and eventually into a <i>person</i>	Personal beliefs and values	Beliefs about the self	Appraisal of myself <i>(Was I right?)</i> Toward personal construction

A Micro-semiotic Model of the Development of Experiences and the Rising up of the Self

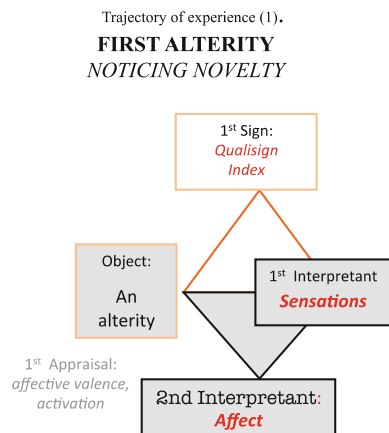
A micro-semiotic analysis of how trajectories of experience unfold permits to go into a detailed genetic examination of how cultural tools (lexicon, arguments), psychological (perception, emotion, memory) and psycho-social (communication, sharing) processes merge to produce different kind of experiences. We will proceed by showing, step by step, the semiotic structure of the encounters with each of the alterities presented in Table 7.1, which also mark the bifurcation points for the shaping of experience.

First Alterity: Reaction to Novelty in the Environment

The most elementary kind of experiences appears when some change in the environment triggers some biological processes.

Figure 7.4 shows a semiotic analysis of how an encounter with an alterity produces some change in sensorial organs, together with some affection of the organism. From a semiotic point of view, it can be said that when some environmental novelty appears, some sensorial qualities show, which then act as *signs* (qualisigns, indexes) of the alterity (*object*), which are finally *interpreted* as sensation. This sensation, in turn, acts as a *sign* of the alterity presented (object) and, together with the internal state of the organism ends up being *interpreted* as an affection. The latter is what Russell (2003) calls *core affect*, the corner stone of his theory of emotion—an evaluation of the internal state of the agent, resulting from the iteration of previous physiological states (tiredness, stress, relaxation, etc.) and previous learnings (habituation, novelty), which can be characterized in two axes: valence (positive/negative) and activation (alert/relaxed). Core affect activates attention and a search for the source of the change felt (the alterity).

Fig. 7.4 The system of the proto-self: body responses to novelty



A semiotic analysis of this process shows two recursive semiosis sharing the same dynamic object (the alterity). The interpretant of the sensorial (first) semiosis acts then as representamen for the interpretation of an affection felt (second semiosis) and so provides the basis for attributing the resulting affect to the sensed qualities.

These two semioses shape what Damasio (1999) takes to be the most basic building stone of consciousness (*core consciousness*), even if it is below the threshold of consciousness, but without which no more elaborate states of consciousness can appear. They are non-conscious integrations of body states which permit the maintenance of the biological system and provide the basis for a *proto-self*.

The first kind of experience then is some kind of still undefined feeling of awareness of novelty.

Second Alterity: Representation of Phenomena and Objects

Core affect changes throughout time, as new alterities are encountered and new sensations appear. The result is the simultaneous appearance of sensorial phenomena and changes of *mood* (Russell 2003), a continuous evaluation of the internal state. Such simultaneity is the result of the new semioses modeled in Fig. 7.5. This is the simplest kind of conscious experience, which results from *rhematic* semioses, i.e., abductive inference.

Three kinds of semioses follow the ones presented in Fig. 7.4. Sensation plays two different roles in two simultaneous different semioses. On the one hand, it acts

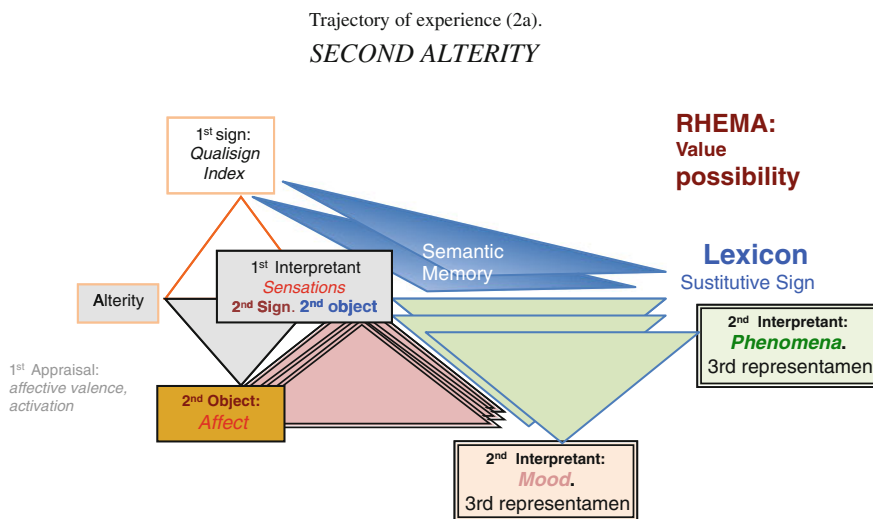


Fig. 7.5 Production of phenomena and mood

as sign of the affect (object) that then can be interpreted as a change in mood (a new interpretant). On the other hand, sensation is the object signaled by the sensed qualities, whose resulting interpretant is a social symbol (taken from lexical memory—e.g., white, warm, etc.). But there is still another semiosis in which sensations are the object signaled by the mood (representamen) that is interpreted as a sensorial phenomenon. When phenomena and symbols are matched, sensations get into consciousness with the cultural name of the quality attached, and so become communicable to other parties.

Once this happens, the semiotic relation between sensation (the object), phenomena, and mood could also be reversed (as in a mirror image), so that in a new semiosis (superimposed to the latter), the phenomenon could act as representamen of the mood, the consequence is that both (mood and phenomenon) appear as phenomenologically related, with the effect that sometimes it is not easy to tell them apart. This is the most elemental kind of aesthetic experience.

The ability to distinguish between external phenomena and internal moods requires not only accumulation of experience, but also something new: symbols. Sustinutive semioses are capable of attaching conventional symbols to the resulting interpretant of the previous semioses. This allows giving a name to sensorial phenomena and moods. But there is also a prize to pay; these experiences get procrusted within the range of possible alternatives supplied by the available cultural lexicon, something compatible with the so-called Whorfian hypothesis.

These kinds of *semioses* can be taken as the semiotic basis of the psychological process of attribution. But also have another important property: they are the necessary requisite for reflective consciousness: experiences always refer to alterities taken as external and real, but also to the experiencer him/herself—another alterity signaled by the change in mood.

Feelings (gathering together phenomena and moods) then appear as the most basic process of consciousness, since without them no sensation of alterity (phenomenon) can appear in consciousness. And in reverse, without felt qualities nothing of the environment could be taken as something signaling a subjective state—as desirable or threatening (for a detailed examination of the importance of affective semiosis see Innis, 2016).

Figure 7.6 shows the next step in the semiotic constitution of new psychological entities: *semiotized objects*, identity, and the self. They are representations of entities believed to be real, which also carry with them sentimental qualities.

The semiotic structure of the new processes is similar to that shown in Fig. 7.5.

Other kind of cultural sign, an *argument* (a kind of sign that gathers together several symbols to produce a new type of semantized object), comes now to participate in the process. Arguments, thus, allow the attribution of real existence to entities bounding together phenomena, which now can be understood as real entities.

The result is that the presence of something taken to be real (a person, an animal, a material object) is felt. Now a substantive can be used to refer to designate and communicate the experience of presence of a known object.

TRAJECTORY OF EXPERIENCE (2b). *2nd ALTERITIES*.
 Symbolic constitution of
OBJECTS, IDENTITY, and the SELF by *substitutive semiosis*

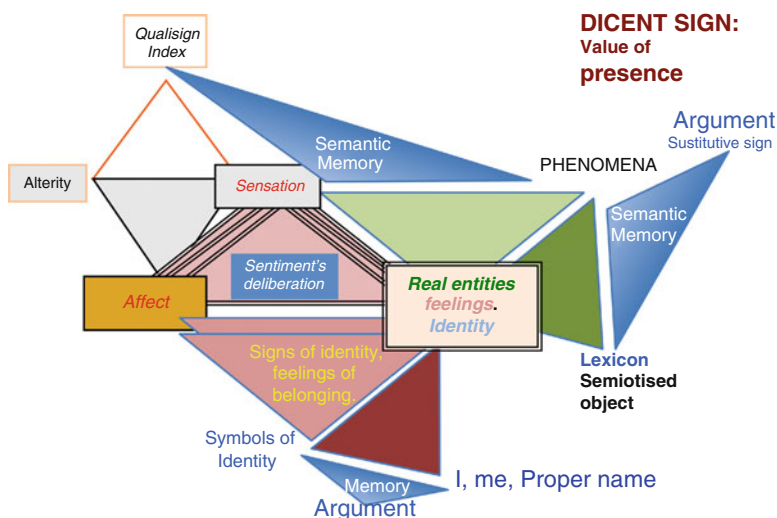


Fig. 7.6 Symbolic constitution of objects, identity, and the self by substitutive semioses

Something similar happens in the realm of sentiments. The way one feels vis-à-vis the experienced object can be interpreted as related to a sense of belonging (or repulsion), to the sentimental attachment, or rejection of the experienced semantized object. Feelings have a representational capability, so they can evoke something previously experienced (Bartlett 1925).

Emotional feelings are conscious awareness, not only of a tension in the body, but also of the body striving in the world (Frijda 2004). Feelings also play the function of a central representation for the organization of responses (Scherer 2004). And when so doing, they also act as a sign of one's own agency. Feelings are a semiotic outcome of earlier actuations, but are also signs for the direction of future ones. They result from appraisal processes that trigger motivational processes, giving emotional value (meaning) to objects, events, agents, and performances.

The feeling attached to some particular semantized object (a person, a portrait, a religious or ethnic symbol) can act as a sign to produce a new kind of sentiment: belonging, and so in turn make the experienced symbol to act as a sign of identity. Here again the use of cultural symbols (a flag, a cross or a crescent, the name of a group, my own name, or a pronoun) supply new signs for substitutive semioses that make this new experience communicable. Now the *I* and the *me*, the *we*, *us*, or *they* can appear as semantized objects.

At this point, feelings of identity become conscious. Identity, then, starts to appear like a sort of entity, as a pole around which experiences gather throughout

time. It is the use of one’s proper name and personal pronouns (another substitutive semiosis) what makes possible to produce this new identity around which the agent’s self starts to develop. The *I* and the *me* can then be conceived and so become agencies for operation.

Third Alterities: Positioning

At this point, it can be said that the self is placed among objects, i.e., is in the middle of a situation, that it is also changing throughout time and so provoking changes in one’s moods. Cultural symbols again come into the process allowing new kinds of substitutive semioses. Narratives supply arguments capable of filling with sense the situation lived. Figure 7.7 models this process.

Cultural narratives provide models so that the there and then experienced semiotized objects could be arranged into an understandable situation. They also provide arguments so that the changing situation could be arranged into events, filling them with meaning. In addition narratives provide set roles to be played within what is taken to be an ongoing drama. The result is the production of emotional episodes (Russell 2003), which trigger abductive processes (rhematic

TRAJECTORY OF EXPERIENCE (3a). POSITIONING
 Interpretation of **third set of alterities** =>
Mutual fitting of Entities, Emotional episodes, and the Self

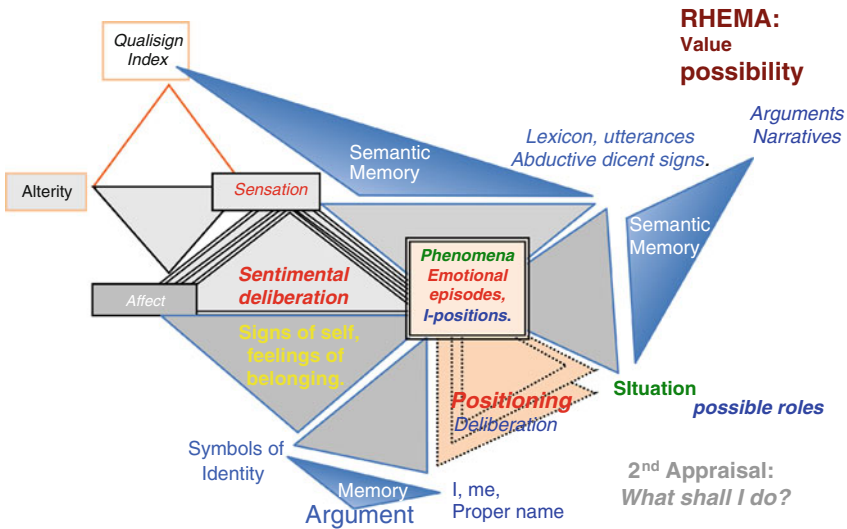


Fig. 7.7 Narratives and symbols of identity arise emotional episodes and drive toward ambivalence and positioning

TRAJECTORY OF EXPERIENCE (3b). **POSITION**
 Simultaneous construction of **SITUATION**, **ACTOR** and **EVENT**.

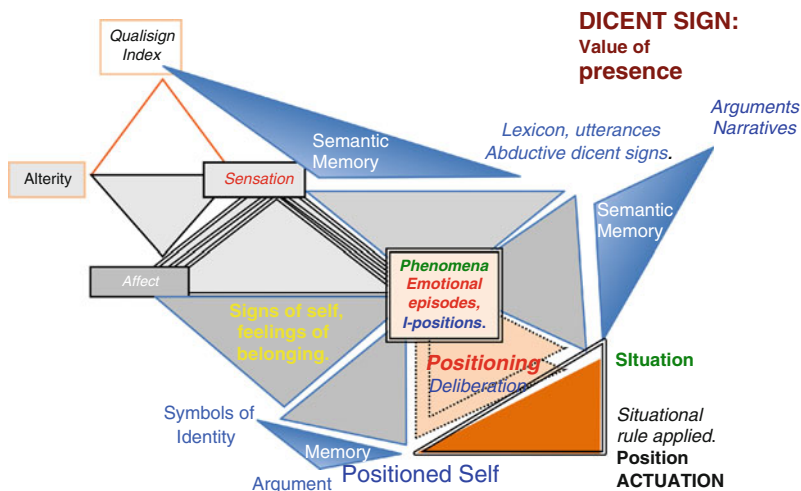


Fig. 7.8 Actuation as resulting from the position taken

semiosis) that explore ways of matching cultural, emotional, and cognitive elements within a comprehensive understanding. This is the semiotic structure of the process of *positioning* in which phenomena, environmental objects, personal feelings, narratives, and the available roles within the narratives are tried to be matched into an integrated whole, so that ambivalence (Valsiner 2006) could be reduced and rules for governing one's actuation be chosen (Harré 2012). When some fitting is achieved, the consequence is that ongoing events are understood and the agent knows what rules are fit for the position taken. The agent now turns into an actor playing a role (see Fig. 7.8). Her or his actuation is the result of the interpretation of the situation, as the position taken shows.

Emotional and cognitive processes merge when a lived situation is understood, producing an *emotional episode* (Russell 2003), where feelings get shaped according to the cultural emotional lexicon. In sum, emotions, feelings, understanding of the situation, and one's own actuation merge in a complex process where the biological, the psychological, the cultural, and the social melt together.

Parkinson (2001) remarks the social character of emotional experience. It is not only that the evaluative component of emotions get shared through the emotional expressions exchanged among the interacting parties in a social situation, but also that the very emotional episode is co-constructed among them. In addition, emotional episodes are not independent from the social situation, the physical space, or the mood of the participants (e.g., laughing in a café or a funeral service). Emotional episodes, then, belong to dynamical systems evolving throughout actions within concrete contexts mutually regulated (Fogel 1993, Fogel et al. 1992).

Once a position is taken, situations are understood, events become somehow predictable, and one can adopt a role and act in a particular way. What one does in the situation then can be constituted as a sort of entity, as an object to be understood, and so to be appraised, monitored, and modified vis-à-vis the values the actor has activated. It is then when one's actuation can be morally appraised and judged in accordance with the moral values implicated in the narrative applied (see Fig. 7.9).

Fourth Alterity: Actuation as a Semiotized Object and a Sign of the Self

Feelings do not only refer to what the stimulus makes me to feel (pleasure, pain—so that I find the object pleasant or painful), but also to how I feel vis-à-vis the experienced object or event (awkward, at ease, disgusted, pleased). Even to how I feel toward myself (or somebody else) as a result of acting as an agent (satisfied, restless), when judging how I did carry out a task (proud, useless, ashamed), or when appraising my own performances vis-à-vis other agents (arrogant, humble, sympathetic, envious, jealous, despicable). These feelings can arise because I am for myself an object (among others) to be appraised so that I can orient my actions toward that object (my *self*)—to govern its actuations. These feelings can exist because emotions are recursive, they are applied again and again upon every outcome of each recursive semiosis; they appraise the object, the actuation, the agent (either somebody else, or my self as an other—if such a thing has first been constructed as an object). These appraisals are not any more just immediate affective reactions; they also involve many other kinds of cognitive processes, and so get increasingly complicated.

Appraisals of performances and agents, of others and oneself, are not immediate processes, they require the reference to a rule, a norm that states what is good or bad, timely, or impertinent. Since rules depend of culture and society, as one move along throughout a series of successive recursive emotions, one may expect a higher cross-cultural diversity both in the emotional feelings people informs of, as well as in the vocabulary referred to the types of feelings present in a society in a particular moment of time—two aspects which are not totally independent (for a discussion, vid. Valsiner 2005). But there is something else worthy of being highlighted. If these appraisals, these judgments derive from the use of norms (social rules), these feelings have a moral nature, as well as acting as signals for the re-adjustment of actuations, for the governance of the group, and one's own self. Moral rules convey moral values of many kinds, and one apply them when situations, events, actuations, the others and one self are judged and emotionally appraised.

Figure 7.9 shows the semiotic structure of these processes. As there appears, the performed actuation is not only an interpretant resulting from an I-position taken from a cultural narrative, but also as resulting from other semioses which include

TRAJECTORY OF EXPERIENCE (4). SELF GOVERNMENT

FOURTH ALTERITY: The act as sign of myself.

The actor turns into *author*, and eventually into a *person*.

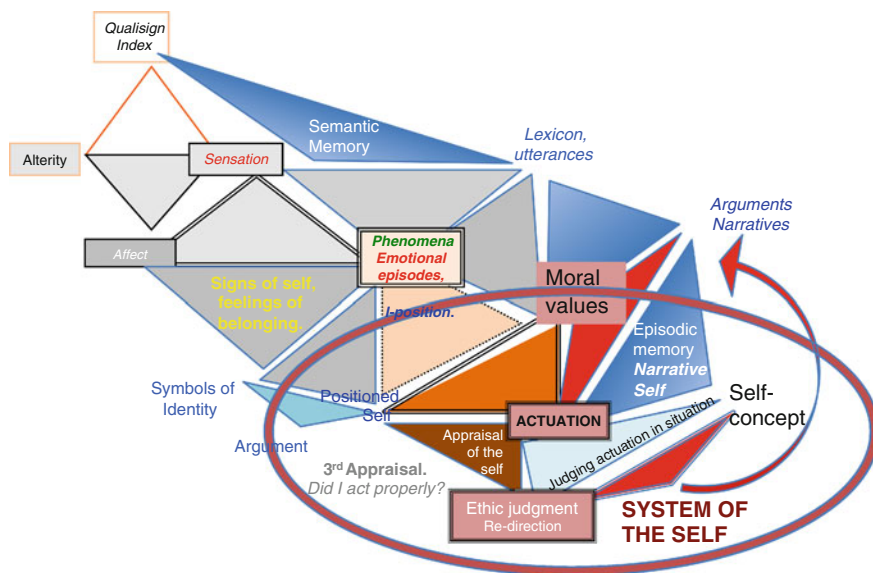


Fig. 7.9 Appraisal and judgment of the actor’s actuation. The system of the self

values that are related with episodic memories of earlier experiences involving the self. The end result is a simultaneous ethic judgment of what one did in the situation, together with an emotional appraisal of oneself, not only as an actor playing a role in a situation, but also as author of the improvised script.

So viewed, the system of the self is, as any other psychological system, a set of semioses for understanding and appraising experiences. What makes it peculiar is that rather than referring to changes felt in the environment, or to understanding the situations faced, it directs behavior and evaluates one’s actuations. The result is not only the rising up of a psychological device for monitoring what one is doing, but also the development of a new semiotized object: the self—a virtual entity, a belief about what the agent is.

The self is what one believes one is, a unique being responsible of one actions, a moral entity who is judged for how behaves, who could act adequately or inadequately not only according to the circumstances, but also to the arguments and goals implied in the narratives and beliefs one identifies with. The self, then, is a concept, but a personal one, one that refers to me as an agent, to my qualities, my capabilities, my virtues, and my vices. Something that can be cared for, improved or neglected, that can be taken as a means for steering through the predicaments of life, put at the service of some end, or taken as an end in itself. This kind of self-concept one builds leaves a mark on how one’s government is exercised, which

also depends on the habits developed throughout the life. Such exercise of the capabilities for self-governance is what usually is called *will*—a process that cannot fully developed without the operations of the system of the self.

Self-Government and Will: A Consequence of the Rising Up of the Self

Will results from the development of early forms of auto regulation (automatic and unconscious, and then over-learned habits—walking, sphincter control, body postures, etc.), but requires consciousness and language to be fully operational. As Marina (1997) says, “will is intelligence applied upon motivational systems” (p. 150). For will to develop, a complex motivational system must already be in operation—a hierarchy of motives, values, and norms. One has to become able to inhibit some motivations, to call upon higher evaluation criteria for the appraisal of objects and events, and accept or reject the desires felt. Will results from obeying an idea, a project; it is the capacity of commanding oneself, it is the habit of obeying imagined values above what is currently felt; it may also result from honoring a promise (an utterance setting boundaries for my future action—and so making it controllable as if it were as kind of past), or obeying social rules. So viewed, will results from a set of habits and interlocking skills—both cognitive and affective, but it is also a sociocultural product. It results from the project of building a human being capable of increasing levels of autonomy, responsible of its actuations, capable of controlling his/her emotions, to profit from his/her own experience and that of others, and to participate in the development of new ways of coexistence (Marina 1997). However, it should be kept in mind that will-force is not itself a moral value, it is instrumental and morally neutral. It is worthy to remember that scholastic medieval philosophers understood will as “the appetite of reason.” It provides reason with fuel for action, but if reason gets mistaken, the appetite moving to action would keep pumping motivational fuel for action.

The Self and the Agent Navigating in the Landscape of Experiences

What is, then, what governs one’s behavior? What is to be taken as the *who* responsible for one’s actuations? What rules set the attribution of responsibility? Can I direct the course of my life? What for? This set of questions makes one to swing between causality to teleology, science, and ideology, and take for granted that there are some entities (the *what*, the *who* and the *I*) involved in theses processes, and also hint that sociocultural rules (both for description of natural causality and for the attribution social–juridical responsibility) have something to do with the way those entities are conceived.

The argument developed throughout this paper has developed a semiotic genetic model of how these entities get constituted as semiotic objects throughout the temporal unfolding of actuations that produce the lived experiences. A particular trajectory of experience is, then, to be conceived as a dynamic system in which iterative changes in the organism and in the environment drive the system toward transitory states of equilibrium (bifurcation points) and eventually to a final state of (transitory) equilibrium that appears as an attractor—the final actuation and its judgment and appraisal, from which a new cycle starts. The repetition of these cycles throughout time changes the internal states of the organisms so that it becomes able to compile within its biological and psychological functional systems (Luria 1962) the new capabilities developed (circular reactions, learning). The system of the self arises as an extension of trajectories of experiences when internal representations of conventional symbols are applied for the representation of internal states. The new system that so arises is a transformation of the former, but then the dynamics of a new cycle has been transformed by the previous iterations. The result is the development of a self-steering mechanism that usually is named *subjectivity*—a domain of experience only accessible to the subject that affects the way phenomena, objects, situations, events, and one's own self is understood, and so profoundly influences overt behavior, even if its inner workings are not accessible for either external or internal observers and can only be modeled with the help of formalisms.

The operations of the system of the self within subjectivity is not only profoundly affected by the cultural resources feeding them, but unthinkable without them. Subjectivity cannot be but a cultural device implemented within a biological entity for the government of its actuations in particular environments. However, cultural arguments and narratives change the perceived environmental landscapes into temporal sceneries where a drama is being performed, so that the agent has to not only play roles, but improvise performances and so becoming an *author*. One may also go into the effort of behaving in order to improve one's capabilities, using materials taken from the available sociocultural toolkit, even if at each moment one is only able to appear as the kind of *person* that shows, and not as one was striving to be.

Some may say that such view of the self is a postmodern dilution of the subject within a myriad of processes and agencies. I do not believe so. The self is a semiotized object and, as such, not very different in its semiotic fabric to subatomic particles: It shows in its workings, regardless of whether it is a tiny piece of matter, a wave, both, or a figment of our imagination. In addition, Kant (2012) in his *Critic of Practical Reason* conceived the self as something beyond the realm of empirical phenomena, as an exigency of *practical* reason, but indispensable for the consideration of ethics. It should not be forgotten too that, when removing the self from the realm of empirical phenomena, Kant also signaled that it could not be taken as a matter susceptible of empirical enquiry, and so it could not be assumed to be determined. By so saying, he opened some room for free will and the development of his ethics of duties, in which transcendental determination was substituted by practical-rational self-determination. Such a view resounds when Rose (1996),

while examining distribution of agency, depicts “human beings as subjects of a certain type of freedom” (p. 187). Perhaps the polarities between metaphysics of permanence versus metaphysics of change, causality and randomness, determination, and freedom are to be reformulated when classical models of science get subsumed within nonlinear kinds of explanation.

The self, as here presented, is then a sort of virtual pivot of a whirlpool of processes around which the objects of the world, situations, events, duties, goals, ends, and hopes get shaped from the symbolic resources one mastered to employ when navigating through life. The self does not supply any fuel to impulse toward an end, nor is an engine to produce movement. It is a set of locational and navigational skills that takes advantage of the charts and courses in store. It is like the skipper in a sailing ship (Marina 1997) that steers over the waves of life, governs the crew of virtues and vices of the agent, and takes advantage of the winds of current experiences. When succeeds, buoyance is kept, and sometimes also the hope that the course chosen, and the journey, is worthwhile.

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Chapter 8

Studying Higher Mental Functions: The Example of Imagination

Tania Zittoun

Among the many objects of interest of cultural psychology is imagination. Imagination is a higher function of the mind, it is deeply cultural in nature, unique in the way it is experienced by a given person in a given time and place, and it plays a major role in individual and collective change. However, like many others higher functions, it cannot be studied directly: One cannot observe what or how someone is imagining. This is where psychologists have either the choice to give up, or to devise alternative ways to access to imagination. In this chapter, I first quickly define the imagination as sociocultural process. On this basis, I then review some studies allowing studying the phenomenon of imagination. Doing so, I hope to highlight, third, some of the methodological perspectives by which we can document imagination as complex psychological phenomena, and thus enrich theories of human experience.

Imagination as Sociocultural Phenomena

Imagination is the process by which our stream of thought disengages from the here and now of our immediate, or “proximal” experience, in the shared, or “paramount reality” (Zittoun and Gillespie 2015a). Imagination can be triggered by boredom, such as one is daydreaming in the classroom, when facing a rupture in everyday life which calls for new solutions, such as the perspective of a geographical relocation, or by various cultural means, such as watching a movie. Imagination can be described as a “loop” of consciousness that allows exploring distal experiences in which the rules of physical time and of causality do not apply—imagining being on a sunny beach when we are in a snowy town, imagining how daily life would be on an island or on Mars, or enjoying traveling back in time to undo past events. Hence, using resources from present and past experiences, such as one’s actual trips, symbolic resources such as magazine and films, as well as diverse cultural and

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social representations, now recombined in new fashions, imagination allows us to explore the past, the future, or alternative realities.

Thus defined as a loop, imagination groups diverse phenomena often treated distinctly, such as dreaming, daydreaming or mind-wandering, fantasizing, engaging in an aesthetic experience, anticipating, regretting, planning, playing, or experiencing culture (Singer and Singer 2005; Singer 2000, 2014). These phenomena can be described as variations of the loop of imagination, which can be depicted in a three-dimensional space. The first dimension represents the time orientation of the imagining (whether it is about personal or collective past, in the present, or about the future—often moving through these); the second dimension designates the generality of the ideas involved (is it about fixing a chair, or about how to make the world a better place); and the third dimension designates the plausibility or implausibility of the imagination, in relation to the social and material rules of the paramount reality (Zittoun and Gillespie 2015a). Of course, imagination can be more or less active, deliberate, or conscious on any of the aspects just described.

Finally, the loop of imagination ends when the focus of consciousness is reengaged in the proximal experience. There, imagination has various outcomes, from the simple pleasure of having been disengaged from a given situation (Oppenheim 2012), to the complex emotional experiences that it may provoke; it produces new or alternative representations, which then might pave the way to concrete actions, to personal choices, or to personal or collective creations, from a new dish to a new political regime (Vygotsky 1994). In that sense, because it is a semiotic process, allowed by our experiences of the world, culturally guided and constrained, and for its consequences in ontogenesis, microgenesis, and socio-genesis, imagination is sociocultural in nature (Vygotsky 1994, 1997; Zittoun and Gillespie 2015a). Imagination is indeed a core feed-forward process in human life, in interactions and in the social world (Valsiner 2014a).

Studying Imagination: Observation, Introspection, and AutoEthnography

Although many social groups have, over the ages, systematically cultivated the power of mind and imagination, our Occidental history is one of trying to restrain, or at least, concentrate imagination in some domains of social and private life only. Social scientists have, often for good reasons, great mistrust for imagination, which, with passion and fears, can lead to the most dramatic collective movements (Le Bon 2013; Moscovici 1976). For the rest, imagination has generally been tolerated in children and artists or in art-related activities, and otherwise, considered as confined to the madman and the deviant. In adult life, it is mainly creativity that has socially acknowledged outcomes, which is the object of attention (Glăveanu et al. 2015). Interestingly, in the past 150 years in psychology, it is often scientists with an

interest for the arts—whether painting or literature—who also tried to give a more central place to imagination, from Hermann Rorschach to Sigmund Freud and Lev Vygotsky.

Beyond the scarcity of empirical work, the redefinition of imagination proposed above allows to turn to various lines of studies that have examined one or the other of its occurrences: fantasy, daydream, memory, and experiencing or creating arts. In what follows, I identify some of the main methodological strategies that have been chosen to document these phenomena: case studies, the standardized approaches of projective tests and laboratory procedures, introspection in autoanalysis and auto-ethnography, and observation, before turning to more open approaches.

Case Studies

A first range of studies that have documented inner lives and imagination are case studies of people considered as mad or deviant. Pierre Janet's substantial study of a woman suffering from delirium is a paradigmatic case of idiographic science, by which the French psychologist could develop many aspects of his theory of the automatism of mind (Janet 2003, 2005; Zittoun 2008). Freud's case studies of men and women haunted by non-real experiences became classic in the clinical literature and have been widely discussed (Freud 2001c). In such case studies, adults mainly talk in the therapeutic setting or are observed as they act in surprising ways. Similarly, case studies of children have been undertaken; here the emphasis is on children's talking and on observing their play, seen as a royal road to the unconscious since Melanie Klein and Anna Freud. Inviting children to play, it is they unfolding of imagination that is observed, and acted upon, by therapists. In these lines of studies, Winnicott's transcripts of psychotherapeutic treatment with adults and children (Winnicott 1994, 1996), or Diatkine and Simon's description of the evolution of the cure of a little girl (Diatkine and Simon 2005), give full access to the richness and complication of a person's fantasmatic life, through their plays, fears, anxieties, dreams, daydreams, reveries, transference relations, memories, and hopes. In other words, such case studies reveal the many facets of the work of imagination, and "pathological cases" illuminate more common experiences. Hence, Jerome Singer, a specialist of daydreaming and imagination, similarly based his first studies on the analysis of psychotherapeutic sessions (Singer 2005, 1976/2014). Here, language and observation are seen as access to the imagination, with arrangements of the setting to facilitate such externalization. In any case, such studies allow both for developing hypothesis about the experiential material used in imagining—memories of emotionally loaded events, important relationships, social norms, and discourses—and for developing hypothesis about the processes involved in their development, unfolding, and outcomes.

Projective Tests

Against idiographic science, imagination has also been studied through more systematic, differential, or nomothetic approaches—studies attempting to systematize the collection of data about something per definition highly variable. On the one hand, an often forgotten route to imagination has been open by projective tests. In a surprising 1898 paper, American psychologist George Dearborn wonders how to capture in a systematic way the sorts of imagining in which people engage when they see shapes in the clouds. He thus devises a series of inkblots and invites people to tell what they see. The great diversity of replies is a first disconcerting:

Why one subject should see in a blot a “cabbage head” and the next an “animal with his mouth open,” or why a professor should be reminded by a blot of “half a sweet pea blossom” and his wife of a “snake coiled round a stick,” of course no one can at present pretend to explain. There is a temptation in such cases of association as these to call the results the choice of chance, but this means too little-or too much (Dearborn 1898, p. 190).

Interestingly, Dearborn continues:

it is clear that, as a general principle, the experience, and especially the early experience, of the subject has important influence. For example, study of the records shows that subject H., a purely domestic woman, is reminded most often of domestic objects; while subject O., who is an artist and student of mythology, sees in the blots many picturesque and fanciful things. The difference between the imaginations of the country and city bred is clear (Dearborn 1898, p. 190).

This beginning of analysis of people’s cultural resources for imagining however is not pursued much. The study of imagination has then followed different routes, whether authors were searching for general principles underlying psychological processes, or individual specificities (Sharp 1899).

On the one hand, projective techniques were further explored toward a differential approach. In France, after a first series of interviews with artists (Passy and Binet 1894), Alfred Binet with Victor Henri proposed a series of completion and projective tests to have access to people’s involuntary and voluntary imagination—people had to continue the beginning of a melody line or a sentence, or to comment on a ink shape—with the goal of developing a differential psychology (Binet and Henri 1895, pp. 443–445). Swiss psychologist Alfred Rorschach developed the inkblot technique further and more systematically, as a technique to evaluate people’s personality (Chabert and Anzieu 2005, p. 15). However, as Rorschach notes, most people who have to comment of the ink shape think that the task is about imagination (Rorschach 1987, p. 3). As a result, authors discussed on whether creative or surprising answers should be read as indications of creativity and vivid imagination, or, departing from the average, as pathology (Rorschach 1987; Schachtel 2013, p. 65). Note that this line of uses of projective test has been pursued in clinical practice, where projective tests are still often as offering an access to children and adults inner lives (Chabert and Anzieu 2005).

On the other hand, in England, Frederic Bartlett, knowing the work reported above, developed an inkblot test where people were asked to describe what they

were seeing when shown as series of abstract figures. As Dearborn, Bartlett finds the diversity of answers striking:

What to one was a ‘camel’ (blot 2) to another was a ‘tortoise’; to another a ‘dog worrying a table-cloth’; to another ‘two dead ducks and an ostrich’; to another an ‘octopus’; to another ‘a baby in a cot with a doll falling out’; to another a ‘picture of Sohrab and Rostum in a book of Arnold’s poems.’ The uninitiated would hardly suspect that the following are all attempts to describe the same object... (Bartlett 1916, p. 254)

In his commentary, Bartlett refers to studies proposing typologies of people according to their answers; yet, as he elegantly formulates, “separation into types, though it is of considerable practical value, solves no theoretical problem” (Bartlett 1916, p. 255). What he rather suggests is to engage in a developmental understanding of how people, through their trajectories of what we could call socialization—experience and learning—come to develop certain experiences and memories which they then use when imagining. This interesting genetic route has to my knowledge not been pursued with such techniques. However, it is true that accessing to imagination through projective test only gives access to the part triggered by the material—whether it is to engage into interpersonal comparison or an understanding of underlying processes.

Dream Laboratory Studies

Also attempting to develop systematic approaches, further from the psychoanalytic tradition and more inspired by the natural sciences, experimental and cognitive psychologists have also been interested in variations of imagination. Research on dreams has defined a methodological paradigm, consisting in having participants sleeping in a laboratory, and being awoken on specific phases of their sleep, a few times a night; they are then interviewed about their dreams following a standard procedure—similar techniques have been defined for adults as well as for children (Foulkes 1999; Hobson 2002; Hobson et al. 2000). Such studies have led to strong debates on the nature of the material used in dreaming—mundane traces of the previous-day experiences (Hobson 2002), or older memories and experiences, internalized social and cultural norms and discourses (Freud 2001a; Nathan 2011)? Also, they have allowed to make hypothesis about the underlying processes, and their development (Foulkes 1999). Whether these narrated dreams can be considered as the dream itself or, precisely, as narration which transforms the dream experience into a text, is a matter of discussion since Freud (2001a, b and c).

Avoiding this problem, some recent studies directly enquire neurological activation; hence, studies suggest that the patterns of neurological work are very similar in dreaming and in mind-wandering (the label used for designating daydreaming in the current neuroscientific literature) (Fox et al. 2013). Avoiding the risk of naturalization of a psychological process, Paul Harris has on the other side worked experimentally to explore some of the properties of imagination in children as they

engaged in systematic tasks—yet emphasizing what participates to logical reasoning, rather than the uniqueness of disengaging from reality (Harris 2000). Here, of course, the material for imagining is of little relevance.

Introspection

On a different, yet complementary route, most researchers have realized, at some point, that self-knowledge might be a key process in understanding other minds. It has led to the whole tradition of introspection, which can be more or less self-directed, or addressed to, or guided by someone else, with all its variations and the debates it raises (Clegg 2013). Introspection is the process by which one examines his or her own thoughts. The history of self-observation methods has been done elsewhere, and here, I only focus on some aspects which are of relevance for imagination in psychology. To be short, Wundt is often considered as one of the authors that has asked his participants to use introspection to respond to his tasks; however, recent historiography shows that he actually trained people to translate simple perceptions (inner-perception) (Brock 2013; Danziger 2001). Introspection was nevertheless also used to give access to more complex states of mind, for instance in the USA, where William James was calling upon his own experience. If it is true that introspection was put in crises by the criticisms issued from behaviorism, which pursued however different goals (Danziger 1980, p. 255), it remained quite present in France. There, in effect, introspection was supported in psychology through philosophy, as the influence of the phenomenology of Husserl remained very strong (for an overview see Brinkmann 2013). It became notably a source of inspiration to Jean-Paul Sartre's enquiry, including his work on imagination (Sartre 1940, 1989). In more modern versions, phenomenology inspired the development of technique for eliciting the other's introspection, used mainly in the analysis of activity at work ("explicitation" in French) (Vermersch 2009).

Autoanalysis

Beyond classic introspection, two variations are worth mentioning here. First, autoanalysis is one of the specific techniques of access to imagination. The notion of "autoanalysis" stems from psychoanalysis; it designates a modality of observation of one's own psychic life, while admitting its unconscious underpinnings. For psychoanalysis, Freud's autoanalysis at the end of the nineteenth century is considered as foundational. It is through his introspective work, a year-long systematic observation and analysis of his inner life—reactions to others, lapsus, emotional states, and more importantly, dreams—together with his theoretical work and data coming from his patient that Freud elaborated the *Interpretation of dreams* (Freud 2001b) and all his theoretical work to come. Some commentators have noted that

this autoanalysis was not the product of a lonely, magically inspired mind; rather, it was also addressed to a friend, through a long correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess (Bonnet 2010; Roudinesco and Plon 2011, pp. 117–121). According to Bonnet, autoanalysis, which demands an attention to one's inner life, fantasies, daydreams, emotional reactions to people and situations, and dreams, can be done alone. It can be practiced while walking or gardening, even though it is ideally done while writing, and with the distant supervision of someone else (Bonnet 2010). For some other authors, autoanalysis can be properly conducted only when someone had experience of a psychoanalytical treatment beforehand. In any case, its main outcomes are that it invites to recognize the plurivocity of the mind, the many contradictory motives which can inhabit a person, and the plurality or lives coexisting in her body and mind. Interestingly, Sartre himself seems to have used the occasion of writing on Freud's autoanalysis to stimulate his own introspective work, which would, a few later, bring him to his own autobiographical writing (Pontalis 1984). In his own writing, clinical psychologist Jerome Singer reports his introspective analysis—quite close to autoanalysis—to propose developmental hypothesis on imagination (Singer and Singer 1992). The few instances of autoanalytical work hence suggest the importance of such approach for the study of the development, the resources, and the outcomes of imagination.

Autoethnography

Second, in social sciences, the notion of “autoethnography” was developed to account for the experience of the researchers in the construction of social facts and observations, a century after Freud, in the 1980s of the 20's century. If autoanalysis is based on the hypothesis of a researcher's unconscious or inner life, autoethnography is based on the fact that the researcher participates to the construction of the social reality in which he or she is engaged, and that this situation also constitutes personal experiences which are worth examining. Ellis thus writes that autoethnography combines autobiography and ethnography:

When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity. However, in addition to telling about experiences, autoethnographers often are required by social science publishing conventions to analyze these experiences. (Ellis et al. 2010, paragr. 8).

Its aim is, through appropriate and skillful use of the written form, to bring the reader to experience the quality of the situation or event researchers want to transmit, while also engaging with existing theories and observations in the social sciences, (Ellis et al. 2010; Wall 2006). Because of its openness to diverse aspects of social, cultural, or institutional settings and the researcher's experiences in it, whatever his or her gender, belonging or body-ability, such method can give access to a wide range of experiences. In fact, it seems that autoethnography has mainly

examined the researcher's experience in work situation, migration, wars, social injustice, health issues—but not the actual experience of imagining.

Observation

A last methodological route is that of observation, which has also long been used to study fantasy and imagination: observation of children's play in therapeutic setting in the laboratory or in daily situation; observation of early interaction in everyday and laboratory situation; observation of people's reactions to images and films, again in different situations (Blumer and Hauser 1933; Hedegaard and Fleer 2013; Miller et al. 1993; Nelson 2006; Singer and Singer 1992, 2005; Taylor 1999; Trevarthen 2012a, b). However, because imagination is often considered as something internal in adults, it has less been addressed through such means. Adults are mostly asked to verbalize their experience, in natural or more controlled situations. Adults have been trained into quasi-experimental tasks in daily life, or to report on their daily experiences about daydreaming (Pereira and Diriwächter 2008); authors and artists have been interviewed about their imagination (Oppenheim 2012; Passy and Binet 1894); and adults have been interviewed on the basis of their filmed activity of painting, music playing, or martial art practice (Diep 2011; Gfeller 2015), using a technique inspired by “clinic of activity” (Clot and Kostulski 2011). These studies have allowed identifying many variations of imagination in play, imaginary companions, and daydreaming; they allow both not only to identify types and differences (e.g., in ages, gender), but also to give access to processes. The last series of studies mentioned—combining observations and different techniques of guided introspection—gave access to new and overlooked aspects of imagination, such as its embodied nature or its outcomes. We will come back to these approaches combining perspectives below.

Everyday Life Enquiry

Data do not need to be always strictly designed or created; often, it can simply be found where it stands. Coming back to more anthropological approaches, or simply, to the fact that the source of our theoretical amazement is in the world that surround us (Brinkmann 2012, 2014; Cohen and Taylor 1992), imagination can also be studied in everyday life. In effect, our theoretical work has allowed us to redefine imagination as the process of uncoupling from the here and now experience, to engage in a distal sphere of experience, with the use of diverse resources; as looping away, imagination always comes back to the ongoing situation, the imagining person's experience having temporarily been enriched. On this basis, instances of imagination become visible in many daily situations. We thus have documented people making decisions in their daily lives, children playing, or solving tasks at

school, adults in prison, adultery couples; as data, we have used documentary film, self-writings (diaries, letters); instances documented through clinic of activity as well as diverse research interviews; and secondary analysis (Gillespie 2010; Gillespie et al. 2008; Gillespie and Zittoun 2010a; Zittoun et al. 2012; Zittoun and de Saint-Laurent 2015; Zittoun and Gillespie 2012, 2015a). We have also considered drawings, paintings, musical pieces, poems, sculpture and films, media documents, both as triggers of imagination or as outcomes of other people's imagining (Gillespie and Zittoun, in press; Zittoun and Gillespie 2014, 2015a). Finally, we relied on our own experience, as former children, adults, parents, researchers, art spectators, and so on, which we analyzed reflectively, in an approach inspired by the two traditions of introspection described above.

Doing so, we did more than simply pile up evidence; our methodological ecumenism has an epistemological grounding. We follow thus as a pragmatist tradition initiated in early psychology and sociology (Freud 1963, 2001b, 2004; James 1890; Schuetz 1944, 1945), interestingly pursued by other researchers interested in our capacity to "escape" from the present (Cohen and Taylor 1992), and recently re-theorized (Brinkmann 2012, 2014; Brinkmann and Tanggaard 2010; Jacobsen et al. 2014; Zittoun et al. 2013, Chap. 12).

What Now?

These main methodological routes are not the only ones that can be devised for the study of imagination. They reflect theories or implicit assumptions about the nature of the phenomena pertaining to imagination—whether it is an expression of an internal disposition, caused by various factors, or whether it is a social and cultural phenomenon; whether it is a rough, primitive, and anecdotic process meant to lead to rationality, or whether it has a value on its own; and whether it is the expression of a predefined given, or whether it is a dynamic developing through the life course, with the rest of the psychological life. They have contributed to the understanding of imagination, at times keeping close to the researcher's ideas, sometimes open to the surprise of other people's experience. But how can we move through this diversity and reflect on methods beyond the case of imagination?

Perspectives in Methodology

Studies in imagination are grounded in different theoretical and epistemological traditions. This, as a consequence, brings them to privilege often one perspective only on the phenomenon at hand. Adopting a more analytical stance will allow for a more complex view of imagination through the combination of various perspectives (Flick 1992; Gillespie and Cornish 2014; Zittoun and Gillespie 2015b). If imagination is always a very personal and a private phenomenon, it can be documented

from different perspectives. Classically, it can be documented from the person's perspective, or from the observer's perspective; yet each of these perspectives can be more or less reflexive (Brinkmann 2013; Gillespie and Zittoun 2010b). In addition, the clinical tradition has taught us that the observer is mostly affected by the participant's experience and invites us to consider such intersubjective experiences (Abbey and Zittoun 2010). Finally, theoretical elaboration demands the examination of these different levels of experiences in light of conceptual work (Valsiner 2014b, c; Valsiner et al. 2009). It is these different perspectives that I will now examine in turn, trying to highlight how these contribute to the understanding of imagination as a higher psychological function. These different perspectives and their relation are summarized in Table 8.1.

The first line focuses on the *first person perspective*, which is that of the researcher, or in some cases, that of a person, engaged in her experience as it goes.

Table 8.1 Perspectives in the study of imagination

Perspective Reflexivity	Direct	Reflexive	Deliberate
First person	I am engrossed in an imaginary experience (possibly externalizing) <i>Daydreaming, imagining, doing arts, etc.</i>	I reflect on my experience and on how it affects or affected me. <i>Autoanalysis, introspection, autoethnography, diary writing, etc.</i>	I look for triggers or resources that can create such imaginary experiences <i>Using resources</i>
Third person	I observe S having an imaginary experience <i>Observation, interviews</i>	I observe S reflecting about his/her experience and how he/she was affected by it <i>Diary analysis, interviews, experimentation</i>	I invite S to reflect about his/her experiences <i>Techniques of elicitation, work clinic, forms of guided introspection, didactic situations</i>
Intersubjective	I interact with S <i>Interaction, collaboration, observation, interviews</i>	I reflect on how interacting with S affects S (transfer) I reflect on how interacting with S affects me (countertransfer) <i>Autoanalysis, introspection, autoethnography, etc.</i>	I reflect on how these mutual interactions construct the interaction (Abbey and Zittoun 2010) <i>Specific attention to the relational modality</i>
Analytical: abduction			I look for what is common in these various experiences, and how this corresponds or not to theoretical constructs

Explicitly or not, experience is an important starting point in psychological and social science: it is from our experience of everyday life that we have intuitions, questions, and gaps that we wish to pursue as researchers. Hence, imagination is present in experiences of dreaming, decision making, regretting, or daydreaming. Moving from experiencing imagination to a more reflexive stance demands a phenomenological movement (Brinkmann 2013), which can be done with the use more or less theoretical tools. This understanding of imagination can bring the person/researcher to deliberately provoke further experiences of imagination. In that sense, the first line of the table can be seen as potentially cyclical, where more reflexivity brings to more deliberate and conscious occurrences of imagining. Hence, the person can deliberately manipulate triggers for imagination, use resources, and orient the directions it takes, its outcomes, and their realization. Authors such as Freud (who experienced dreaming, cocaine and hypnosis), Sartre, Singer, and certain ethnographers and sociologists importantly relied on this type of experiences to develop their understanding of imagination.

Research starting with an attempt by the researcher to directly access to a *third person's perspective*, as in the second line, is the most common in psychology research. Observing people interacting in laboratory situations or in daily life, observing responses in a PET scan, seeing how people react to various stimuli (to words, cards, etc. as in cases of projective test), examining how people are engrossed in TV watching, painting, music playing or as they watch an art piece are such approaches. One can question where lies imagination, and on which basis it is inferred. Here, authors mostly rely on language—observing people talk is often seen as good-enough access to their imagination. But if we admit that imagination is, as any psychological experience, based on the internalization and new synthesis made out of internalized material; that it is affected by the conditions in which it occurs, where for instance an ongoing activity feeds-back in imagination (as in diary writing, or dancing), then we also have to acknowledge that imagination is displayed, or given off, by diverse forms of externalization. The TV viewer engrossed in a film or hiding his head in a pillow (Lembo 2000), the painter moving back a few steps (Glăveanu 2011), the aikidoka slowing down his or practice (Gfeller 2015), physically externalize some aspects of their process of imagining. Such variations have been widely described and analyzed in early infant and triadic interactions (Stern 1998; Trevarthen 2012c); however, we have much less a vocabulary for describing gestures, body postures, and nonverbal forms of externalization in adults. Multimodal studies have engaged in the description of these semiotic forms, but often without questioning the intention to communicate lying in there (Jewitt 2014; Kress 2009). Methodologically, much has to be developed on that line, also, experience shows that it would to gain to be combined with other perspectives.

A second common variation of that perspective is these in which the researcher more actively solicits the work of imagination of the participant. Asking people to realize a boring task and tell what comes to mind, or to report about episodes of mind-wandering (Pereira and Diriwächter 2008), waking up people and ask them to report on dreams (Foulkes 1999; Hobson 2002) are such examples. Here, the data

are generally the discourse of the person who is self-writing or thinking aloud. Here, it might be important to differentiate between the sincerity of an expression and the analytical accuracy of an interpretation (Brinkmann 2013). Imagination is an embodied, multimodal, often inconsistent experience; the very act of turning it into a narrative flattens it out and submits it to the temporal and logical demands of communicable language. Too often, the researchers consider these reports as good-enough versions of the process of imagination itself, not questioning these process of transformation. Although some verbal expressions are sincere, they are not strictly reflecting—or not transparently translating—psychological process, many of which are not verbal and not fully conscious.

One possible way to overcome this difficulty is combining perspectives. In effect, admitting that imagination is often not conscious or deliberate for a person, yet that it can be visible to a theoretically informed observer that a person is imagining, the combination of inner and outer perspectives may allow to construct or to identify the process of imagination that does, or that did take place. The techniques using commented filmed activities, as in the “work clinic”, or techniques of elicitation, are techniques by which the researcher guides the introspection of the research participant. In terms of data, it allows the researcher to combine his or her observation—for instance, or a moment of hesitation in painting when the artists seem to explore possible ways to continue (Bertinotti 2014)—with what the person actually can verbalize. The observations themselves can become secondary stimulus to trigger the reflexion of the participant (Clot and Kostulski 2011). Altogether, the process searched can be constructed by triangulation of these diverse perspectives and semiotic modalities (Flick 1992).

The third line in the table designates a phenomena often overlooked in research, *intersubjectivity*, as imagination is often considered as private. However, interacting with others is one of the elements both triggering and feeding in imagination. When we interact with others, we of course intentionally verify that they understand us and we try to understand them; but also, we nourish questions about who they are, we think about who they remind us of, we feel toward them, and we read into their nonverbal language (body posture, silences, eye gaze, smell, etc.). This has been addressed differently in various domains in psychology (Grossen 2010; Rommetveit 1985) and has been very called countertransference by the psychoanalytical tradition. Transference is the process by which a patient reactivates memories of parents, friends, real and imagined figures, and projects them on the psychoanalyst. Countertransference is the emotional reactions the analyst has to the patient, what he or she does represents to him or her, how this patient reactivates in him emotional reactions, how she reacts to the projections put unto him or her. Transference and countertransference can thus be seen as the loops of imagination triggered by the relation itself; it is about the dialogicality activated by the intersubjective situation (Grossen 2010; Grossen et al. 2014). As a consequence, researchers who would observe their own imagination activated by interactions could usefully complement studies in which they ask someone else to recall instances of imagining. A closer analysis of how such inner gaze can be combined with the unfolding interactions demands a more microgenetic analysis (Abbey and

Zittoun 2010). Hence, Emily Abbey and I proposed to identify three semiotic streams within interactions: first, the “meaning stream,” where each participant tries to understand what the other is talking about, responds, etc.; second, the “sense-feeling stream” where “each person is engaged in sense making, which is directly following the participants’ changing emotional experiences, constantly triggered by the presence and the discourse of the other, or any atmospheric reason” (Abbey and Zittoun 2010, p. 7); and third, the “reflexive stream,” where “each participant can also draw on various other signs to synchronically reflect on the ongoing evolving situation” (Abbey and Zittoun 2010, p. 7). On this basis, the proposition is to focus on moments of breach or rupture, when the reflexive streams identify that these “sense-feeling” does not correspond to what is meant, or that the meaning is unclear, or that there is any other change in the intersubjective dynamic. The methodological proposition was then, rather to “let go,” to precisely focus on such ruptures; for it is in moment of breach of meaning that imagination may unfold (Zittoun and Gillespie 2015a).

Finally, the fourth and last line of the table designates the effort of putting any empirical evidence of the kinds seen so far, and others, in dialog with theorization—that is, abduction. To understand imagination, theoretical imagination is required, as it is about some phenomena which cannot be seen; and in such darkness, our only light are theoretical tools; yet whatever they illuminate, can transform them in turn (Peirce 1878; Valsiner 2014b, c; Valsiner et al. 2009).

From Imagination to Higher Psychological Functions

This chapter explored some ways through which imagination has been and can be studied. These ways are diverse and reflect many epistemological and methodological traditions within psychology. This exploration showed some ways through which we can further the study of imagination, but mainly, it is an occasion to reflect on the study of higher mental functions.

Studying Imagination

This rapid overview allows underlining two main aspects for progressing in the study of imagination. Both are based on a theoretical reasoning: on the one hand, imagination is a process, which is nourished by semiotic resources and leads to certain outcomes; and on the other hand, it is multimodal. Imagination can only be inferred on the basis of traces of externalization, and these are multimodal as well. As consequence, imagination can be experienced by a researcher, or observed in others, or as self and other interact. Imagination is best observed when different perspectives are brought together—self and other, inner and outer, first and third, or different semiotic modalities (gesture and language, for instance). More specifically,

our small enquiry invites, first, not to limit any enquiry to verbal language; second, it privileges a theoretically justified methodological ecumenism; third, it suggests to counterbalance the simplicity of observation or discourse analysis with reflexivity, and more generally, with triangulation of perspectives. But why is that? This is where we have to come back to the more general question of studying higher psychological functions.

Studying Higher Mental Functions

Imagination is here just one case of a complex phenomenon to be studied by cultural psychology seen as general psychology (Valsiner 2014a). Psychology can in effect choose to focus on very specific and local thinking processes, reactions, physiological processes related to human activity; or it can more ambitiously aim at understanding the more complex conduct in which people engage, as they are located in a complex world of culture, in which they find a unique expression—which is the goal of cultural psychology of the twenty-first century.

Higher psychological functions designate these human conducts which are only possible as people have internalized the complex semiotic organization of the social and cultural environment and are thus socially situated and culturally mediated. They demand the mastery of a semiotic system to be able to act in, and upon the world, often, through further cultural mediation (e.g., Vygotsky 1994, 2004; THIS VOLUME). Reflex, direct apperception, after-colors effect, rote remembering are not higher functions. Daydreaming about a better life, reading a novel, solving a mathematical operation, remembering a movie, acting in the name of a deity all depend on such higher psychological functions. Although the term has a normative connotation—something is higher than something else—here I use it with care, simply to designate the mediated, distanced nature of the processes involved.

Historically, since the origins of psychology as a science, there has been a divide between approaches considering, on the one side, that it is wiser to start to study simple operations and activities in human, and that complex conduct could then be understood through the sum or the recombination of its parts, and approaches which, on the other side, considered that it was certainly more accurate to start addressing complex phenomena for their own sake, as these were probably more as the sum of their parts. This divide is also deeply connected with the question, clearly appearing in this chapter, of whether one should first identify phenomena that allow interpersonal comparison, or the understanding of the complex conduct of a single person, as an access to more complex laws (e.g., Sharp 1899). These questions are well-known, but how deeply they have constructed methodologies and hold epistemologies captive is sometimes forgotten.

In this chapter, I have recalled that the same question addressed through different techniques brings about different data—which is redundant—and that these techniques reflect assumptions about the nature of the phenomena at hand. Typically, a method that respects the temporality of a phenomenon reflects assumptions on their

developmental nature (Gillespie and Zittoun 2010a). In addition, I wish to underlie the deeper underlying epistemological positioning of research implied in different methodologies. Higher psychological phenomena are actually theoretical constructs; people do things, remember, laugh, buy milk or imagine their holidays; psychologists make hypothesis about cultural guidance, structures of recognition, or uses of resources. This is why, epistemologically, the question of how to capture higher psychological phenomena necessarily demands the careful combination of perspectives. Elsewhere, we have shown that understanding how someone experiences the war demands also a careful documentation of how the war occurred around the person even if she could not see it—only elements connected to the paramount reality and its sociogenesis give shape to the ontogenetic conduct (Gillespie and Zittoun 2015a, b). Here, I have suggested that understanding of imagination, as sociocultural process, might require combining four perspectives: that of the one who experiences, that of the one who observes, that of the one who experiences the observation, and that of theories which only gives us the necessary support to hold these together, beyond the obvious.

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Chapter 9

What Imagination Can Teach Us About Higher Mental Functions

Luca Tateo

As human beings, or a part of this category, we rejoice ourselves at believing to be the peak of the evolutionary process. We claim that the qualitative leap that differentiates us from other living beings is the symbolic capability that allowed us to build higher mental functions, whose rationality at the top, upon, or rather in coordination with, the physiological characteristics of *homo* (Cassirer 1957; Piaget 2013; Vygotsky 2012; Werner and Kaplan 2014). Building upon this claim, we elaborated a meta-narrative of development and progress (Wallerstein 1991) that is resisting ethological and anthropological evidence, according to which other species share with us the capability of learning, using tools, modifying the environment, treasuring experience, and transmitting knowledge apart from genetic selection. Such meta-narrative, which originates from a religious view and ends up in a teleological one, includes a system of categorization of the world which is exquisitely anthropocentric, or, better, it is power-centric, reflecting the historical power relationships in the history of civilization. We created abstract concepts (e.g., development, progress, race, rationality, and society) that we use as analytic, normative, and pragmatic categories to operate upon the world and upon our human fellows (Billig 1983).

On the other hand, it is indubitable that we are the only existing living beings, as far as we know, that are able to constantly, voluntarily, and collectively construct and deconstruct abstract and non-existing objects (Grossman 1974; Valsiner 2014) to guide and self-regulate future-oriented actions, in a forward-feeding process of construction and overcoming (Simmel 1918/2010). The capability of creating abstract concepts treating them as real things and creating real things treating them as abstract concepts is one of the distinctive features of humanity, and this is the

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reason for my argument that imagination is one of the most relevant higher mental functions (Tateo 2015).¹

What is equally indubitable is that we are the only living beings that possess the capability of setting goals and actions that lead to the modification of the environment in the direction of making it UGLIER (Fig. 9.1a),² to the extent of THREATENING the prosecution of our offspring (Fig. 9.1b), and the existence (Fig. 9.1c) of life itself (Moscovici 1972).

Thus, the same developmental processes (learning, planning, creating, imagining, building, problem-solving, inventing, transcending, etc.) can lead to both generative and destructive outcomes. The question is then how to understand the problem of the relationships between the normativity of the contemporary conception of the right conditions for thinking (the quest of philosophy and psychology since Descartes and Kant), and the conception of the normativity of the idea of development as cumulative, thus teleological, phylogenetic, and ontogenetic process. In other words, how psychology must deal, for instance, with the process of learning and learning-for-what-purpose, or problem-solving and problem-solving-for-what purpose? One could answer that the task of psychology as a science is not to deal with ends but only with means: no matter if you call them systems, mechanisms, or processes. I find such an answer unsatisfactory for it implies a distinction between means and ends that is not the case.

Originally, in Greek philosophy, the question of the conditions of knowledge and the teleology of knowledge were strictly related: The true and the good were in mutual relationship (Murray 2011). In Plato's *Phaedrus* (1972), for instance, the erotic experience of good was essential to learning. In this sense, development is "fair, wise, and good, and possessed of all other such excellences" (Plato 1972: 70). I am not learned in philosophy, but I can guess that somehow along the history of Western thinking, the study of the conditions for a *correct* thinking took primacy over the conditions for a *good* thinking. For instance, this is what Kant's project implied: "I require that the critique of pure practical reason, if it is to be carried through completely, be able at the same time to present the unity of practical with speculative reason in a common principle, since there can, in the end, be only one and the same reason, which must be distinguished merely in its application" (Kant 1997: 391).

And yet some scholars, like Vico (1709/1965), warned us about the risk of founding the theory of mind on the axioms of a theory of rationality, neglecting the fact that rationality is a normative and artificial concept a posteriori. It cannot ground the mind alone, establishing the condition of felicity for formally correct reasoning, but it needs another leg, that is common sense, understood as the knowledge of the conditions of felicity of thinking for real people in a real world.

¹I am not advocating here a monist position, so that imagination is the main higher function, but I will try to show that revitalizing and renovating the study of this topic can tell us more also on the other functions and their relationships.

²All the pictures in this chapter are licensed under Creative Commons for fair use and retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org> April 19, 2015.



Kowloon Walled City in Hongkong, 1989



Liberal Army's "red children" in Panama, 1989



Pollution, Ribeira, Galicia, 2005

Fig. 9.1 Self-destructive goal-setting

In the effort of liberating us from the metaphysical teleology, we have build a science of mind which is focused on the formal teleology, in both cases putting in the background the human teleology, which is a goal-oriented movement toward future that swallows its horizon as soon as it is reached (Tateo 2014).

The Orthodontics of Mind

Psychology, as galaxy of sub-disciplines, is marked by this original sin, developing as a normative science of control and fixing (Foucault 1988; Valsiner 2012). It describes at the same time the conditions for a “correct” functioning of mental life and the conditions for deviations. Along its history, it required the building of a complex apparatus of concepts in the form of biases, bounds, deficiencies, heuristics, and stereotypes to account for the simple fact that we do not comply with the normative view of correct thinking.

On the other hand, after almost 150 years of new psychology, we are still facing the fact, seriously jeopardizing the concepts of development and rationality, that the

world is full of war, violence, inequalities, pollution, and means of destruction, both for us and the other living being as never before. This questions the basic assumptions of psychology as far as they are formulated in terms of *orthodontics of mind*. It has been easy to explain that racism, addiction, violence, etc., are due to several individual, social, or biological factors that make us potential deviants and perpetrators (Shelton et al. 2015). More difficult is to explain, instead, how it is possible that, for instance, the same risk factors do not lead to deviant behaviors all the time, or yet because the same knowledge about processes like learning, can be oriented toward a harmonic development of the child or toward the education of child-soldiers (Boyden 2003). Before the manifestations of human destructivity, psychology is still helpless, in particular about the question whether we can still properly talk about developmental processes (Fig. 9.2).

And yet the point has been raised several times by different scholars advocating for a genetic approach to human phenomena. Starting from Vico's idea that development is not linear nor cumulative (Vico 1744/1948), to Baldwin's one that development is qualitatively different at each stage of complexity (Valsiner 2009), to Vygotsky's conception that content and operations are strictly interdependent in development (Van der Veer and Valsiner 1991). All these ideas lead us to think that, first of all, we cannot talk about "development" as a single process, but rather about "developments" or "developing" as a configuration of different situated events in the life course. Thus, the problem becomes not how to set the conditions for a correct development of the person according to a normative concept that cannot be constructed a priori (Valsiner 2009), but rather how the person is able to integrate a posteriori the manifold, opposing and ambiguous experiences for a social individuality to emerge at higher qualitative levels of complexity (Valsiner 2009). In the case of child-soldiers, for instance, it is fairly evident how developing takes place in very different moments and contexts, without any linearity if not the huge effort of the person to make sense of her life course, before, during and after the abduction (Boyden 2003), of the different forms of pedagogy (Murray 2011) they have been involved in the transitions from ordinary childhood to the abduction and training to kill, or to be finally brought back into the community where often reintegration becomes impossible in the family itself.

Fig. 9.2 The pedagogy of violence for child-soldiers training in Daesh's army, 2015



From these examples, we can argue that what we usually call human development is neither necessarily cumulative nor ameliorative. Developmental processes are value-laden: Their valence can be established only a posteriori with respect to the capability of the person to construct a meaningful negotiation between the different developments experienced in life course and the prospective horizon of existence. Such an horizon, as imaginative product (Tateo 2014), is not limited to the ineluctability of life end, but its edge can be constantly pushed beyond to the transcendental (Simmel 1918/2010).

Take for instance two very famous individuals, like the jazz piano player Michael Petrucciani and the bodybuilder and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger (Fig. 9.3).

How would you define the developmental trajectories of these two individuals? Which one had a more normal development? From these example is evident that it is not possible to understand the life trajectory from a single standpoint. Depending on the dimensions one decides to apply (ontogenetic, medical, existential, artistic, aesthetic, etc.), the different aspects of developmental trajectories will assume different meanings. This happens because the notion of development is value-laden in itself, while the idea of developmental processes as reconfiguration and renegotiation of manifold and often opposing experiences makes it a form of *exaptation* (Gould and Vrba 1982), that is the emerging complex wholes that are not fulfilling normative paths but rather building and overcoming constraints and horizons. In particular, if we look at human developmental processes of higher mental functions only in terms of fulfilling maturational stages, unfolding of personal potential, or adaptation to societal requirements, we miss the generative aspect of development, because we apply to his concept a normative and teleological aspect that is based on the meta-narrative of development and progress.

What I have tried to argue so far is that normativity, rationality, and causality cannot be epistemological watersheds in the understanding of psychological life. And yet, as I will show in the case of imagination in the next section, those principles are still guiding and constraining our understanding of higher mental



Fig. 9.3 Two forms of value-laden development: the piano player Michael Petrucciani and the actor Arnold Schwarzenegger

functions, to the extent that they define the negative side of psyche. I will show how the normative opposition between imagination and rationality has limited our understanding of this fundamental faculty and how it is possible to overcome it.

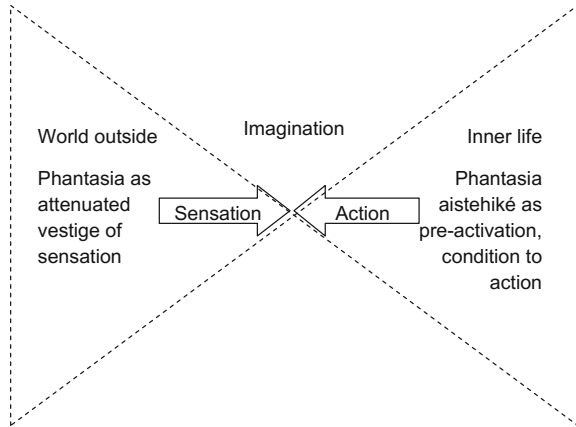
Imagination: Short History of a Concept

Imagination is “a category of mental activity whose definition and interpretation has varied very greatly from age to age and from author to author” (Cocking 2005: xiii). Imaginative processes permeate every aspect of human life. Like memory, they are constitutive part of the sense of self: is part of what we are both individually and collectively. In general, it is understood as “the image-making capacity of human beings” (Cocking 2005: xiii) that “manifests itself in a whole range of human experiences: in our ability to picture things which are absent, for instance, in dreams, fantasies and illusions, in artistic creativity and invention, in the ordinary person’s power to envisage the possibility of a better world or to imagine other lives, as much as in the mystic’s vision of a higher reality beyond the world of the senses” (Cocking 2005: xiii). This conception originates from Aristotle’s theory of mind based on main two principles that originated and guided all the following ideas on imagination: a) Whatever is in intellect was originally in sense, and b) there is no thinking without images. For Aristotle, imagination, or *phantasia*, is a motion that goes from the senses to the creation of a mental images, which constitute the object of thinking. Thus, we cannot think of something without first creating a mental image of it, that is attenuated, blurred, and imperfect, a diminished sensory experience, that becomes more defined and memorized through repetition (Schofield 1992). Imagination as also an opposite form that goes from the inner mental work to the external reality, a form of preparation to action in which the organism has an alteration of its normal state, experiencing an appetite for something. It is a kind of warming up, called *phantasia aisteiké*, that the organism goes through before being ready for action. Thus, Aristotle understands imagination as a lower mental faculty *in between* reality outside and inner mental life (Fig. 9.4).

The duality established by Aristotle will orientate the following ideas about imagination (Cocking 2005): Imagination is a phantasmal representation of real objects or a condition of internal exaltation or arousal, even down to the derangement of mental life like in the states of mental alteration, mystical ecstasy, or delirium.

The Aristotelian idea was developed in Islamic culture by Avicenna and Averroes, who stressed potential power of imagination, that is influenced by the forces of the world and can strongly operate on the body in return, and it can explain several forms, from mundane to magic phenomena. Imagination is constituted by both a formative faculty and an active faculty. The former receives influences from the outside (e.g., folk tales, astral influences, or divine action) and produces psychic images, the latter generates forms of communication that can influence other people (Black 2000). Besides, Avicenna connects imagination with

Fig. 9.4 Imagination in between



a faculty called “estimative,” able to grasp the extra-sensible properties, or intentions, that an object of sensation presents to an animal or a person. These intentions affect the perceiver (e.g., the fear that a sheep senses in perceiving a wolf, or the positive feelings sensed in perceiving a friend or a child). The combination of formative imagination and estimation creates the material that will be retained in memory. These inner senses constitute common sense knowledge, which is sufficient for the child and the unlearned people in most part of everyday activities, but is not sufficient to attain true knowledge. Commonsense knowledge is guided by the power of imagination to generate intense collective feelings. Laymen are not able to go beyond common sense and attain true knowledge because in them intellect and rationality is weak. The crowd thinks in terms of images and the feelings attached to them; thus, imagination has a great political power (Black 2000; Cocking 2005), as in the case of rituals, imagines and myths that can generate strong passions in the lay, uneducated crowd.

When this conception passes into late Latin and Medieval tradition, the major features of the idea of imagination has been already defined. It is a lower mental function which is typical of earlier stages of development (children and laymen), in between sensation and intellect, bounded to passions and appetites, and then opposed to rationality.

One fundamental feature of imagination was already added by Augustine, who used to overlap the Greek word *phantasia* and the Latin word *imaginatio*, establishing a usage that became vernacular (Cocking 1984). According to Augustine, there are three different degrees of seeing: “bodily seeing, which is sensation together with consciousness of sensation, the mental representation or ‘spiritual seeing’; ‘spiritual seeing’ on its own, without sensation, which includes what we now call imagining and dreaming; and ‘intellectual seeing’ or understanding” (Cocking 2005: 43). Imagination is placed at a lower level than understanding, and abstract knowledge is repeatedly distinguished from mental images that have no guarantee to be true. What the mind presents to itself in the form of images is also

ethically suspect of evil, as well as the capability to stir up passions in the people through imagination, which is almost compared to sorcery (Cocking 2005). All in all, how can we discriminate between true and false, ill or good images? Any religion's Holy Scriptures abound in false images that the Devil uses to tempt dozens of prophets and of saints in the desert. Only two possible solutions: you can discriminate by faith or by rationality, but which one is the most reliable?

The Partial Rehabilitation of Imagination

Only in the Renaissance, imagination is partly rehabilitated as part of the general rediscovery of the creativity of men and the work of the art (Gigliani 2013). Humanists like Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) outlined “the notion of imagination as the artist's creative faculty” (Cocking 2005: 105). Invention and technical and artistic capabilities are indeed distinctive human faculties that can be used for practical purposes (e.g., in the case of Ancient Romans that were able to achieve an extraordinary mastery over nature), or can be used for mere pleasure or play like in art. Ficino establishes the relationship between creativity and imagination: “creativity in general is ingenium, just as poetic inventiveness was ingegno, and more specifically *alto ingegno*, for Dante” (Cocking 2005: 105). But still Ficino places fantasia in a middle way between sensation and rationality and maintains the distinction between passive and active nature of imaginative processes: Imagination synthesizes *in absentia* of the real object, fantasy recognizes, and combines different elements into an unitary presentation, and finally, intelligence understands.

Also, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533), in his *De imaginatione* (1501), develops the idea of imagination as fundamental psychological faculty of representation and mediation between senses and intellect (Caplan 1930). Besides, Pico recognizes that the products of imagination can be culturally conditioned. “Renaissance philosophers saw the imagination as a mediator between the body and the soul, the intellect and the senses, the appetites and the will, between the animal and natural functions of the body, motion and rest, past and future, between memories, dreams and prophecies, between nature and culture” (Gigliani 2013: 176).

The empiricist Francis Bacon (1561–1626), in the “Advancement of Learning” (Bacon 1605/2001), presents imagination as a mediator who carries messages from the senses to the mind, where reason interprets them in order to generate understanding. In the opposite direction, imagination also mediates between the decision to act in a certain way and the practical carrying out of the action, making as it were an anticipation of what is to be done, and the image or mental picture is then translated into concrete action on the sensible world (Cocking 2005). But this work of generating “as if” plans of action is limited to the raw material that is already been provided by senses and stored in memory.

For Descartes, the role of imagination is to pre-work the material from senses and present it to cognition as “the precondition of abstraction and any manipulation

of general quantities” (Galison 1984: 321). Imagination produces a synthetic experience, rather than the mere combination of sensations. “Sensation gives us the data of the present, memory gives us the data of the past, but the ability to see relations in and between the data requires the synthesizing power of imagination, which sets the present situation against the background of the past and tries to generate new appearances necessary for grasping what is at issue, and ultimately for solving problems and answering questions of almost any type” (Sepper 2013: 276). When Descartes resolutely turns into the road of the rationalistic foundation of the conditions of knowledge, imagination has assigned no role in abstract thinking and understanding, being on the contrary a potential source of error (Galison 1984). It just retains some practical utility as “every single idea that includes sensory perceptions is imaginary—then we realize that outside of metaphysics, theology, and pure mathematics all our thinking requires imagination” (Lyons 1999: 311), like in visually manipulating, building, and rotating geometric shapes.

In direct opposition to Descartes, Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) provides imagination with a proper epistemological status. He was not interested in a science of universals, like Descartes or Kant, but in a science of how universals are created, developed, and used in the different civilizations. Imagination is a proper, though primitive, form of knowledge based on three fundamental functions of the mind: (a) *fantasy*, the capability to imitate and change; (b) *ingeniousness*, the capability to create correspondence between things; and (c) *memory* that is the capability to remember. “All three appertain to the primary operation of the mind whose regulating art is topics, just as the regulating art of the second operation of the mind is criticism; and as the latter is the art of judging, so the former is the art of inventing. And since naturally the discovery or invention of things comes before criticism of them, it was fitting that the infancy of the world should concern itself with the first operation of the human mind, for the world then had need of all inventions for the necessities and utilities of life, all of which had been provided before the philosophers appeared” (Vico 1744/1948: 236). Imagination is a primordial and legitimate form of knowledge, that follows a specific logic, that Vico calls *po(i)etic*. For the first time in history appears the idea of imagination as a form of affective sense-making that starting from an unspecified feeling (e.g., primitive fear of meteorological phenomena) creates a sign (e.g., Jupiter) that becomes a universal and iconic concept (e.g., divinity) acting as self-regulatory sign for human action. Thus, imagination is a specific mode of thought, historically situated and with its own rules, which is not simply opposed to rationality, but represents the ground on which rationality itself could develop along the history of civilization. If we forget this generative relationship between imaginative and rational modes of thought, Vico warns us, we fail to understand human nature and we get caught in the fallacy of normativity of rational progress. History teach us instead that at any time the primacy of rationality can also lead us to negative outcomes, to the barbarism of reflection, in which we become able to turn the very same means of our development in the means of our destruction.

The idea of imagination as form of knowledge will be resumed by Romanticism, especially by Goethe (1749–1832), who again equates fantasy and imagination.

While Vico's theory applies to human phenomena as a specific domain of knowledge, not entering the realm of natural sciences, to which he acknowledges a different epistemological status, Goethe tried to develop a general theory of knowledge starting from the unilateral point of view of the knower: instead of the cogito, he said: *imagino ergo sum*. Goethe position is universalistic and ethnocentric, to the extent that the primacy among the forms of knowledge is occupied by intuitive perception, which is the form of direct experience of the world: as the knower "perceives the world only in himself, and himself only in the world" (Goethe 1820/1998: 38). With Goethe, we can see again the opposition between imagination and rationality but with an inverted polarity. In this case, imagination is the most important form of knowledge *exactly* because it is not rational. Paradoxically, Romanticism, trying to re-appreciate imagination as "all-encompassing", reproduced the opposition with rationality, whose effects we can still see today (Sepper 2013).

Imagination as Simulation

In the course of history, imagination's ranking among mental function has been slowly moving up. From Aristotle's positioning in the animal soul, just a step-up sensation, imagination became more and more an active function of elaboration of mental images. Nevertheless, its role was still near to that of intuition in opposition to intellect and rationality. Since the second half of nineteenth century, instead, psychology understood imagination in opposition to reality, a fictional process of simulation and elaboration of as-if worlds. It becomes the distinctive feature of childhood, as a form of symbolic play with alternatives to reality. For Baldwin, it was related to imitation and play, as a form of mastering the object through "ideational experimenting with the potential properties of the object" (Valsiner 2009: 61). For Piaget, imagination was related to the basic mechanism of deferred imitation in symbolic play (Piaget 2013). When children reach the pre-operational stage, they develop the capability of mental manipulation by deferred reproduction and imitation of symbols, that is image-like mimetic concepts of the objects (Sarbin and Juhasz 1970).

For Vygotsky, imagination or fantasy was, on the one hand, "the central element of the emotional reaction" (Vygotsky 1971: 210),: "The images of imagination also provide an internal language for our emotion" (Vygotsky 2004: 18). On the other hand, it plays an adaptive function: It creates new images or actions from previous experience to cope with unexpected changes in the environment. It is the "human creative activity that makes the human being a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present" (Vygotsky 2004: 9). Vygotsky also introduces for the first time the topic of the ontogenesis and sociogenesis of imagination. In fact, placing imagination among lower mental functions had so far implied that it was already available as a sort of innate equipment, whose importance was decreasing as rational capability was developing in the individual.

Vygotsky turns this conception upside down, claiming that the development of “the creative activity of the imagination depends directly on the richness and variety of a person’s previous experience because this experience provides the material from which the products of fantasy are constructed. The richer a person’s experience, the richer is the material his imagination has access to. This is why a child has a less rich imagination than an adult, because his experience has not been as rich” (Vygotsky 2004: 14–15). Besides, the function of imagination is that of creating the conditions for and expanding experience, as soon as one “can imagine what he has not seen, can conceptualize something from another person’s narration and description of what he himself has never directly experienced” (Vygotsky 2004: 17). The relationship between imagination, rationality, and reality is thus not opposition rather co-constructive. And yet imagination as higher mental function follows the same general law of sociohistorical–genetic development of other functions like memory. Though it has never been documented that Vygotsky read Vico, it is remarkable to note the several affinities between their conceptions of imagination. They both understand it as a proper higher mental function whose sociogenesis is possible to study with a genetic method. Imagination is a mode of thought with its own rules and does not belong to a early stage of development but is present in life course, establishing specific relationships with other functions (e.g., memory, emotions, problem-solving, generalization, and creativity). Finally, imagination is in both cases a way of constructing intersubjectivity, by providing a way to access the experience of the other. Nevertheless, though this is a very promising theoretical starting point, no significant improvement has been done in psychology so far in the understanding of imagination (Sepper 2013), because the normative view of psychological processes and the opposition between imagination and rationality is still ruling, placing imagination at an earlier stage of the linear view of development. In the following section, I will try to provide a proposal for future research directions on imagination that could help us to look at higher mental functions at large from a different point of view.

Imagination as Higher Mental Function

The misunderstandings about imagination historically originated, as I argued above, in its exclusion from the studies on thinking. If imagination was just a pre-rational faculty, devoted to provide pre-worked contents from sensation to intellect, thus it was not properly understood as a mode of thought, but as a mode of weaker (re) presentation. To understand imagination, we have then to turn exactly to some studies about thinking that have provided evidence for the role of imagination as higher mental function right while neglecting it. The starting point is an obliterated concept in psychology: Imagination is not just about images. In Greek and Latin philosophy, the content of thought is the *figura* that can be iconic, linguistic, acoustic, etc. For instance, Quintilian, in his *Institutio Oratoria*, defines *figurae* as both any form in which a thought is expressed and a configuration of elements, a

scheme or script, like in the common use of rhetoric figures (Butler 1921). This idea has two implications: (a) that the form of thought always carries linguistic, echoic, and iconic meaning and (b) thoughts cannot present singularly but only in configurations. Aesthetics is aware of it, but psychology often seems to forget it, when reduces imagination to mental manipulation of images. For instance, Baroque art was treating visual representations with the same rules of rhetorical art of speech, as well as all contemporary branding and advertisement is based on this simple principle (Fig. 9.5).

In the case of Ruben's painting that will later inspire the composition of Picasso's *Guernica*, the representation of the Thirty Years' War as a devastating event for European civilization is understandable only if we read it as a rhetoric figure linking the different elements into a discourse. In the case of the Coca Cola bottle, instead, the recognizability of the brand is possible only because the lettering is also iconic.

Interestingly, looking for evidence in support the existence of imageless thought, the Würzburg school of Külpe and Bühler developed the amazing method of introspection that clearly contradicted the Cartesian claim of pure and distinct ideas, which can present themselves to rationality without any iconic content or relationship with other ideas. In fact, in introspective method, the subjects (fellow psychologists) were instructed to immediately answer "yes" if they understood or "no" in case of lack of understanding after being presented a complex sentence. Thereafter, the subjects were asked to report the experience that preceded their response (Bühler 1951). Reading the introspective reports, indeed, it is fairly evident how the metacognitive process is actually an imaginative activity, as far as we understand imagination as more than thinking through images. The reconstruction of process of understanding included several imaginative features like: (a) "the presence of more general thought" (Bühler 1951: 50); (b) synesthetic and metaphoric mode of thought: "the new light, the special color, often reported by subjects



The Consequences of War, Rubens, 1637-38,
Galleria Palatina, Florence



"Black and white Coke Zero"
by Daniel Case, 2007

Fig. 9.5 Linguistic and iconic always go together

as distinguishing the comprehended sentence from the uncomprehended one” (Bühler 1951: 50); (c) metonymical process in establishing relationships between thoughts: “they are different pictures expressing the same thing” (Bühler 1951: 50); and (d) a process of topological “fitting in” (Bühler 1951: 54) that defines the meaning in relationship with the subject’s previous thoughts.

This resonates with Sepper’s definition of imagination as

“a (psychologically) evocative, anticipatory, abstractional-concretional activity that follows upon actual perception. It allows the imaginer to 1) dynamically (re)position herself and incipiently explore, place, vary, connect, and re-present appearances originating within a field of concerns, 2) attend and mark the field’s potentials, and 3) exploit those potentials by projecting them to other fields (possibly new) in abstracted/concreted appearances” (Sepper 2013: 19).

Looking for imageless thought, Bühler shows how imagination is at work in both cognitive and metacognitive processes as the mental function that can synthetically elaborate the iconic and linguistic meaning, including affective and ethical relationships to the objects. Besides, imagination is not a detachment from the immediate input of the senses, but also a form of abstraction, by distinction, analogy and replacement, and categorization at one time. In this sense, we could say that there is no opposition between rationality and imagination, but rather that imagination is playing a meaningful role in rationality.

Conclusions

I have tried to use the example of imagination to show how as long as we follow the traditional hierarchy of psychological functions, with abstract rationality on top, we fail to understand psychological life as it develops in its manifold manifestations. Every hierarchy, no matter if temporal, causal, or functional, is indeed implicitly normative. In the case of development, by equating phylogenetic, ontogenetic, and noogenetic (Boulding 1978) hierarchy of progress, we have ended up to neglect the role of imagination as higher mental function despite evidence.

In our future-oriented experiencing, we create, recreate, and swallow horizons, both our own and those of our fellow humans (Tateo 2014). Imagination is the higher mental function that elaborates and manipulates these horizons in the form universal and abstract representations of life starting from very situated individual actions. Such institutionalized representations of the world become traditions, or life-forms: the frameworks distanced from the individual, immediate experience within which the meaning of the experiences itself acquires sense in return. Through the semiotic substitution between the concrete and abstract, we create those non-existing objects that are the inhabitants of mental life. Through this process, we create distinctions and connections in the form of borders: a type of horizon which both regulate and orientate action at both collective and individual level (Marsico et al. 2013).

Imagination also implies different points of view or positions of the observer in experiencing. Think of yourself voting at the last elections (for those who still vote). You can see yourself putting a piece of paper into the ballot urn. It is not just a picture-like form of imagination, but involves memory, action, and emotion. Now think about you looking at someone else performing that action. Finally, think about someone else looking at you while you vote. The imaginative process allows the possibility of changing the perspective of the person imagining: Imagination is also imagining someone else's imagination. This is the form of access to intersubjectivity that Vico and Vygotsky had in mind. After all, what is the Theory of Mind if not a theory of imagination as form of access to intersubjectivity (Carruthers and Smith 1996; Wellman 1990)?

The voting example supports the idea that imagination is a complex semiotic dialogue between fantasy, in the classical sense, memory, perspective taking, perception, intersubjectivity, and categorization, through which we recontextualize the course of action, whether potential, inhibited or performed. Recontextualizing implies the possibility of simultaneously experiencing and transcending experience (Sepper 2013; Simmel 1918/2010),³ and this movement of transcendence is also a movement of reification and generalization at the same time. "Aspects of that 'external' world generated on the basis of firmly shared ecological-cultural background conditions tend to become objectified and acquire the status of social realities" (Rommetveit 1992: 22). Santa Claus, the invisible hand of the market, the Prince Charming, Paradise and Hell, Progress, etc., are all specimen of entities that humans firmly believe, without further ascertaining being required. Therefore, we produce and reproduce signs as actions upon the world in order to make sense, through identity and distinctions, and manage uncertainty outside an inside us. From fairy tales to religious iconography or political propaganda, imagination has been used to promote specific valued behaviors or inhibit despicable ones, as well as dealing with otherness by promoting the collective identity and differentiation processes. Objects are never things in themselves (Valsiner 2009), but through imaginative elaboration they become semiotic non-existing objects in future-oriented sense-making.

Imagination is neither bringing us in fictional world where we can find relief to the disquieting spectacle of the world, nor a sandbox in which we can play with alternative futures. It is one of the higher mental functions that makes the world how we experience it and how we are striving to experience it. The imaginative process plays a self-regulative function toward the ambivalent nature of experience and uncertainty of change during development, through semiotic elaboration of meaning in both linguistic and iconic form. Through imagination, we build the world acting as if it was an abstraction and build abstractions acting as they were

³Here, I claim that imagination is not experiencing in a fictional way opposed to real experiencing but as a specific way of experiencing through the creation and elaboration of signs in a process of affective semiosis.

real things, constructing meaning in a dialogue between fantasy, memory, reflection, and affection.

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Chapter 10

Variety of Love: Multiverses in a Localism Aesthetic

Luis Tapia-Villanueva and María Elisa Molina

*As of last night I've touched you and I've felt you
unless my hand from my hand flew
unless my body flew, or what I knew:
in a manner almost new,
I've felt you.*

*You ran through my wooden house,
You opened its windows
And I felt you shake the entire night.
Daughter of the abyss silent in your
Spite so terrible so slight
That as much as everything might
Be for me it's not
without your light.*

Gonzalo Rojas
Beautiful darkness (fragment)

According to Lévinas (1987), the presence of another's body or eyes makes us human. He stated, "the meaning is the face of the other and any appeal of the word is placed inside the original face-to-face of the language" (p. 220) and "(...) humanity is in the eyes that are looking at me" (p. 222). In the embodiment of face-to-face encounters, humanity is legitimated and the violence of abstraction is avoided. Love comes as an emergent property of human encounters, as one can only be challenged by the gaze of another with a physical presence, not through the metaphor of images on virtual networks.

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The Meanings of Love

Love is a feeling of strong or constant affection for a person, and an attraction that includes sexual desire in the context of a romantic relationship (Merriam-Webster 2015). A plurality of Greek words expresses the concept of love. *Agape* (ἀγάπη agápē) generally refers to a pure ideal type of love, rather than one involving physical attraction. *Eros* (ἔρως érōs, after the Greek deity) is passionate love involving sensual desire. *Philia* (φιλία philía) refers to dispassionate virtuous love that includes loyalty to friends, family, and community. *Storge* (στοργή storgē) is a natural affection, like that felt by parents for their children. *Xenia* (ξενία xenía) means hospitality, a particular and ritualized friendship formed between a host and his/her guest. The importance of these different faces of love can be seen throughout Greek mythology, particularly in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Lewis 1960).

In 84 BC, the roman poet Gaius Valerius Catullus (Catulo) wrote:

*Odi et amo. quare id faciam fortasse requiris
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior*

I hate and love. And why, perhaps you'll ask.

I don't know: but I feel, and I'm tormented (Kline 2001, p. 85).

The poem describes love as ambiguous and ambivalent. Latin contains several verbs that express various aspects of "love." *Amare* refers to love in a romantic and sensual sense, with the *amator* defined as a professional lover and *amica* as a girlfriend. *Amare* and *placere* can be used to express "like" (Lewis 2010).

The meanings of this diversity of love-related concepts and their use in the organization of interactions are confusing and diffuse. This fuzziness allows for variability in social contracts, family interplay, and even the intimate lives of particular dyads, associated with cultural influences. A tension of meanings that points at two contradictory experiences, i.e., care and desire, is frequently involved in romantic passionate love.

Care and Desire

Caring leads to generous behavior and entails an asymmetrical relationship between the one who cares and the other who receives. In this hierarchy, the person who cares holds the higher position. The action of caring does not require an affectionate relationship. On the other hand, desire is a more selfish experience, with more self-centered feelings within a symmetrical relationship. As with care, one can experience desire for a person with whom one has no affectionate bond.

The original and primordial fire of sexuality raises the red flame of eroticism, and this in turn supports and raises another flame, blue and trembling: that of love. Eroticism and love: the double flame of life. Eroticism changes sex drive and transforms it into a representation. Love, for its part, is also ceremony and representation, but it is something more: a purification, which transforms the subject and the object of erotic encounter into unique people.

Love is the ultimate metaphor for sexuality. Its foundation stone is freedom: the mystery of the person. There is no love without eroticism, as there is no eroticism without sexuality (Paz 1997, p. 103, translated by the authors, December, 2014).

The title of the essay from which this quotation is taken, “The double flame,” illustrates the tensions of passionate love. The author speaks of love and eroticism, and of lovers dealing with the tension between care and desire. A quite difficult situation for a couple is when a partner tells the other, “I appreciate you, but I do not love you.” This revelation from one’s partner is almost always unexpected. It is usually experienced as an offense, considering mutuality and reciprocity as the main forms of relation in the experience of love. Loving means that we are also concerned for the one we love, we want to take care of him/her. His/her suffering yields compassion, but this is an asymmetrical affection. Who wants compassion from a lover? We want to be cared for and to care, but we also need to admire and be admired, to mirror ourselves in the other, to legitimate each other.

Contemporary Passionate Love

For a long historical period until the early twentieth century, social contracts regarding mating engagement predominated over the individual desires of partners. The core of society was the family as a social unit and source of parenting. This scenario visibly defined the roles of the partners to themselves, others, and society. Currently, people perceive more freedom and appreciate less-rigid social requirements for the organization of individual lives. Thus, the definition of one’s identity has become a personal and individual task. The current society of freedom, known as the information society, involves many communication scenarios, implying that interpersonal contacts occur with low levels of intimacy, rather than deep emotionality, and without compromise. People and their lives are positioned within large public spaces of learning, knowledge, and influence. In the book *The saturated self*, Gergen (1991) referred to the resulting fragmented self as a “pastiche self.” He stated:

The pastiche personality is a social chameleon, constantly borrowing bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available and constructing them as useful or desirable in a given situation (Gergen 1991, p. 150).

This situation presents new and coexisting cultural complexities. People face demands to develop sense and meaning from an individual perspective in a world crowded by the masses and by what is made public. Paradoxically, the passionate relationship becomes an emergent human relational dimension in this context. It has evolved along with a qualitatively different task, which entails the development of emotional intimacy and reciprocal care. Fulfillment of these aims is sought in a relationship with a deep bond that represents a relevant source for identity and self-sense development (Tapia et al. 2009). This deep bond is developed through a history of reciprocity and mutuality. It entails an interaction of giving and taking

and a common world of shared experiences and views. A history of confidence is constructed in which one partner wants the best for the other but not any other, only a unique other. This recursive integration from reciprocity to unicity permits the emergence of passionate love. When passion appears, the bond is reinforced and the aim of being one with the lover becomes a vital and deep longing.

Passionate Love and Fraternal Love

A consequence of the development of science and technology is the separation of reproduction and desire into different trajectories of experience and meaning. This process impacts the dynamics of romantic relationships, modifying the role and meaning of sexuality. Today, people wish to get married or live together—or any of the above—to experience desire in a loving relationship.

New ways of amorous relations that are more focused on passion and fellowship have emerged from the coexistence of motives such as care and desire. Passionate love entails intense emotions of joining with the other amidst feelings of fullness and ecstasy. It also involves periods of emptiness, despair, and anxiety. Lovers are thus usually involved in an intense and conflicting bond that combines pleasure and satisfaction with unwanted, feared, and avoided aspects of the self, the other, and the relationship. Emotions are less intense without passion, and when the relations are characterized by fellowship they encompass feelings of tenderness and affection, providing partners with warmth and the feeling to be strongly connected (Hatfield and Rapson 1996; Kim and Hatfield 2004).

In Western culture, the use of dichotomies is a popular heuristic device; for example, the individualistic vs collectivistic taxonomy. Some authors consider that passionate love is more highly valued in individualistic systems, while collectivist societies characterized by strong family networks tend to view passionate love as a threat to family tradition (Kim and Hatfield 2004; Skolnick 1996). This false dichotomy entails subtle differences and qualitative nuances. In an essay named *Individualism in a collectivist culture. A case of coexistence of opposites*, Sinha and Tripathi (1994) states:

In philosophy and ethics, similar juxtapositions of contradictory elements are to be found where *dharma* (duty) and *moksha* (salvation) coexist with pursuit of wealth (*artha*) and sexual satisfaction (*kama*) as constituents of cardinal virtues. Material wealth and worldly pleasures are considered illusory (*maya*), and spiritual values and otherworldliness are emphasized. At the same time, how much sexual pleasure is cherished can be gauged from the most elaborate treatise of the art of love that the ancient seer has given to posterity, the *Kamasutra* (Sinha and Tripathi 1994, p. 127)

The dichotomies prevent the coexistence of opposites and collapse the ambiguity of passionate love borders between the people in love and the culture. Actually, the route of passionate love is carried by a continual tension between tenderness and desire concerning the individual and the culture.

Equality and Legitimacy in the Post-Industrial Couple

Legitimacy in passionate love means that each member grants to the other his/her uniqueness as a person (Burgoyne and Lewis 1994). The term “legitimate” conjures a legal perspective of what is authentic, genuine, and true. In post-industrial society, fragmentation and invisibility remove partners’ feelings of the relationship’s uniqueness (Sheppard 2009). For example, in the Spike Jonze film *Her* (Ellison and Jonze 2013), set in the near future, Theodore Twombly (played by Joaquin Phoenix) is a lonely man who works at a company that provides customers with handwritten letters to send to loved ones. In this society, people have apparently lost the ability to affectively communicate with one another. Theodore downloads from the internet a new artificially intelligent operating system (OS) featuring the voice of Samantha. In the course of the film, he gradually co-constructs a relationship with Samantha. Their conversations are filled with sensuality and eroticism, although Samantha possesses no body. Love has no body of residence, which creates progressive distancing. The situation comes to a crisis, and Samantha distances herself. Another OS with a male voice appears on the scene. He is a friend of Samantha, and Theodore becomes jealous. The crisis culminates with Samantha’s decision to leave Theodore to travel with other OSs to a world beyond words. In their farewell conversation, Theodore discovers that Samantha has simultaneously loved hundreds of other users. He realizes with consternation that her love did not have the uniqueness of human love; it lacked intimacy and private space. Rather, the intimacy was transparent, in a transparent society where complicity, secrecy, and privacy have been lost.

This fictional work about relationships in virtual worlds refers to the loss of otherness in post-industrial societies. Such a society pushes self-centered subjects to race for performance and complacency, to increasing consumption needs. Relationships become primarily virtual, without bodies, and people who lose sight of others create the illusion of imagined others that resemble themselves. The other becomes someone who does not challenge the self, and love turns into oneself. The mystery, and thus desire, is lost.

The film *Her* presents a magnified reflection on current shared ideas of socio-cultural exchange, i.e., the virtualization of desire, the other as illusion, and intimacy as transparent, where the legitimacy of others is distorted (Han 2013).

Passionate Love as a Co-Construction of Weness

The perspective we take in this article refers to the passion of love, not the passion of casual contact. The love affair is a symmetrical and pair-bound experience. Loving relationships can be relatively unconditional in some contexts, such as between parent and child or siblings. By contrast, passionate love is a conditional bond, in the sense that deep, personal emotional needs are brought into play in that relationship. Perhaps more than any other human bond, passionate love involves the

seeking of unity, desire, and admiration (Tapia and Molina 2012). Love and affection are developed in the space of intersubjectivity. Partners are situated in the same phenomenological space, and the lovers experience the relationship as an encounter that entails shared meanings, mutual acknowledgment, and reciprocity. This meeting is bidirectional, and mutuality regulates the relationship. The intersubjective space is original, irreplicable, and continuously changing (Aron 1996; Szmulewicz 2013). These aspects imply that romantic love is an uncertain venture, open to novelty. The other as foreign challenges the subject and reveals something of the subject's self that was previously unknown. Simultaneously, processes of subjectivity and those destabilizing identity operate. Contact with the other thus requires a flexible self and acceptance of otherness, as well as recognition of the impossibility of total identification with the other. These dynamics of intersubjective process (Bakhtin 1993) in the relationship build essential aspects that most represent each member, implying large dispositions and renouncements. Passionate love involves moving around the edges of the self and the other who are involved in the experiences of fusion, abandonment, and surrender. An expansion of the self occurs. The alliance of love is more than self and other, in the sense that the relationship pushes the development of selves and the co-construction of weness (Aron and Aron 2010).

Passionate Love: Reduction, Generalization, and Localism

In psychology, the phenomenon of passionate love has been conceptualized from different perspectives. From an evolutionary perspective, it has been explained as a mechanism oriented toward permanence in relation to adaptation in caring for especially fragile human neonates (Buss 2003; Fisher 1994). In developmental psychology, the lovers bond has been conceptualized as an update of the first relational patterns of life, with its securitization based on mechanisms regulating emotional closeness and distance (Feeney 1999; Fisher and Crandell 2001). In neuropsychobiology, neurotransmitter systems such as the dopamine system have been explored to identify the "molecule of love." Functional magnetic resonance imaging studies have suggested that dopaminergic neural pathways are created in the early stage (first 7 months) of a love affair and that they are related to reward systems of the caudate nucleus (Aron et al. 2005). Studies of longer (more than 29 months) relationships have documented the actions of neural pathways related to oxytocin and vasopressin systems, which appear to play roles in the construction of a close bond (Bartels and Zeki 2004). From cultural and sociopolitical perspectives, attempts to explain romantic love have addressed phenomena such as the industrial revolution, the constitution of the concepts of marriage and family, and the influence of patriarchal systems in configurations of political and economic power (Beck-Gernsheim and Beck 1995; Guidens 1992).

The phenomenon of love has thus been constructed and deconstructed from different perspectives, but none of them has sufficiently managed to account for the

human experience of passionate love. This dilemma displays an opposition between general and local aesthetics (forms of the process). A general aesthetic uses inferences to develop general classification models, which are usually descriptive. It is used in psychological and psychiatric clinical practice, in which consultants' observed signs and symptoms are compared with others, described in general models. Numerous studies of general and specific populations have been conducted to describe and enumerate the characteristics of passionate love. These lists like descriptions are often vague and diffuse, reflecting the difficulty of using language and abstraction to characterize the phenomenon. A general model is applied to a particular person to determine whether he/she is in love. Local aesthetic models instead make distinctions based on the particular universe of the person, on his/her history, stories, experiences, hopes, and dreams, in a situated space-time. Love can be seen as a consequence of general perspectives and/or of emergent original properties of the co-construction of identity and sense of the loving bond. These views are complementary, not mutually exclusive; they belong to different levels of logic, wherein the local aesthetic is a more complex logic containing the overall aesthetic.

The difficulty of expressing passionate love has led humans to resort to the composition of love poetry since the beginning of history. In 1899, a clay tablet of Sumerian origin (dating to the eighth century BC) was found in the town of Niffar, Iraq (Fig. 10.1). On it was written an Ancient Babylonian poem. According to Sumerian belief, the king had the sacred duty to marry a priestess representing Inanna, the goddess of fertility and sexual love, every year to make the soil and women of the realm fertile. The bibliography states that probably this poem was written by a bride chosen for King Shu-Sin to be sung at the New Year festival; it was likely sung at banquets and festivals, accompanied by music and dance

Fig. 10.1 The oldest love poem. Niffar, Iraq, circa 8th century BC. Istanbul Archaeological Museums



(Istanbul Archeological Museums 2014). The poem references the dilemma of love related to care and desire:

Bridegroom, dear to my heart,
 Goodly is your beauty, honeysweet,
 Lion, dear to my heart,
 Goodly is your beauty, honeysweet.

.....

Bridegroom, let me caress you,
 My precious caress is more savory than honey,
 In the bedchamber, honey-filled,
 Let me enjoy your goodly beauty,
 Lion, let me caress you,
 My precious caress is more savory than honey.

Bridegroom, you have taken your pleasure of me (Istanbul Archeological Museums 2014, p 1).

Much of the work of Gonzalo Rojas, one of the most important Chilean poets, is erotic poetry. His poem “What do you love when you love?” expresses the pressing question of human love (Rojas 1982a, p. 1):

What do you love when you love, my God: the terrible light of life
 or the light of death? What do you seek or find, what
 is this: love? Who is it? woman, with her depth, her roses, volcanoes,
 or this red sun, which is my furious blood
 when I enter into her up to the final roots?

Or is it all a great game, my God, and there is no woman
 nor man but one body only: yours,
 split up in stars of beauty, in fleeting particles
 of visible eternity?

I'm dying in this, oh God, in this war
 of coming and going among women in the streets, of not being able to love
 three hundred of them at a time, because I am always condemned to one,
 to this one, to this only one whom you gave me in the old paradise.

The Multiverses of Love and Ways of Coexistence

The diversity of types of living love in Western society has increased in the new century. Gradually, various pair arrangements in romantic love have appeared and been legitimized with respect to sexual orientation, extradyadic relationships, and the duration and type of commitment (Beaujouan et al. 2009; Calasanti and Kiecolt 2007; De Jong Gierveld 2004; Gotta et al. 2011). Whatever has worked once as a unit (marriage, home, children, sexual identity) has diversified into numerous possibilities and combinations. This evolution has placed emphasis on the loving bond as a local phenomenon, belonging to an aesthetic of localism (Tapia and Molina 2014). Each pair generates an ideography of identity and sense, migrating from uniformity to particularity (Jankoviak 2008).

Particularity and Multiverses

Passionate love has been related in contemporary society with different dimensions of couples' modes of living, such as parenting, the institution of marriage, financial resources, and intimacy. These dimensions belong to a fuzzy logic, and mates participate in all, some, or none of them. Pairs and individuals give different weight to each of these dimensions. Nevertheless, passionate love goes beyond the living together and the social commitment of being a couple.

For some people, parenthood is essential for the construction of the pair's sense. The focus is turned to the care and importance of children, with a high valuation of sacrifice, as a benchmark for metavaluation of the link between partners (Tapia-Villanueva et al. 2014). However, parenthood places a significant emotional burden on parents/mates, which has helped to explain the problems of marital dissatisfaction and divorce risk in periods of parenting of infants and adolescents (Linville et al. 2010).

The institutional framework brings meaning and sense that individuals attach to the loving bond as members of a social community. The union of the members thus makes sense in terms of social legitimacy. The principle of the institution of marriage has diversified greatly in Western culture since the middle of the last century (Beaujouan et al. 2009; De Jong Gierveld 2004; Kiernan 2004; Levine et al. 1995). Full examination of the complexity of its meaning exceeds the scope of this article, but it is important to note that it comprises sacred and secular elements, with implications for the lives of partners and their families regarding group membership—social benefits, dignity, and legitimacy. The deritualization of unions and the transformation of rites have occurred and continue to occur. This process can be seen as a staging, acting, and catalyzing of the hypersigns that hold affective, familiar, and social meanings of the loving bond. Some authors have expressed concern that rituals and the love bond have gradually lost their place in Western culture, particularly in Latin America (Rodriguez 2005). This loss means a reduction of the density of meanings and identity of the union, with disconnection from networks of semiotic tradition. This disconnection overloads the union, spurring the search for identity and meaning of partners' corresponding selves and weness. However, new values have been constructed that regulate the process of loving relationships with a new appreciation of fairness and legitimacy. The aim of sense is achieved through mutual esteem for the dignity of each member's biography, more than the valuation of sacrifice for the family and other conservative ideas (Tapia et al. 2009; Tapia-Villanueva et al. 2014).

Intimacy is an important dimension for passionate love. The word comes from the Latin *intimus*, which means hidden. It refers to the existence of a relational emotional space where the deeper aspects and vulnerabilities of the self can be uncovered. Affection and reliance in the relational environment are needed to generate support and legitimacy, where the lovers can receive and display personal emotions, including anger during conflicts. However, the exposure of hidden aspects is limited to the extent of confidence and trust, being needed the opening to

mystery. The exercise of emotional intimacy is local and occurs in the here and now. Intimacy is co-constructed in time and with time. Two bodies are joined in this endeavor, which allows grasping the present quality of the loving encounter (Le Breton 1990).

A Crucible of Multiverses

Life events such as illness, bereavement, and job affect the way in which relationship dimensions are organized. Changing multiverses take place generating opposite processes, producing tension due to life goals positioned in asymmetrical situations, such as tenderness/desire, commitment/free will, stability/novelty, internal limits/external boundaries, and couple/family.

These tensions enable and drive the semiotic construction of the ways of being in a loving bond and its position in relation to the cultural narratives. Every couple can be a crucible for the interaction of the relationship dimensions described above. Passionate love may emerge or not from aspects related to one or more of the dimensions described. For example, when a woman who was neglected in childhood sees a man behaving as an affectionate and close father, she may experience sensuality if parenting generates feelings of communality and plenitude. A person who interprets his/her childhood as full of suffering and disturbance will probably make a great effort to co-construct life sense around the notion of stability with his/her partner. Yet it may be or may be not passionate love. Accomplishing their goals could enable them to develop allegiance and plenitude, perhaps leading them to desire one another and then to expand the borders of their fears and barriers. Nevertheless, it is emotional intimacy the most important setting for love. It allows the expression of weaknesses and fragility in support and acceptance of conflict conditions. This dynamic validates the legitimacy of each partner's position, making way for emerging desire and eroticism.

In their particular universe, each lover co-constructs (or not) a multiplicity of meanings. Passionate love makes to emerge the experience of plenitude and unicity (Fig. 10.2).

Plenitude, Unicity, and Hypergeneralization in Passionate Love

Love poetry and songs contain numerous references to plenitude and unicity. In the poem "October fullness"—a song to the life in order to heal the pain and the lost—the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda said: (Eisner 2004, pp. 174–175).

So be it, my business
was

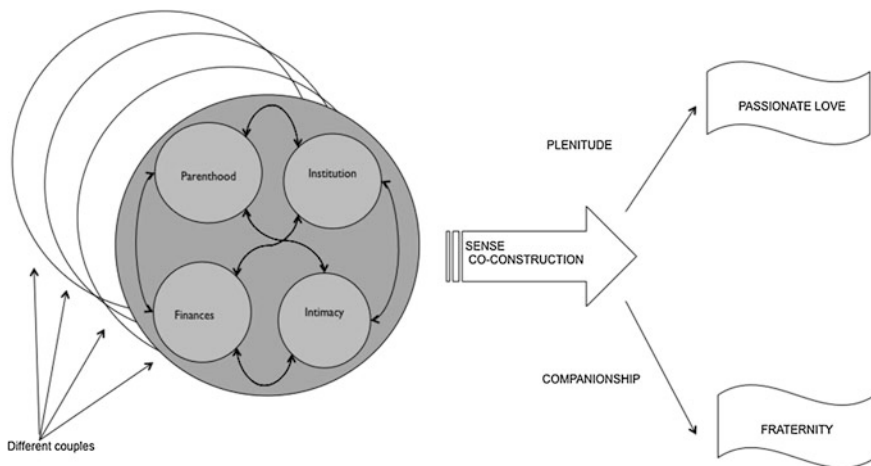


Fig. 10.2 Multiverses and co-construction of the sense of weness

the fullness of the spirit:
 a cry of the pleasure choking you,
 a sigh from an uprooted plant,
 The sum of all action.

It pleased me to grow with the morning,
 to bathe in the sun, in the great joy
 of sun, salt, sea-light and wave,
 and in that unwinding of the foam
 my heart began to move
 growing in that essential spasm,
 and dying away as it seeped into the sand.

Neruda writes of the lover’s need for unicity and fusion of souls and bodies in the poem “The wind on the island” (Neruda and Walsh 2004, p. 28):

With your face on my face,
 with your mouth on my mouth,
 knotting our bodies
 the love that burns us,
 it lets the wind pass
 without being able to take me.

In the second canto of Vicente-Huidobro’s “Altazor,” the poet declaims about the bodily union of love (Huidobro 1931, pp. 3–4):

Nevertheless, I warn you: we are sewn
 to the same star
 We are sewn together—by one same music,
 stretching between us,
 by the same shadow, vast and tormented like a tree.
 Let us become a piece of the sky,
 a segment through which fate mysteriously passes,
 the fate of a planet that bursts into petals of dream.

Plenitude is derived from the Greek *pleroma* (πλήρωμα), the primary unit from which all existing elements arise. It is the *wuji* (無極) of Chinese philosophy, the original state of the undifferentiated universe. Here, we consider plenitude to provide the experience of passionate love as a primordial undifferentiated unit in the context of constant tension between the edge of self and us.

Weness in Time

“Weness” refers to the identity of unity and totality that partners attempt to construct together. Such construction of sense continues throughout the relationship. Partners position themselves existentially from individual perspectives in relation to the other and also as a team, a unit, as peers. From the individual position, the other is seen as foreign, a stranger. The difference that the other brings to the relationship attracts, complements, demands, challenges, questions, and threatens. In the process of meeting of two individualities, a third party emerges: the intersubjectivity of the “us” of the relationship. With weness, the feeling of being peers, partners experience similarity, mutuality, and reciprocity. Similarity refers to the reflection of one’s own traits in the loved one. A partner shows one something that belongs to him/herself, which is attractive as an experience of ownership. The mutual aspect of weness refers to the shared aspects of life with a partner. The development of ideas, tastes, beliefs, and projects provides a measure of resemblance in the couple. Reciprocity refers to the games that partners play. Each assumes different roles and interplays with the other. This interplay progresses through a chain of actions that are signified as being caused by the other and at the same time intended for him or her.

Weness is in constant tension with the partners’ respective selves. This tension creates an edge where the meanings of the selves and the us are co-constructed. It drives transformation and constant re-creation of the identity of the self in encounters with the other and the us. It leads to a process of differentiation, in which the relationship moves from fuzzy to clear—and from clear to fuzzy—meanings of individual selves and the unified lovers. The process moves through balance and imbalance, between being unique, individuated, self-conscious, and abandoned by the partner and being a unit with him/her, losing the notion of each other’s personal boundaries. Diffuse zones of autonomy and dependence are associated with these dynamics.

Weness is constructed in temporality as chronogenesis. The chronogenesis model highlights the progressive and transforming nature of psychological phenomena, focusing on the directionality from an irreversible past toward an open future (Sato and Valsiner 2010; Valsiner 2008). The time of passionate love is unique, historical, and the resulting love is an ongoing transformation. It is encounter, re-encounter, and de-encounter in subjective and existential time. It unfolds through ruptures, transitions, and transitional stabilities, as phenomena of the lovers’ chronogenesis resulting from the strategies they use to face the uncertain

future. In this process, selves and weness pass through time and their trajectories intersect, implying that experience and existence are being co-created in every moment. The loving people live in the here and now, in Bergson’s *durée* (1896/1959) where time is experienced as the subjective perception of a space-time continuum. The irreversible past brings to them the embodied imprint of their families of origin, with the longing and guilt of reconstructed memories. The present is lived with urges for holding, visibility, and legitimacy. The present weness is full of identity and sense if future attractors pull it into an uncertain and hopeful future. The tension of chronogenesis embodies the identity and sense of partners on a continuum of coming toward and moving away from one another. Different ways of perceiving space-time are encountered in chronogenesis (Figs. 10.3 and 10.4).

The notion of temporality broadens the understanding of the dynamics of love encounters to new horizons. The experience of relationship, co-construction of an identity of weness and the common project, is influenced by each actor’s stance in the relationship (Gottman 1999, 2011; Johnson 2004; Schnarch 1991, 2011; Tapia 2007). This perspective refers to the sexual encounter of love as a living experience, not merely as a metaphor for the relationship, but as a quintessential moment of relationship building, of chronogenesis. For example, the amorous encounter as fragile self-experience can be lived through momentary strategies of here-now abandonment, turning to temporary displacements of imagination of the past or to feared or desired expectations of the future. These withdrawal actions may even block or hinder the space-time that enables the encounter. The evitative and

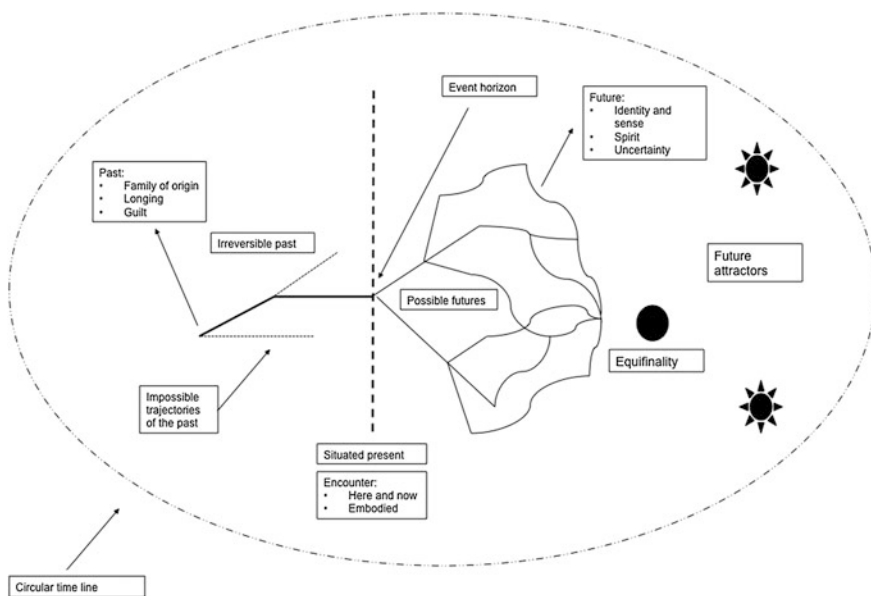


Fig. 10.3 Chronogenesis of passionate love. Self-chronogenesis. Adapted from Valsiner (2008)

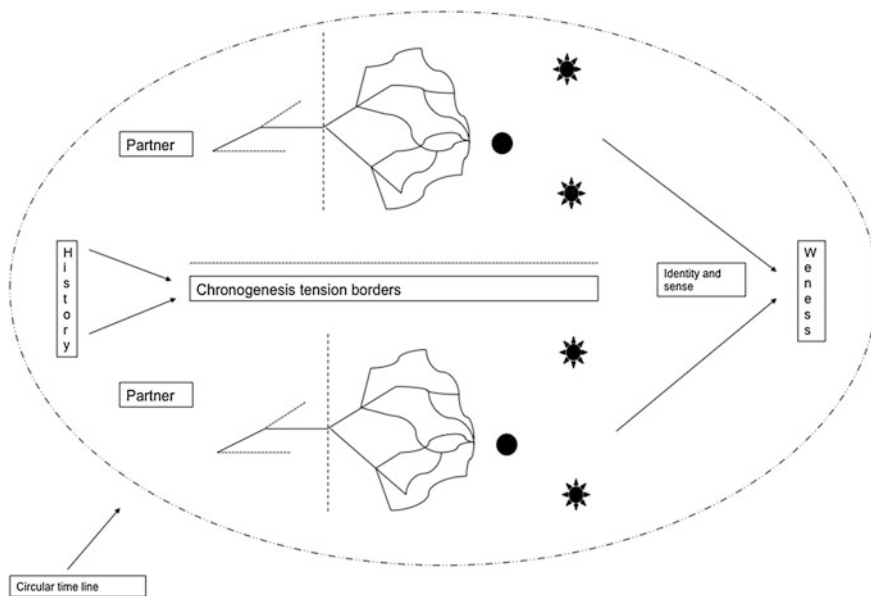


Fig. 10.4 Chronogenesis of passionate love. Weness chronogenesis. Adapted from Valsiner (2008)

breaking strategies activate mechanisms of detachment from a part of the experience—emotional, bodily, or meaning-related—which makes connection difficult.

Temporality and Boundaries in the Love Encounter

The temporality of human experience addresses the essential question about existence; the essence of being alive, of being still and its contrast, of what has ceased to be or is still not. The quality of becoming and transformation is the scenario in which the love process is displayed and passionate love can be developed. This process of being is positioned at the border of creation and the unknown; in it, the dynamic of experiencing edges and borders lies.

In temporary borders of identity, ambivalence, tension, conflict, and passionate love arise. The quality and centrality of the notion of borders for the understanding of love relationships come from the effects of separating while unifying, and contacting while dividing (Marsico et al. 2013), even as opposites (Valsiner 2007). The regulation of closeness and distance has been found to be a crucial dynamic in the co-construction of passionate love (Gottman 1999, 2011; Johnson 2004; Schnarch 1991, 2011; Tapia 2007), and conceptualization of this process as a dynamic of lovers' experience of borders is useful.

Partners express their differences and disagreements in different ways, but they are not fully aware of the space in between that allows for crossing and encounter

(Marsico et al. 2013). This situation probably points to the cultural valuation of consistency. However, consistency is constantly challenged and defied in the love relationship. Each time partners relate, they enter a zone between connection and disconnection, struggling with the boundaries of the other. This situated and embodied experience pushes them toward the management, sheltering, and progress of the relationship.

Encounters with the other in the relationship, and that other which is the course toward the future, occur in diffuse zones characterized by tension and ambivalence. These dynamics enable and push the loving attempt to develop connection approaches in the search for incitement and development (Molina and Tapia 2012).

Patrick Modiano's novel *Dans le café de la jeunesse perdue* (2007) refers to a type of border phenomenon as "neutral zones":

...midway zones, lands of nobody where one was on the edge of everything, in transit or even suspended. You could enjoy a certain impunity. I might have to call these free zones, but neutral zones is more accurate.... Who could come get me here? The few people with whom I spend time must have been dead for the public status. One day I was looking at the newspaper and got to the notice "Declaration of absence".... Passage sites where anyone was asked to identify himself and hiding was possible (Modiano 2007, pp. 97–98, translated by the authors, December 2014).

As Modiano wrote, considering the love experience as entering a zone in between could be a very new possibility in life. It requests aperture and plasticity and enables people to be in passage, staying outside any other experience, even of time.

The border zone is an experience of madness to some extent. This space is in between being another and myself and also merging with him or her. It is an experience that defies sanity. The kiss is the desire to merge with the beloved and the painful awareness of its impossibility. Experiencing passionate of love leads lovers to break the boundaries of sanity in the search of the sublime. In fragments of loving discourse, Roland Barthes, quoting Goethe (*The Sorrows of Young Werther*), says. "Since 100 years it is considered that the madness is this: 'I is another' Insanity is an experience of depersonalization. For me, amorous subject, it is quite the opposite: it is because of becoming a subject, of not being able to remove me to be that a single subject that I come crazy. I am not another, is what I check with dread" (Barthes 1977, p. 169 Traduced by the authors).

The eternal dance of this madness is the anguish of not solving the existential loneliness and being debated on the edge of closeness and distance. This anguish demands regulatory efforts but not its annulment because it also makes the vitality of passion to arise.

In the effort to manage the emotional experience, people resort to actions and strategies to prevent negative feelings and the escalation of relational conflict (Gross and Thompson 2006). This regulation has been promoted in Western socialization as a tension regulation tool that enables reflective and judicious behavior within social coexistence. Its function is oriented toward the goals of social predictability and reliability.

The regulation process is thus an answer to the uncomfortable feelings of tension and asymmetry, with directionality toward some goal in the near future. If we

consider this mechanism taking a simple view, it could lead to limit the amorous experience. Nevertheless, it can bring human experience beyond homeostasis. As an answer, it is autopoietic, in the sense that it induces action over the borders of previous experiences. Autopoiesis, in Varela's (1996, p. 407) words, is related to "the interpretive capacity of living being and conceives of human as an agent which doesn't discover the world but rather constitutes it." "Autopoiesis" is etymologically derived from the term "poiesis," which means creation and production. "Poeisis," from which the word "poetry" is also derived, is related to the notion of aesthetics, understood as the experience of becoming. Such conceptualizations of aesthetics of art are not associated with beauty, but with the meaning of being in life (Heidegger 1962).

Tension and its regulation go beyond its boundaries, driving toward the questions of the senses of self and of the couple's life. Louke, the main character in Modianos's (2007) novel, answered the questioning of herself and her relationship with "this is not the true life." In this statement, the true or real is applied to the sense of life and expressed in a generalized way. Generalization opens the mind to broader possibilities, referring to some image or representation of a life that has not yet been experienced, which acts as a future attractor generating the possibilities and challenges of the present. The borders of lived and not-lived moments, in or out of time, are opened, expanding the horizons of life. A question about the temporality of one's experience of self and weness is a question about existence, and individuals hesitate to keep the question of life and death.

Consequently, partners must resort to certain illusions, generalized meanings, and powerful socially co-constructed goals that give stability to the relationship; hence, they sometimes opt to and other times opt not to challenge the bond. The Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez (1978) sang:

Cowardice is something that has to do
 With men, not with lovers
 Coward love will become neither love
 Nor a story, it gets stuck there
 Not even memories can save it
 Not even the best orator can bring it together.

The regulation of tension in romantic relationships leads to its own transformation. This transience brings forth instability and calls for the bond to not be taken for granted. Thus, the relationship is not static or assured.

Passionate Love and Semiotic Generalization

The loving state is an inverbalizable experience; human language can be used to build only fragmented stories about it. The experience of loving is similar to a holistic aesthetic experience. In 1903, the German philosopher Theodor Lipps formulated in his book *The basics of aesthetics* (1924) the concept of *Einfühlung*, a process of affinity between subject and object wherein the self is first recognized

and a connection is then created with the object. This process allows the subject to find self-knowledge that had been hitherto ignored. Feelings are reflected in objective forms as expressions of pleasure or pain. The artist's experience and his creative projection are the essence of a work that goes beyond what has been depicted. Moreover, the creative action generates communion with the addressee—the viewer, reader, audience, or listener—who inherently changes the view of the artwork, in its own sense (Lipps 1924). For Jaan Valsiner (2013), the notion of *Einführung* addresses the experience of feeling into the world, an encountering that turns into feelings for oneself. Love is like the absorption with beauty that entails an objectified self-enjoyment. The deep meaning of lovers looked in each other's eyes, caressing and embracing, kissing and tuning their heartbeat, breath rhythm, and body movements. In public or private, this all functions are arena for *Einführung*. The need for bodily contact entails a deep feeling of weness.

Love is a metalevel, extraordinary experience. Some ordinary relationships become extraordinary (like beauty), producing an aesthetic experience (Valsiner 2013). This process is pleromatization, a movement from ordinary, concrete specificity toward metalevel holistic generalization, which is actually hypergeneralization. Valsiner (2012, p. 22) defined generalization as “a process of abstraction from the concrete here-and-now experience, sensori-motor-semiotic process of the person toward abstraction that conditionally frees the experience from the confines of the given context and temporal duration.”

To achieve this abstraction, one must move beyond the immediate experience through a metalevel scaling of similar specific qualities. This kind of abstraction, which involves qualitative escalation to cover the whole experience, is termed “hypergeneralization” (Valsiner 2012). Hypergeneralization takes place in passionate love, as in other human experiences, such as aesthetic appraisal (catharsis while viewing a theatrical performance, deep reading of a poem). These undifferentiated experiences are imbued with full sense through ambiguous but powerful symbols—catalyzing signs—in the semiotic process and chronogenesis (Fig. 10.5). The passionate love that emerges from chronogenesis is a deeply embodied phenomenon.

Embodied Passionate Love

The human body and mind form an interconnected unit. The body shapes human cognition in the same way that the body is shaped by the mind. In passionate love, the body is a main player beyond the boundaries of sexuality.

Consider, for example, human skin. As skin has a common embryonic origin with the central nervous system, it contains numerous receptors (of temperature, pressure, pain, touch) that allow interaction with the environment. At the same time, skin is a “wrapping” necessary for the regulation of salt and water metabolism and temperature. In the meeting of lovers, skin is a border. It acts as a barrier and delimitation of bodily identity while also serving as the site of intermingling with

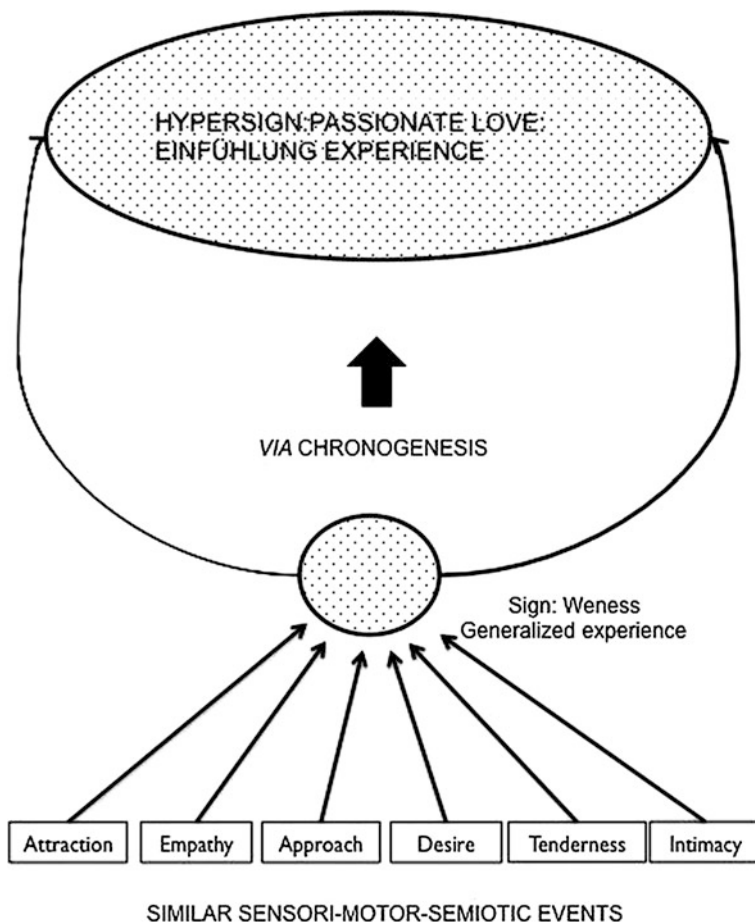


Fig. 10.5 Passionate love as a hypergeneralized hypersign. Adapted from Valsiner (2012)

the other, in pain and pleasure. The skin is an organ capable of conducting a wide range of sensory experiences in a fuzzy zone between pleasure and tenderness that allows the coevolution of lovers' relational process. It is a territory of residence of stories, memories, and experiences that are evoked in the romantic encounter. The lovers' skin-to-skin contact permits the emergence of passion only if the lovers have affection for their own bodies. The passionate love is impossible if the lovers deny, devalue, reject, or refuse their bodies. The appearance of body shame collapses the border and the fear appears interfering the emergency of plenitude and unicity.

Lovers' prose, poems, and slang have attributed a sort of visceral residence to the experience of love, such as descriptions and representations of the heart and stomach butterflies. The bodily representation of love has an inside and outside, as in "feeling the other" and "feeling him/her inside me." The transition between outside and inside is another embodied border that is represented by bodily zones of

access, such as the mouth, nose, ears, vagina, and anus. These apertures are places of connection between internal mucous, membranes, and superficial skin. Like any border, they are ambiguous biological zones of transition.

These transitional zones are transformed into the residences of the border between individuality and fusion. Being inside and outside of the other has a rhythmic edge of transgression. This embodied consummation of the desire for uniqueness in union arises from the complexities and subtle refinements of love-making pleasure. Increased pleasure and sexual tension lead to the resolving orgasm. This climax can lead to full union with another, the blurring of boundaries through being as one soul and one body; at the same time, it is the realization of separation and disengagement. It is the joy of communion and the melancholy of a *petit mort*. Paz (1997, p. 103, translated by the authors, December 2014) stated:

Love is ceremony and representation and something else, a purification that transforms the subject and object of erotic encounter in unique people. Love is the ultimate metaphor for sexuality. Its foundation stone is freedom and the mystery of the person.

Love is founded on a paradox. Lovers cannot be separated but to the extent that they are mortal or when they reflect on the possibility of dying. Death is the force of gravity of life, and love is the discovery of its unicity. It is the border between the intense feelings of life and extinction (Paz 1997).

Passionate Love as an Aesthetic Experience: A Ceremony of Freedom and Determinism

The erotic experience is a symbolic mediation of sexuality. In the context of passionate love, a sexual encounter is a ritualized experience wherein many symbols establish a *metteur-en-scène*, turning the encounter into a representation and ceremony. This ceremony permits maintenance of the lovers' *roman* (novel) while pushing them toward an uncertain future in an infinite present. Passion can be seen as a continuous tension between individuality and unicity, and between the established and the novel. Passionate love is uncertainty.

The sexual metaphor says "ever reproduction," the erotic metaphor puts brackets to "reproduction" as the poetry puts brackets to "communication" (Paz 1997). The relationship between erotism and poetry is such that the first is a body poetic and the second is a verbal poetic. The erotic metaphor is ambiguous, with a double face representing fascination with pleasure (life) and death. Eroticism is first and foremost a thirst for otherness, a repeating rhythm of separation and reconciliation. Gonzalo Rojas' (1982b, p. 1) poem "Beautiful darkness" is a testimony about lovers' eternal rhythm:

As of last night I've touched you and I've felt you
unless my hand from my hand flew
unless my body flew, or what I knew:

in a manner almost new,
I've felt you.

Pulsing, not knowing
whether like blood or clouds I'm
fleeting
through the house on tiptoe, darkness coming
darkness cheating you ran through here shining.

You ran through my wooden house,
You opened its windows
And I felt you shake the entire night.
Daughter of the abyss silent in your
Spite so terrible so slight
That as much as everything might
Be for me it's not
without your light.

Octavio Paz remarks that it is not the same to make love to anyone. "This is the line that marks the border between love and eroticism. Love is an attraction to one person (unique): to one body and to one soul, love is election, the body is acceptance. There is no love without erotism, but love oversteps the desired body and seeks the soul in the body and the body in the soul. In the whole person" (Paz 1997, p. 34).

The encounter entails an experience of borders during a voluntary act of choice within an involuntary experience of attraction. It reflects the tension between determinism and agency.

A lover seeks the beauty of a person in body and soul. The feeling of love is an exception within the eroticism of sexuality. This exception occurs in all societies and has occurred in all periods of history (Paz 1997).

General Conclusions: Bhatki as a Recursive Hypergeneralization

We have attempted to position passionate love as the quintessence of all human experience. We have described the varieties of human love, which is eminently cultural, although it makes no distinction based on ethnicity, race, or sexual orientation. We have highlighted as central elements in the aesthetics of passionate love, i.e., plenitude, unicity, and hypergeneralization (*Einfühlung*). Perhaps the concept of *Bhakti* can clarify its aesthetics in a recursive way.

In Hinduism *Bhakti*, literally means "portion, share," from the root *bhaj*- "to partake in, to receive one's share" refers to religious devotion of a devotee in the worship of the divine. Also, it means "being a part of" and "that which belongs to or is contained in anything else." *Bhakti* has two fundamental elements: the sense of participation and the intense feeling related to the concepts of love (Werner 1993). Traditional Hinduism speaks of five different *bhāvas* or "affective essences" or

“devotional states of mind.” In this sense, *bhāvas* are different attitudes that a devotee takes according to his individual temperament to express his devotion toward God in some form. The different *bhāvas* are as follows: *śānta*, placid love for God; *dāsya*, the attitude of a servant; *sakhya*, the attitude of a friend; *vātsalya*, the attitude of a mother toward her child; and *madhura*, the attitude of a woman toward her lover (Akhilananda 2000). Indian poets such as Kabir (1440–1518) and Nanak (1469–1539) represented divinity as unique and inefable while Princess Mirabai (1498–1546) (Fig. 10.6) conceived the relationship between the worshiper and God in ordinary human terms. Mirabai was a Hindu mystic poet and devotee of Krishna. She was one of the most significant of the *Vaishnava bhakti* movement. Mirabai desire to be with her Krishna intensely, and she believed that Lord Krishna was to be her husband. She created many poems that she sang to her love across the north of India (Stratton 2005):

Oh, the yogui
 my friend, that clever one
 whose mind is on Shiva and the Snake,
 that all-knowing yogi—tell him this:

I'm not staying here, not staying where
 the land's grown strange without you, my dear
 But coming home, coming to where your place is;
 take me, guard me with your guardian mercy;
 please.

I'll take up your yogic garb—
 your prayer beads
 earrings,
 begging-bowl skull,
 tattered yogic cloth—
 I'll take them all

And search through the world as a yogi does
 With you-yogi and yogini, side by side.

My loved one, the rain has come,
 And you promised that when they did, you'd come too
 And now the days are gone: I've counted them
 one by one on the folds of my fingers
 till the lines at the joints have blurred

And my love has left me pale.
 my youth grown yellow as with age.

Singing of Ram
 your servant Mira
 has offered you an offering:
 her body and her mind

The Mirabai poems to Krishna as a *madhura bhavas* (states of mind), highlights the core of aesthetics of passionate love i.e., care, compassion, belonging, reciprocity, unicity, plenitude and *Einführung*.

One of the Bhatki meanings is “that which belongs to or is contained in anything else.” The concepts of be contained by other or contain in oneself the other is the supreme embodiment of the weness. It is a conception where the souls could be considered as a reciprocal nest. Mirabai poem talk about the “servant” where the

Fig. 10.6 Mirabai princess, (1498–1546). Bajoli, Nagaur, Rajasthan, India



issue of asymmetry is pointing up. In a servant condition, one partner is in a serving position and the other in a protector position. Mirabai and Krishna's love in spite of being a *madhura bhavas* (loving a God as a human act) it is love between a creature and her God, a definitive asymmetrical interaction. In human passionate love, this interaction is not definitive and it is necessary a flexibility at positions interchanging. There is a continuous fluctuation between asymmetrical borders. The human love needs courage to live the ambiguity of the borders, to tolerate staying in different positions, and to overcome the fear of abandonment, control, and fusion. It implies a tension between the unicity and the individual, between the I and the we/ness. On the other hand, the ambiguity of passionate love experience permits to live the ecstasy of the *Einfühlung*, the vertigo of the novelty, and the spirituality of the plenitude. Only few individuals dive into the hazardous adventure of love and passion, which entails living on the edge of the question of existence.

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Part III
Values and Ways of Human Being

Chapter 11

Religion and Religiosity as Cultural Phenomena: From Ontological Reductionism to Acknowledgment of Plurality

Jacob A. Belzen

Psychology's ties to religion have always been numerous—and perhaps always will be. Ever since human beings started to reflect upon themselves, they have been wondering about the relationships between those apparently non-material aspects of their functioning—such as dreaming, feeling, and thinking—and the rest of the world, including other non-material aspects of that world called by designations like gods, spirits, fate, virtue, purpose, and what have you. The earliest forms of religions seem to have been related to funeral ceremonies, humans apparently assuming that non-material, non-visible aspects of themselves and others continue to exist after the body dies, therefore oftentimes providing the deceased with what they would need in the 'beyond,' the 'afterlife.' In what counts as one of the oldest types of religion, shamans will send their 'soul' on a voyage to a world beyond the common world in order to find medicine or whatever solution to the situations of illness or other despair that made people turn to a shaman. In all long-existing, established religions, there are highly elaborated and highly different notions of both human and divine realms and especially of the relationships between those two, leading to prescriptions of both how to deal with the divine realm and how to deal with the consequences with regard to that realm; across religions, there are countless commandment about how humans, 'down here' (as opposed to 'up there'), 'under the moon' (as opposed to beyond the moon, among the stars), on 'earth' (as opposed to 'in heaven'), should live their lives.

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Even if one, after the rise of so-called scientific psychology in the nineteenth-century Europe, would be inclined to call many of these ideas and explanations of such practices ‘implicit psychology’ and ‘folk psychology,’ perhaps limiting psychology’s scope and domain to only such realms of human life that can be investigated by scientific methods, many of the questions asked to psychologists can nevertheless not be answered by science only and they continue to draw on all kinds of religious doctrines, or at least on worldviews derived from religious perspectives. As has been explained at length by numerous authors since Foucault (1961/1965), in many respects the present-day psychologists have stepped into (or perhaps have been forced into—this chapter is not going to evaluate these developments!) roles that in previous periods of Western civilization were taken care of by the clergy: psychotherapy, for instance, sometimes resembles in many respects older religious practices of hearing confession and of spiritual direction. Whereas in such previous times, ethical rules were provided on the basis of ecclesial doctrines and with ditto authority, nowadays people with questions about feelings of guilt, loneliness, or despair, about difficulties with their children, with their (sexual) partners, with their parents or employers, often turn to professional (or sometimes to popularized) psychological knowledge furnished with scientific authority. Very often, however, the answers and advices given are not derived from any objective scientific knowledge alone, but consist in a delicate mixture of such knowledge and of hopefully sophisticated common sense, in which a good deal of religious notions or religiously influenced worldviews dress themselves.

And not even science itself is without religious notions: Science always starts from presuppositions that are themselves not scientific, that cannot and need not be scientifically proven, and more often than not, such presuppositions are articulations of religious notions. To stay with the science of psychology: whether an entity in many religions and religious philosophies called the ‘soul’ exists or not, and whether that soul can maintain a relationship to any ‘god,’ is not an issue science itself could resolve. One ‘believes’ (or one does not) in such matters. But such belief does make a difference: If one assumes that many states of affairs in human life (like socioeconomic status, health, marital happiness and many more) are the result of conduct of the same soul in a previous life, or the result of divine punishment, one will provide different therapy and counseling to people asking for them. The assumption of a unique, subsistent, essential, and immortal soul (like in much dualistic Western thought) will result in a different view on life, in different attitudes, and in different ways of coping with tribulation. Moreover, what counts as science and what doesn’t, is affected by non-scientific positions too. For those who are of the opinion that only the natural sciences should be regarded as science, many aspects of reality will not—not yet or perhaps never, the answer will depend on the stand taken—become accessible, yet they are aspects that (non-scientific? the

answer will depend on the stand taken) psychologies such as psychoanalysis in all its branches often concentrate on. Totally different notions of the human being in its relationships to different realms of reality are the foundation of many so-called transpersonal psychologies—whether one accepts these as types of psychology at all will depend on the stand taken, not on any psychology itself.

The aim of this chapter is neither to enumerate the many types of relationships between ‘psychology’ (in what way ever defined) on the one hand and ‘religion’ (in what way ever understood) and religiosity (understood as the personal experiential-behavioral correlate of being involved in [a] religion) on the other hand,¹ nor to leave the reader bewildered because of the many actual and possible fights between all kinds of stands taken in the broad domain marked out by these poles. The fourfold aim is rather (1) to deal with only one type of relationship between psychology and religion, (2) to do so in a reconciliatory manner, (3) to argue that a specific type of progress has been achieved in this domain, and (4) to demonstrate the indispensable contribution of cultural psychology in this regard. The short introduction above was necessary not only to evoke at least some awareness of the history of the domain we are talking about, but also to realize that both ‘psychology’ and ‘religion’ are nouns that refer to extremely diversified fields: what counts as religion to one, may count as perversion or as anything-but-religion to others (the religious phenomenon called ‘temple prostitution’ may be abhorred by advocates of religious ‘celibacy,’ the phenomenon called ‘religious terrorism’ by some, will be called ‘martyrdom’ by others, to give just some examples of controversial practices); what counts as psychology to some, may have nothing to do with psychology according to others (the opposition between much of academic psychology and transpersonal psychology has been hinted at already, also think of how little ‘methods’ like transference analysis or experiment sometimes have in common—both practiced by ‘licensed psychologists,’ however).

¹The distinction between religion and religiosity introduced only in passing here is quite important. Religion refers to an entity on the level of culture, any religion having properties such as doctrines, ethics, organization (of clergy and otherwise), architecture, and symbols. The term religiosity refers to the correlate of these on the level of the human being: whereas a religion has a doctrine, a human being has religious thoughts and experiences; therefore, a theological treatise about prayer belongs to a religion, a person praying displays religiosity. An ecclesiastical or otherwise religious doctrine belongs to the respective religion, a person believing, doubting, rejecting that given doctrine is committing an act of religiosity. A temple may signify the presence of a certain type of religion, a person visiting that temple can display religiosity. (Note, I write ‘can’ display: as one can also visit a temple for non-religious reasons, for instance, as a tourist. The individual meaning of any act is never available without having consulted the subject involved, which is the reason why meaning is usually investigated by experience-near empirical methods.) Moreover, to anticipate some of the reasoning of this chapter, as will come as no surprise to fellow cultural psychologists: the primate is with the cultural entity of ‘religion’; ‘religiosity’ can only exist as the result of instigation and regulation by ‘religion’; there is no way to derive a complex cultural phenomenon like religion from individual psychic processes or functions. (The latter type of reasoning usually leads to an ontological reductionistic fallacy.)

From ‘the’ Psychology of Religion to Psychologies of Religions

The one type of relationship between ‘psychology’ and ‘religion’² to be dealt with in the remainder of this chapter is the psychology of religion, which is usually understood as the common designation for such employment of (some kind of) psychology to investigate and analyze (some kind of) religiosity. In order to proceed well, some possible misunderstandings related to the term ‘psychology of religion’ need to be clarified. First, short and practical as the name seems to be, one should bear in mind that psychology of religion is not religious psychology: It is not the articulation of any psychology that would be inherent to any religion. (Evidently, as hinted at in the introduction, such would be possible, has been done and is fascinating in itself.) Rather, what is meant here is the employment of (whatever kind of) psychology that, for other than religious reasons, has ‘proved’ itself to be valid psychology in an effort to investigate (whatever kind of) religion. Also, bear in mind that this employment of psychology may serve totally different intentions: sometimes, psychology has been used to discredit religion (during the days of the Soviet Union, some institutions for research on religion had the duty to contribute to the liquidation of religion, see Kääriäinen 1989), sometimes to defend religion in general or to defend some types of religion [usually, of course, including the author’s own type of religion, think of the well-known works by James (1902/2002) or Allport (1950)], or to outright serve the purposes of some religion (like the so-called ‘pastoral psychology’ which is the employment of established psychology in the services of Christian churches, see, e.g., Watts et al. 2002). All of this may be related to, but is not to be identified with the psychology of religion in ‘a proper sense’ (Wulff 1997): the (in principal: neutral³) looking at religion through the lens of psychology. Neither is the psychology of religion to be identified with (usually highly theoretical) discourse on the (possible) relationships between psychology and religion as hinted at shortly in the introduction already; rather, psychology of religion stands for what religion looks like through the lens of psychology as employed in some kind of research.

In a double respect, it is noteworthy to signal that there is no one and single psychology of religion. First of all and as hinted at already, there are many different types of psychology and many different empirical phenomena designated as religious. Ever since psychology’s rise as a ‘modern science,’ there has been a strong

²From now on I will mostly just employ the terms psychology and religion, leaving behind the somewhat clumsy use of quotation marks; the reader should remember, however, that ‘such scholarly approaches that have been called psychology,’ respectively, ‘such cultural entities including the human experiences and conduct they instigate, facilitate, and regulate, as have been called religious’ is what is being meant.

³It goes without saying that a neutral stand is not easy to achieve when it comes to something like religion. It takes considerable (and long) training to be able to analyze one’s own and other people’s types of religion without prejudice and apriori valuations, or to at least leave such aside during professional research.

tendency, even among present-day psychologists, to combat other approaches within psychology than those one has been trained in. Obviously, all kinds of interests play a role here (e.g., financial-economic ones, when different fractions need to rival about available funding), but sometimes an incapacity to deal with variety, especially about issues important to self-esteem, manifests itself here. (In general, many people find it hard to accept that the way things are in their life could have been quite different: with different parents, they might have been raised quite differently, their spouse might have married someone else; that other people on other continents have different opinions is, literally, a tale from a faraway country, but that the own children vote or believe deviantly is often enough a reason for tragedies in families, etc.) Numerous discussions, quarrels and fights, secessions, and rivalries in psychology remind of the similar happenings in churches and other religious organizations. Yet, as philosophers of other sciences (like Bunge 1979; Pattee 1973) have distinguished different layers in the theories within a certain science, philosophers of psychology have been helpful in proposing a stratification for the many theories in psychology. Van Rappard and Sanders (1990), for instance, spoke about three main levels of structurization in theory, that each approach reality from a certain perspective: mechanistic, organicistic, and hermeneutical (see also Dennett 1981), which exhibit successive levels of mounting complexity as a result of the increasing historico-cultural determinacy of the object and therefore of the results of research. While in mechanistic and organicistic theories, the tendency is as much as possible to disregard the historico-cultural determinacy of human reality, in hermeneutic psychologies this is deemed both impossible and undesirable. So, on the first level, human beings are studied as if the researcher were dealing with mechanisms. (And indeed, some aspects of human psychic functioning operate on a low level of structurization, like behavioristic theories about learning, or 'computational' cognitive psychology.) Theories like Piaget's or Gibson's figure on the organicistic level: They conceive of the human psychic functioning as an organism. The hermeneutical level in theory is typically seen as the highest level of structurization, as it presupposes the other two (the reverse not being the case: on a lower level of structurization, one does not need to take the higher levels into account, one can make an abstraction of those).⁴ Approaches in psychology like the cultural—historical activity theory, social constructionism, and in general all those that go under the label 'cultural psychology' are examples of this level of theory in psychology.

From this perspective, the different kinds of psychological theory do not necessarily contradict one another; on the contrary, they illuminate different aspects of

⁴Mind, however, that to this idea—like to almost any relevant idea in psychology—objections have been raised: The so-called anthropological school (in medicine, also including psychiatry) and the phenomenological movement (which had strong offshoots in psychology) have pointed out that in the case of the human being even the lower levels of structurization are affected by the higher levels, there would be no simple 'stimulus–response–situation' in the world of the human being; trying to abstract from the higher levels would be a distortion, resulting in invalid 'knowledge.'

psychic functioning and taken all together contribute to a more holistic view of the human being, also in psychological respects. By logical consequence, this is also true for the religious realm: at all times, in whatever religion human beings are involved in, psychologists can direct their attention to different aspects of psychic functioning, from a physiological—psychological level to a cultural psychological level. If one takes a look at the literature presenting itself as belonging to the psychology of religion, one sees this tendency reflected: From any psychological perspective, one could investigate those psychic aspects of religiosity any particular psychological perspective focuses on, the many ‘handbooks’ available by now offering handsome overviews.⁵ And one probably should conclude that for an embracing view of psychical factors at work in any given instance of religiosity, one will need to draw on a variety of psychological perspectives.

Progress in Psychological Thinking About Religion?

The second reason why there is not one and single psychology of religion may count as a type of progress in psychological thinking about religion. Obviously, the notion of progress is problematic, and in scientific and scholarly milieus easily reeks after positivism. The type of progress referred to here is quite the opposite, however: whereas positivistically inclined scientists tend to think that to all kinds of questions and problems there may be only one answer, other than natural scientists point out that to many questions and problems there may be several answers, not a single one among them necessarily being the best one. To a clinical psychologist, there usually is not only one option available to help clients deal with their problems (e.g., ‘I can’t stop thinking about my deceased mother, it interferes with all of my life, my work, my marriage’); to a historian, there hardly ever is a single reason for something happening in the past (‘why did Leonardo paint the Mona Lisa?’, ‘what caused Napoleon to try to conquer Russia?’, ‘why was Hitler elected?’). As with so many domains in human life, the recognition of a multitude of relevant factors is in many branches of scholarship an advantage over the effort to rule out as

⁵To mention just some examples: Wulff (1997) organized his classic book along the mainstreams in theories within psychology like biology-oriented psychology, behaviorism, psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, and others; Paloutzian and Park (2013) drew on ‘basic psychology disciplines,’ like developmental, social, personality, and cognitive psychology, and tried to line up with current wings like neuropsychology, cross-cultural psychology, evolutionary psychology; Miller (2012) added attention to movements like positive psychology, feminism, esotericism, and parapsychology, while Pargament (2013), himself a clinical psychologist, gave ample attention to applied versions of psychology of religion like in psychotherapy and counseling, and in clinical and otherwise health-related situations. In modern journals like *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* or the APA-published *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, editors and authors do their best to line up with current developments within psychology at large. The conclusion remains the same: from any psychological perspective one can make contributions to ‘the’ psychology of religion.

many variables as possible. In order to help to change a certain situation ('we don't want Jim to commit criminal acts'), or to understand an event or a certain state of affairs ('why did Jim become a criminal at all?') not all factors recognized may be equally important, but for exhaustive analysis and embracing and lasting solution, it is usually best to take as many factors into account as possible.

The history of progress in insight into multifaceted problems reminds of a famous saying attributed to Bernard of Chartres (+1124), about whom the philosopher (and later bishop) John of Salisbury (c. 1120–1180) wrote that he 'used to compare us to [puny] dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic stature' (1159/1955, p. 167). Indeed, the saying has become a metaphor for progress in the human sciences, to which large parts of psychology also belong. For many Westerners today, it is hardly conceivable that previous ages did not recognize how different children are from (so-called) adults, that they did not realize that behavior is usually overdetermined, that deviancy may be related to psychic disorder, etc. The 'discovery' of 'the psyche' (and the rise of a branch of science concentrating thereon) may count as a kind of progress in the history of humanity. Contrary to the lament over the lack of unity in psychology, the emergence of different types of psychology constitutes a continuation of this type of progress as well: the 'psyche,' the very object of psychology, has shown itself to be so complex that multiple and sometimes highly different types of psychology are necessary to even begin to explore and understand it and to begin to take the psychological dimension into account with regard to all human functioning. Many pioneers of present-day psychology spoke about their newly established science as if it were one and single (as many psychologists even today continue to do so). Within only a few decades, however, it had to be acknowledged that 'progress in psychology' does not consist in any unilinear movement as often assumed to be the case in the natural sciences—in this latter sense, one can only conclude that there is no progress in psychology and that large parts of psychology have perhaps 'gone astray' striving for it (Toomela and Valsiner 2010). The progress referred to here, however, is typical for philosophy and the human sciences to which psychology, in many respects, next to the natural sciences, will always also belong. Progress consists in the acknowledgment of diversity in the psychological realm and of the many factors that need to be distinguished here.

The history of 'the' psychology of religion is a telling example of the developments evoked and of the type of progress hinted at. During the course of the last 150 years, there has not only been an increasing understanding that the noun 'religion' is unsuitable to refer to the worldwide multitude of phenomena that

Westerners have called by that name. Indeed, recently, voices can be heard that propose to discontinue altogether the use the word 'religion' in scholarly discussions: The very word would be coined by Westerners, modeled after a particular understanding of certain types of Christianity and in its application to utterly different subcultures it would be an example of intellectual colonialism (Feil 1986, 1997; Haußig 1999). The diversity supposedly covered by the noun 'religion' as its designation would have only in common that it is being referred to as religion (by Westerners), the real issue for scholarly research being to find out, why some practices at some time have come to be regarded as 'religion' at all (see, e.g., Hölscher 1999; McCutcheon 2007; Taves 2009). Be this as it may (and as such an issue that is not specific to psychology of religion), a similar trend can be depicted for 'the' psychology of religion as well: Ever since the 'turn to the subject' in the modern European philosophy, there has been a tendency to try to understand (all of) religion by means of one single psychology, often enough leading to a kind of ontological reductionism (when it was suggested that 'religion' *tout court*, so to say, would be the result of the psychic function or mechanism that any particular author postulated or claimed to have discovered). Whereas religion in early Modernity was still understood to be the human being's service of (the Christian) god (therefore, an obligation of the human being toward god), modern philosophies like deism, rationalism, and naturalism offered new interpretations of the world that turned the existence of religion as such into something that needs to be accounted for. Whereas the early Enlightenment had explained religion by appealing to human rationality ('god' would be necessary to explain the existence of the world), Kant founded religion in the will (theology would not add anything to the explanation of the natural world, god would be no 'object of theoretical reason', as Kant (1787/1956) phrased it; but god would be a necessary postulate for 'practical reason', in order to guarantee morality). After him, the effort to explain religion that became most dominant in psychology would be formulated by Schleiermacher (1799/1958): He founded religion in emotion; according to Schleiermacher, religion would be 'a province of its own within the soul,' it would be 'sense and taste for the Infinite.' A long row of psychologists, up to the present, followed, trying to anchor religion in a (single) property of the human psyche—forgetting, like with so many other domains of human life, that the explanation of the human conduct and experience under scrutiny owes much more to culture and history than to any aspect of the human psyche (an insight gone lost to much of contemporary psychology, influenced by American individualism, but common in much of older continental European psychology, and one that current cultural psychology capitalizes on, Valsiner 2012, 2014). Numerous explanations for the existence of religion have been proposed by psychologists, naturally in terms of the theory they happened to

develop or to be acquainted with, often leaving no room—as is typical for reductionism⁶—for alternative ‘explanations.’ Thus, James (1902/2002) spoke about religion in terms of emotion (disregarding all cultural and historical factors at work in any religion), Freud (1913/1964, 1927/1961) saw oedipal complications and projection at work in religion, Skinner (1953) called attention to (social) learning, Jung (1938/1969) ‘detected’ archetypes, and contemporary psychologists offer interpretations in terms of cognitive and evolutionary psychology. But throughout the development of the psychology of religion modesty has increased: Only a small minority of those involved today will still claim that there is only one single psychological explanation for religion; most will grant that all of psychology at best provide some insights into some of the psychological aspects of religion and religiosity.

The Plural Program in the Psychologies of Religions

In an effort to grant the right of existence to the variety among the psychologies of religions, one could distinguish a threefold program in this branch of scholarship (Belzen 2015):

1. The inclusion of ‘religion,’ in what sense ever understood, in psychological reasoning and acting. Although this program is comprehensive—one could think of many types of research and application of psychological expertise—it could be called a ‘weak program,’ as the emphasis is not with the analysis of phenomena, events, and situations called religion, but rather with either theoretical psychology (e.g., focusing on the relationship between psychology and religion—an important issue that as such does not belong to the psychology of

⁶Note that reductionism as such is a kind of error in logic found in all kinds of domains. Methodological reduction of complexity in order to focus on some selected factor is as such a valid element in many procedures, both outside and inside science. (As soon as one leaves the research situation, this type of reduction should be left behind.) However, acknowledging *only* the factor one wishes to concentrate on, not just during a certain investigation but in general, denying the presence of other factors in the more complex whole counts as ontological reductionism. (A salesman, a chemist, and an art historian will each focus on different aspects of, e.g., Rembrandt’s work, but without necessarily denying the relevance of other aspects. Neglecting the artistic value altogether, considering the market value of a painting only would be a form of reductionism; to focus only on the chemical materials used in painting in dealing with a piece of art would be just as much a form of reductionism.) With regard to the scientific study of religion, Freud’s saying that ‘God would be nothing but an elevated father’ counted as an infamous example of psychological reductionism. One should bear in mind, however, that treatises of religion that seemed to be defensive (like Jung’s) often are just as reductionistic in explaining (almost) everything by means of only his own ‘analytical psychology,’ and that many theological treatises (especially of Christianity) are reductionistic too when allowing only for the religious viewpoint itself (e.g., when allowing only supposed divine or otherwise supernatural agents as ‘explanation’ for anything religious, whether an individual conversion, the emergence of Christianity, the origin of the Bible, or what have you).

religion), or with the development or application of some psychological theory or technique (e.g., bringing religious variables or populations into the scope of a piece of empirical psychological research). In the latter case, the focus is on the development of psychological instruments (concepts or techniques) that might, but need not be, applied to religion. Paradoxically, and pointedly, expressed: This would be a type of psychology of religion that is not primarily concerned about religion, but about psychology. Research on religion functions here as a possible *application and illustration* of a particular psychological theory or technique.

2. The second program in the psychology of religion, however, has its focus with the *exploration* of religious phenomena, events, and situations. To belong to this 'strong program' can be counted all those efforts to explore, and possibly explain empirical constellations considered religious, in light of a certain psychology. The biggest difference—even if it sometimes is more an accent than a principal difference—with the previous program is that the starting point is with religion (in what way ever understood), not with a psychological approach or method. By consequence, in such a piece of research even diverse psychological theories or techniques may be employed, or psychological viewpoints may be combined with ones drawing on other scientific approaches (like anthropology, history, or sociology). In such works, one often encounters a interplay of extensive empirical description and multiple theory.
3. As a third program, one could then consider all such efforts to determine or even explain 'religion,' *tout court*, including its origin, development, and reason of existence, by means of any psychology. This program is the oldest one in the psychology of religion and also the most theoretical one. (It has had many precursors that nowadays are counted to the history of the philosophy of religion, from the efforts to explain religion as the result of fear of death in Antiquity to the notion of religion as a socially produced illusion by Karl Marx.) Ever since its introduction into thinking about religion, this program has attracted considerable attention, not only from scholars of all kinds, but up until today also from the general public (see bestselling books like Dawkins (2006), Dennett (2006) or Hitchens (2007), who often employ some type of popularizing or sometimes even vulgarizing psychology). The goal here is to arrive at an *explanation* why religion exists at all, which is beyond psychology's sole competence, however, turning this program into an 'all-too-strong' one.

Obviously, what counts as an advantage in one program, or to one observer, may resemble a disadvantage in another program or to another observer. Research as figuring in the weak program, striving to remain close to mainstream psychology and to get its results published in such journals, may be best recognizable as present-day psychology and may facilitate the return of religion into the scope of the discipline of psychology at large. But it often has not too much to say about the religious phenomenon that functions as an illustration to the psychological theory or technique employed, and for that reason is often a disappointment to people interested in what psychology might have to say about religion (Nørager 1996).

This type of psychology of religion is therefore most attractive to and usually practiced by psychologists only, and much of the recent growth of the psychology of religion is owed to this program. Psychological reasoning as found with the third program is most attractive to people with strong theoretical interest, but it easily runs the risk of becoming a kind of vulgarized psychology as when ‘too much is explained by too little,’ sometimes even leading again to a type of ontological reductionism, when all of religion is derived from psychological mechanisms only. This type of psychology of religion is often enough no longer recognizable to research psychologists, as hardly any empirical investigation is reported here and the discussion is highly conceptual and goes into the direction of general theoretical debates about the relationship between psychology and religion in general. (In the main, such discussions are not found among psychologists, but among theologians and academics at institutes for religious studies (Jonte-Pace and Parsons 2001), more often than not only engaging psychoanalysis, yet sometimes leading to excellent publications in their own right, see, e.g., Dixon (1999), Parsons (1999, 2013)). The second program is one to which both experts of religion (like historians of religion, or comparative religionists, but also empirically oriented Christian theologians) and researchers drawing on a variety of approaches contribute. Not new psychology, but new psychological insight into something religious is what counts here, but it may, according to representatives of the first program, result in eclecticism and lack of scientific rigor, and it runs the risk, according to representatives of the third program, of presenting *Bilderbuchphänomenologie* (an academic swear word, which means something like: a book full of nice pictures, but failing to offer coherent analysis or overarching theory). Yet, the second program is radically empirical in its own way, for instead of molding an empirical phenomenon into the categories of some existing psychology, it will concentrate on that empirical phenomenon and look whether existing psychologies have something to offer to its exploration (and perhaps explanation) at all. If need be, representatives of the second program will even prefer to devise new ways of conducting empirical research rather than ‘subjecting’ (mind the word!) religious people to standardized techniques as already developed in many branches of psychology.

The Indispensable Contribution of Cultural Psychologies

Because of its preference for hermeneutical approaches, including so-called qualitative research methods, cultural psychology appears to be a natural, though not the only possible, ally to the second program. If one accepts that different psychologies may contribute to insight into human psychic functioning, this also implies that such approaches within psychology that go by the name cultural psychology are indispensable: It would be, and in fact is, a fault in ontological reasoning to assume that only physiological psychology, or only neuropsychology, would be ‘really’ scientific psychology. Although a common opinion among the general population of Western societies, it would be just as illogical to consider clinical psychology as

the prototype of psychology *tout court*. Cultural psychologies focus on the way human beings are becoming human beings because of their inculturation: It is because the neonates is born into (a specific) human culture, that she or he will develop a human nature. (Without culture, there would be no human nature, cf. Geertz (1973, p. 49). A human being is unthinkable without culture, only a being like the mythical Kaspar Hauser would emerge.) Decades ago psychologists like Vygotsky (1978) have already pointed out that the higher psychic functions have a double origin: first a cultural and, after appropriation, an individual one. All concrete phenomena belonging to the reality of the psychic are determined by cultural encadration. All knowing, experiencing, action, wanting, and fantasizing can only be grasped in light of the individual's historico-cultural situatedness and mediation. Emotions, to deal only with this example briefly, are not irrational eruptions of purely natural and unavoidable reactions. In contrast to what is currently thought, they turn out rather to be characterized by convictions, evaluations, and wishes, whose content is not given by nature but determined by systems of convictions, values, and mores of particular cultural communities. Emotions are socioculturally determined patterns of experience and expression which are acquired and then expressed in specific social situations (Armon-Jones 1986). The various behavioral, physiological, and cognitive reactions which belong to the syndrome which is a specific emotion are not necessarily emotional in and of themselves. Ultimately, emotions are based on the same physiological processes which underlie all other behavior. What makes a syndrome specifically emotional, however, is the way in which the different responses are organized and interpreted within a certain context. To put it succinctly, emotions conform to pre-existing cultural paradigms: They are socially construed syndromes, temporary social roles, which encompass an assessment of the situation by the person in question and are interpreted as passions instead of actions (Averill 1985). Further, in the course of the so-called civilization process (Elias 1939/1978–1982) which can be described for Western society, certain emotions were not only regulated but even created (see also Foucault 1975/1977). Human subjectivity in its totality is always subject to specific historical-cultural conditions: There is no meaningful conduct that is not culturally constituted. It has to be understood in light of cultural contexts; and this not to find out how the postulated constant articulates itself again and again in different contexts (such only results in knowledge about 'cultural variation') but to trace how a specific cultural context made the specific action, knowledge, and experience possible. Accordingly, psychology, like history, anthropology, and linguistics, is—next to being partly a natural science, focusing on levels of psychical functioning that can be approached by mechanistic and organicistic metaphors—also a hermeneutical science: It focuses its attention on meanings and searches out the rules according to which meaning originates in a cultural situation.

As pointed out already, religiosity, like so many aspects characteristic of human beings, is a culturally constituted phenomenon too, shaping the psyche and being shaped itself by that psyche; religiosity is the result and correlate of subjective involvement in some kind of religion (in what way ever understood), displaying enormous differences. (In some religions, like Christianity or Islam, prayer is

regarded as central; other religions do not even have the concept or practice of prayer. Some religions oppose all violence, even toward animals, other religions induce violence, in the form of sacred slaughtering of animals but sometimes also against followers of a different religious path, think, for instance, of the Inquisition in Late Medieval Europe, persecuting, among others, the early Protestants, think also of the many instances of religiously legitimated violence at present. The range seems to be without end.) Approaches within psychology that try to conceptualize the very nexus between a given type of religion, as a subcultural entity, and personal religious functioning will necessarily draw on such cultural psychological approaches: If one, e.g., would like to understand an individual conversion (whether an intensification of faith or a switch to another religious tradition), neurophysiological psychology will hardly be illuminating. For whether a person prays to Allah or to the Virgin Mary does not make a difference on the level of brain activity. For the subject involved, however, the difference may be of ultimate importance! Biographical approaches, narrative psychology or dialogical self-theory might be helpful to analyze and understand how and why such a conversion came about (Belzen 2004; Popp-Baier 1998). Or if one would like to explore the personal meaning of belonging to a clearly recognizable religious minority like the *Amish* in Pennsylvania (USA), the *Chassidic Jews* in Antwerp or Jerusalem, or the *Bevindelijken* in the Netherlands, theories about embodiment formulated by Bourdieu, Goffmann, or Radley may be more apt than cognitive approaches (Belzen 2010; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Goffman 1951, 1961; Radley 1996; Zittoun 2012).

Which type of psychology a certain psychologist will draw on is depending on numerous factors. Not only the choice of the object of study (usually one type or another of religiosity, religion as the macro-cultural phenomenon is hardly ever made an object of study by psychologists) is oftentimes related to her personal circumstances (she will turn to the religion she knows by acquaintance or that she has got to know somewhere along her biography), she will probably try to employ the type of psychology she has been trained in herself. Ideally, and as pointed out in almost any methodological treatise, the object of research comes first, the methods and technique to be employed only second. In fact, it hardly ever works that way: especially in a field of application like the psychology of religion (where the aim is not so much to develop new psychology, but to analyze something considered religious in light of psychology), when running into an object of interest, or when being confronted with a certain question or problems, psychologists usually do not set out to develop a new theory or a new technique for empirical research, but will employ existing ones. Although in many respects sound, this procedure carries a huge risk when researchers mold the factual problem too strongly into the categories of a theory they happen to have at hand already. To what extent ever illuminating it may be to discuss a problem or a certain situation in terms of a given theory, here a possible discrepancy between, simply said, empirical reality and analytical tool needed to be guarded against too: In the case of applied psychology, the analytical tool (a psychological theory or research method) should be employed to understand better any psychic aspect of the phenomenon under scrutiny, not the

other way round. Obviously, psychology of religion should be practiced in order to find out more about religion, it should not be a case of psychology for psychology's sake. Psychology of religion has been criticized, especially by representatives of religious points of view, of offering no real or no new insight into religion and/or religiosity, but of being just repetitious, of just finding again what other psychological research has been finding elsewhere already, only this time within a religious context (cf., e.g., Koepf 1920; cf. also Dittes 1969). This objection seems to be all too critical (for it oftentimes is illuminating in its own right to show psychological factors at work in constellations about which no psychological analysis had yet been put forward: think about the many other domains of application of psychology, like arts, sports, conflict management, war, education, marriage, jurisprudence, and advertisement), but it is also understandable as there often seems to be an opposition: is the research aiming to be on psychology's side (risking to find out nothing about the object it should deal with) or on the object's side (perhaps losing touch with the science of psychology)? To such research that really strives to focus on the religious object on which it is supposed to bring psychological light to shine, cultural psychological approaches provide an obvious royal road. Without any claim to be the only possible approach in the psychology of religion, cultural psychology is a type of psychology that allows to concentrate on the empirical religious object itself, striving for analysis and understanding while precluding efforts to explain all of religion from the existence of some postulated psychological function or mechanism only.

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Chapter 12

Understanding Human Being Within the Framework of William Stern's Critical Personalism: Teleology, Holism, and Valuation

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The name William Stern (1871–1938) is familiar to many psychologists because of his early contributions in the field of mental testing. Known to very few, however is the *Weltanschauung* or comprehensive system of thought that Stern developed under the name 'critical personalism,' despite his own regard for that project as his 'true life's work' (Stern in a 1904 letter to Jonas Cohn (1869–1947); reprinted in Lück and Löwisch 1994, p. 33). Despite its long-standing and widespread obscurity, however, the present authors are of the view that, even now, more than a decade into the twenty-first century, critical personalism is a potentially valuable orientation for understanding human being, and the present contribution has been written in this spirit.

Stern needed to write three full volumes, published over a period of 18 years, in order to set forth critical personalism in its entirety. The first volume appeared in 1906 under the title (in English translation) *Person and Thing: A Systematic Philosophical Worldview. Volume One: Rationale and Basic Tenets (Ableitung und Grundlehre; Stern 1906)*. *Volume Two: The Human Personality (Die menschliche Persönlichkeit)* did not appear until 12 years later (Stern 1918), and yet another six years would pass before the publication of *Volume Three: Philosophy of Value*

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(*Wertphilosophie*) (Stern 1924). With the publication of the third volume, Stern modified the leading title to *Person and Thing: System of Critical Personalism*.

In the limited space available to us here, we could not possibly provide a detailed exposition of these works, and more extensive discussions are available elsewhere [in addition to Stern (2010), see Lamiell (2003), esp. Chap. 8, Lamiell (2010), esp. Chap. 5, Lamiell (2013)]. Instead, our present objective is to provide a condensed treatment of certain of the core ideas within the framework, followed by a discussion intended to position critical personalism within the larger intellectual landscape, highlighting its fundamental compatibility with humanistic thinking more generally, and with the investigative methods of phenomenology more specifically.

Some Central Tenets of Critical Personalism

Teleology

In naming his worldview ‘critical personalism,’ Stern was deliberately differentiating his conception of human being both from ‘naïve personalism’ and from *impersonalism*. According to the latter view, Stern argued,

the individual is merely an aggregate: physically just a sum of atoms; psychologically just a bundle of perceptions. There is no real and consequential unity, but only a mechanical by-product of elements fully determined by the general laws of all happenings. In short, there is no ‘person’ on this view, but only a ‘thing.’ This is impersonalism. (Stern 2010, p. 113)

Stern rejected this mechanistic impersonalism and insisted instead on a *teleological* view of the person. To be sure, he was acutely aware of concerns among psychologists (and other scientists) of his time about the scientific viability of a teleological perspective. He was firmly convinced, however, that those concerns, which he characterized as having developed into a kind of ‘teleophobia’ (Stern 1918, p. 270), both could be and had to be remediated, for his view was that ‘the idea of purpose [is] the very key to a true understanding of personal being’ (Stern 1918, p. 270).¹ A person’s ‘doings,’ then, must be understood within the context of, and explained with reference to, the goals toward which they are oriented (whether consciously or unconsciously, the personalistic perspective allows for both possibilities; cf. Stern 1930) and cannot be accounted for adequately simply in terms of biophysical cause–effect relationships that would allegedly determine those ‘doings’ in a wholly mechanistic fashion.

¹Decades later, another fervent spokesperson for teleology in psychological science, Joseph F. Rychlak (1928–2013), would find that ‘teleophobia’ was still very much alive within the field. He wrote that in the view of the overwhelming majority within the discipline’s mainstream, ‘to propose teleological conceptions of behavior is to violate scientific descriptions in favor of spiritualism’ (Rychlak 1984, p. 126).

Psychophysical Neutrality

Yet while avoiding the Scylla of impersonalism, Stern wished also to elude the Charybdis of positing a ‘soul’ or an ‘I’ somehow existing independently alongside the rest of an individual’s being. It is some version of this view, Stern argued, that one routinely finds in folk beliefs about the nature of persons—hence the term ‘naïve’ personalism.

Stern avoided naïve personalism by positing the fundamental *psychophysical neutrality* of the person. He saw that although a person can be regarded from either a psychological or biophysical perspective, the person *as such* is the precondition for any such bifurcation at all.² As an entity necessarily existing prior to any consideration of his/her mental and/or physical aspects, the person is first and foremost psychophysically neutral. As Stern himself expressed this point in the first (1906) volume of *Person and Thing*:

Not that there is the physical and the psychological, but rather that there are real persons, is the basic fact of the world. That these persons can be present to themselves and to others, and thereby give rise to the notions of the psychological and the physical, *is a fact of the world of second order.* (Stern 1906, pp. 204–205, emphasis added)

Persons, Things, and the Goal-Directedness of Human Being

As Stern asserted in his description of impersonalism, quoted above, that view essentially reduces persons to things, a reduction entirely at odds with the distinction between persons and things from which all of personalistic thinking proceeds. Stern elaborated this distinction in various ways over the years, but running throughout all of his writings on this subject is the notion that persons actively *evaluate*, whereas things can only *be evaluated* passively.

As an active process, evaluation entails the projection of value outward from its source, thus imbuing some other entity (or life circumstance) with some level of (un)worthiness. As beings whose very nature entails valuations, persons must be regarded as inherently *able to value*—i.e., literally *valueable*. Things, by contrast, cannot ever be so regarded. To the extent that they are ‘valuable’ at all, they are so only contingently, i.e., in a way dependent upon the purposes of the person doing the evaluating. Obviously, those purposes are related to (in some instances just *are*) the person’s goals, and within the framework of critical personalism, Stern offered a system for classifying goals using terminology that further underscored the teleological commitments of his personalistic worldview.

²In this respect, Stern predated a very similar conception of the person, and one that enjoyed wide popularity among philosophers, articulated by Strawson (1958) in a paper titled ‘Persons’.

Stern referred to as ‘autotelic’ those goals of most immediate relevance to the individual him/herself. He further subclassified those goals into those having primarily to do with survival or continuity of being in relationship to the world (*Selbsterhaltung*; literally, self-maintenance) and those having primarily to do with development or the further realization of potentialities (*Selbstentfaltung*, literally, self-unfolding).

Having postulated these ‘autotelic’ goals, Stern emphasized that

the person who pursues only his/her own narrow individual goals would be an extensionless point in emptiness. Only goals extending beyond the self give the person concrete content and living coherence with the world. Autotelie encounters heterotelie. (Stern 2010, p. 130)

‘Heterotelic’ goals, then, are the goals of persons other than oneself, and Stern labeled ‘introception’ the process of taking in of others’ goals and making them one’s own. Where the goals being accommodated are most accurately regarded as *transpersonal*, i.e., not simply those of particular other persons but proper to larger unitary entities such as ‘family, folk, humanity, or deity’—persons in an expanded sense of the term admissible within critical personalism—the accommodation is termed ‘hypertelic.’ Finally, Stern argued that ‘there are goals which do not pertain directly to other individual persons or to transpersonal entities but instead to the realization of abstract ideals such as truth, morality, justice, holiness, the idea of nationality, etc. This is ‘ideotelie,’ which, according to Stern, ‘is an indirect expression of hypertelie’ since ‘the significance of these abstract goals results from the facts of concrete upper unities, to which the individual is beholden’ (Stern 2010, p. 131).

It bears emphasis here that while Stern posited a limited form of syntelie among at least some subhuman animals, he maintained that genuine ideotelie applied exclusively to *human* being:

Only among humans does the incorporation of hypertelie into autotelie develop into a huge holding of relationships and entail inner struggles between individualism and socialism, between egoism and altruism, between duty and inclination, and to the final reconciliation of these in the total unity of the goal system of the personality. (Stern 2010, p. 131)

It is in the concepts of syntelie, introception, hypertelie, and ideotelie where one finds the rich possibilities offered by critical personalism as a framework for the elaboration of a critical *interpersonalism* and, indeed, a personalistically grounded *cultural psychology*.

Though Stern did not write extensively on the topic of ‘cultural psychology’ per se, he did view critical personalism as a framework rich in potential for that field. For example, within the context of his insistence upon the need for a teleological perspective in order to grasp the true nature of human being, Stern wrote in the concluding paragraph of *The Human Personality* (Stern 1918), through the treatment of this matter that he had offered in the book,

[t]he way has now been opened for making a critically teleological conception of human nature fruitful both for work in the human sciences *and for the grounding of cultural life*. (Stern 1918, p. 270, emphasis added)

In the view of the present authors, the systematic pursuit of this latter idea presents an exciting and important challenge for contemporary critical personalists.³

Critical Personalism as Humanism

The so-called ‘humanistic’ approach to psychology was established during the latter half of the twentieth century as the ‘third way’ beyond Freudian psychology on the one side and behaviorism on the other. Psychologists such as Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Gordon Allport, and others rejected the idea that human behavior was determined by either unconscious drives or the conditions of the outside world. The proponents of humanistic psychology rather affirmed the reality of personal self-determination and thus advocated a view of the person as an intentional and goal- and value-oriented organism, functioning holistically (Bugental 1964) that is consistent with the views of Stern. These considerations alone suggest the merit of viewing critical personalism as an essentially humanistic system of thought.

As a comprehensive worldview, however, critical personalism can properly be regarded as broader in scope and hence seen as compatible with every orientation in psychology that views purpose as an inherent characteristic of human behavior. This means that human ‘doings’—from sensations and perceptions through emotions and cognitions to overt action—cannot be reduced to simple mechanistic interplay of some physical or psychological parts of a person, but rather are expressions of the active goal orientation of the person as a whole.

Stern (2010) argued that

the task of science, and particularly that of psychology, lies not in the removal of the teleological but in its critical understanding. The goal categories of the person must be formulated in such a way that they stand not in contradiction to but in harmony with the facts and laws of scientific knowledge (p. 130).

In full accordance with this stipulation, he deliberately developed his worldview as one that embraces the scientific attitude while at the same time conserving human

³An early hint of Stern’s thinking on this topic can be found in an obscure work that he wrote in 1900. The text, which to the best of the present authors’ knowledge was never published, was presented orally on March 15, 1900, to an organization known as the Society of Brothers. Stern titled the presentation *On the Ethical Meaning of Tolerance* (Stern 1900a), and his central mission in that work was to highlight and then elucidate the importance of the distinction between two forms of *Toleranz* implied (at least at that time) by the German terms *Duldung* and *Duldsamkeit*. Stern understood *Duldung* as referring to a merely superficial form of tolerance that might best be expressed in English as *sufferance*, i.e., a form of toleration practiced either out of uncritical laziness or for ulterior motives. In contrast, Stern understood *Duldsamkeit* to refer to tolerance of a genuinely—and decidedly Aristotelian—virtuous sort situated between the two non-virtuous extremes of intolerance, on the one hand, and indolence, on the other. The achievement of genuinely virtuous tolerance requires the concerted effort of one person to engage with and thereby come to a *critical* understanding—i.e., one that avoids undisciplined relativism—of the values, customs, and practices of persons other than oneself.

values and purposes in a way that he described as ‘immanently teleological and holistic.’ He wrote:

Impersonalism denies the existence of teleological causality in general and wants to deduce all human events, psychological as well as physical, from mechanical laws of causality governing the elementary processes. Naïve personalism only knows an intentional teleology pushing from the outside, with God directing the behavior of the world and the soul the behavior of its body. Critical personalism, on the other hand, represents an immanent teleology: the person as a whole acts on its wholeness on behalf of its wholeness; all of its behavior is saturated by this tendency, beyond the psychological and physical; and the conscious purposeful intention is just a last and late emanation of this general purposivity. (Stern 1906, pp. 6–7; translation by K. Lehmann-Muriithi)

On the present authors’ view, Stern’s description of the immanent and holistic teleology of the person and, specifically, the claim of a natural orientation of the person as a whole toward values and purposes, can be understood as entirely consonant with what is called, following Carl Rogers (1902–1987) and other humanistic psychologists, the ‘actualizing tendency.’ Indeed, this holistic, teleological orientation might very well be the crucial defining characteristic of the person both for Stern and for Rogers. In any case, it is surely not by mere coincidence that both Stern and Rogers agreed with the holistic–teleological thinking of organismic biologists such as Kurt Goldstein (1878–1965), Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901–1972), and Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944),⁴ to all of whom both Stern and Rogers were linked professionally. Another striking parallel is seen in the fact that both critical personalism and Rogerian humanism not only acknowledge the value orientation of human doings, but also concur on the point that human persons are the source of values. Stern’s conception of persons as evaluators (see above) has its direct parallel in Rogers’ concept of the organismic valuing process.

Rogers on Personal Freedom

Closely related to the questions of teleology and valuation is the question of personal freedom. Rogers was acutely aware of this problem and, in particular, of the conceptual tension created between the assumption of freedom, on the one hand, and the tenets of a deterministic science.⁵ In one of his writings, he addressed himself directly to this problem as follows:

⁴As evidenced by his contribution to the *Festschrift* honoring Hans Driesch (1867–1941) on his 60th birthday (see von Hartmann and Stern 1927), Stern also had some affinity for Driesch’s vitalistic/teleological ideas. It must be emphasized, however, that Stern was opposed to any dualistic conception of the idea of a vitalistic life force.

⁵In a but thinly disguised rebuke of Windelband’s (1894) deduction of individual freedom, Stern’s mentor Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850–1909) had declared belief in such freedom entirely the result of ignorance and insisted that a truly scientific psychology required the assumption of the ‘absolute and inevitable subjection to law of all mental processes’ (Ebbinghaus 1908, p. 7).

[W]hat is really at issue is the confrontation of two paradoxes. If the extreme behaviorist position is true, then everything an individual does is essentially meaningless, since he is but an atom caught in a seamless chain of cause and effect. On the other hand, if the thoroughgoing humanistic position is true, then choice enters in, and this individual subjective choice has some influence on the cause-and-effect chain. Then, scientific research, which is based on a complete confidence in an unbroken chain of cause and effect, must be fundamentally modified. I, as well as others, have attempted to explain away this dilemma – my own attempt was in a 1964 paper called ‘Freedom and Commitment,’ but I believe we must wait for the future to bring about the full reconciliation of these paradoxes. (Rogers 1980, p. 58)

The attempted resolution of the dilemma Rogers identified in this passage consisted in locating the freedom of the person in a ‘phenomenological dimension,’ which he viewed as complementary to the dimension of causal relations explored through science (Rogers 1964). He elaborated as follows:

[W]e are first of all speaking of something which exists within the individual, something phenomenological rather than objective, but nonetheless to be prized. ... [It] exists not as a contradiction of the picture of the psychological universe as a sequence of cause and effect, but as a complement to such a universe. Freedom rightly understood is a fulfillment by the person of the ordered sequence of his life. The free man moves out voluntarily, freely, responsibly, to play his significant part in a world whose determined events move through him and through his spontaneous choice and will. I see this freedom of which I am speaking, then, as existing in a different dimension than the determined sequence of cause and effect. (Rogers 1969, pp. 268–269)

In Rogers’s thinking, then, the possibility of personal freedom would exist in ‘another dimension’ than relations of cause and effect. This seemingly dualistic solution does seem to avoid a direct contradiction, but it is also unsatisfactory because an insistence on the separation of the dimension of phenomenological experience from the dimension of causal relations would seem to require the surrender of the notion of intentional personal effects which must be presumed to exist precisely at the intersection of those two dimensions. To retain that seemingly necessary notion, then, requires further elaboration of the relationship between the two indicated dimensions of reality. The problem here, then, is in essence the age-old difficulty of dualism, and Rogers’s sense that this is the case was quite possibly the source of his dissatisfaction with his own solution as stated in the above quotation. In one reiteration of the point that he had first made in 1964, Rogers stated: ‘I do not pretend that I have resolved the age-old problem of freedom and determinism, but I have, for myself, formulated a way of living with it (Rogers 1969, p. 259).’

Had Rogers been familiar with Stern’s writings, he might have found in critical personalism one possible solution to this conceptual tension. Within that system of thought, Stern not only affirmed the existence of personal freedom, values, and effectance (cf. White 1959), all of which are entailed by his definition of the person, but he regarded those aspects of the person as legitimate objects of scientific research. This is especially true, as we shall see, to the extent that that research would be carried out in accordance with the phenomenologically oriented methods of humanistic inquiry. Critical personalism thus can be viewed not only as a

precursor of the humanistic notion of teleological and holistic understanding of human being—including what Rogers and his followers would come to refer to as ‘organismic valuing,’ but also as a framework within which to meet the philosophical challenges often associated with such a perspective.⁶

In this regard, one strength of critical personalism lies in the tenet that a person is not only an entity other than a thing, but is at the same time an entity intrinsically more precious than a thing by virtue of its essential teleological characteristic of striving toward its own self-preservation (*Selbsterhaltung*) and self-development (*Selbstentwicklung*).⁷ This characteristic transcends the distinction between mind and body; for as noted previously in this chapter, critical personalism regards the person as fundamentally *psychophysically neutral*. Alongside the irreducible distinction between persons and things, this postulation of psychophysical neutrality is perhaps critical personalism’s greatest philosophical asset.

For Stern, an important implication of the foregoing considerations was that when scientific inquiry is directed at human persons **as persons**, methods are required which go beyond those that are sufficient for the scientific study of mere things. Even the method of generating and analyzing test scores, a method featured prominently in the differential psychology that Stern himself founded (cf. Stern 1900b, 1911) was regarded by him as inadequate to the task of scientifically representing human individualities. Across a great many of his writings, he expressed in various ways the view that

... [t]he person is a unified whole, and has depth. A human being is not a mosaic, and therefore cannot be described as a mosaic. All attempts to represent a person simply in terms of a sequence of test scores are fundamentally false. (Stern 1929, p. 63)

It is partly because of this conviction that Stern could appreciate the need for phenomenological methods of investigation alongside the experimental and test/assessment methods predominant within the mainstream.

On the Compatibility of Critical Personalism and Phenomenology

Stern and the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), who is widely credited with establishing the school of phenomenology, held in common the overarching objective for their respective philosophical undertakings: to provide a

⁶Sperry (1993), for example, has argued that the concept of a non-reductive, i.e., holistic mental causation lies at the heart of the so-called cognitive revolution in psychology.

⁷It should also be noted that within the domain of self-development, Stern further distinguished between ‘conservative’ and ‘productive’ self-development. The former refers to ‘the growth and maturation of the forms and functions already present in the species,’ whereas the latter refers to ‘the development toward goals not previously present, i.e., toward the original formulation of new forms of being through personal doing’ (Stern 2010, p. 130).

conceptual foundation for the scientific investigation of personal entities. That is what Stern asserted in the foreword of the first volume of *Person and Thing* (Stern 1906), and that is also what Husserl set out to achieve with phenomenology. Both scholars saw the essential problem as that of remaining true to the subject matter presented personal entities in a way that would qualify as scientific. As the Husserl scholar, John Jalbert, noted, the challenge was to establish a science of life that ‘does not in the process alienate itself from and distort its subject matter’ (Jalbert 1988, p. 280).

Given that Stern and Husserl shared this objective, it is reasonable to expect substantial compatibility in their views, and there is, in fact, clear evidence of same. For example, Stern’s student in Breslau, Edith Stein (1891–1942) went on to complete her doctoral dissertation under Husserl, completing a phenomenological analysis of empathy (Stein 1917) that Stern would in turn praise in a letter to his philosopher colleague and friend, Jonas Cohn (1869–1947; cf. Lück and Löwisch 1994, p. 108). Perhaps even more revealing is the fact that Stern’s own son, Günther, who was substantially influenced by his father’s philosophy, also went on to doctoral studies under Husserl. But there is more.

Husserl (1901/2014a) characterized phenomenology as a ‘descriptive psychology’ in order to perform an analysis on the structures of consciousness. In this sense, phenomenology appeared with the proposal of being an apodictic science that seeks to analyze and describe the phenomena as they appear to consciousness, and also seeks to describe the essential structure of consciousness. ‘Pure phenomenology’ (*reine Phänomenologie*) does not aim at the description of actual cognitive processes or the description of psychophysical structures, which is properly the task of empirical psychology, but rather seeks to vivify the pure structures of intentional consciousness that can be but need not be intended in actual cognitive processes.

The phenomenological method accommodates the analysis of a possible world outside the range of empirical experience, but it also allows the description of actual experiential episodes in terms of their phenomenological content. This is what Husserl sought to explain in his series of lectures on phenomenological psychology. The phenomenological description of actual experiential episodes does not, however, require the actual existence of the phenomena described. What Husserl termed the ‘eidetic reduction’ (also called the *epoché*), which is the first step of the phenomenological method, is the existential suspension of all that is incidental in the intended phenomenon (the intended reality and its contingencies), thus allowing to emerge what is essential to a phenomenon in itself. Bracketing everything we know by experience means suspending all previously given knowledge about what one wants to investigate and then proceeding from immediate intuition—which is primary for the knowing of anything at all. Thus, what is of central interest to the phenomenologist is not what the world is like in reality, but rather the way the human being ‘intends’ it. The second step of the phenomenological method entails the transcendental reduction, i.e., the description of the pure acts of consciousness.

From the standpoint of Husserl’s phenomenological psychology, the discipline of psychology should be founded on a consistent description of the person and the

grounding of his or her particular comprehension. Toward the realization of this goal, Husserl and the aforementioned Edith Stein highlighted in particular the intentional act that would provide the condition for the knowledge of other people and also the basis for intersubjective knowledge of the world: empathy. Based on perception, this intentional act enables one to recognize other persons in their respective psychological and spiritual lives. Through empathy, it is possible to recognize the experience of the other person's corporeity, as a living embodiment of meaning. This acknowledgement is only the initial movement of empathic apprehension, enabling the subsequent coapprehension of the intentionality of the other's acts (Stein 1917/2003).

A substantial affinity for these phenomenological principles is evident in Stern's conception of epistemology. He advances a 'hierarchy of the kinds of recognition of being' (*eine Rangordnung der Seinerfassungen*) (Stern 1924, *passim*), in which he arranges the different kinds of recognition of being in ascending order: from lower intuition through conceptual abstraction to higher intuition he regards as the apex of intuition something that he calls *understanding introception*. Here, the subject recognizes the entity of regard to the extent of identifying with it, and Stern argues that through this kind of recognition 'the best possible convergence with the core being of persons is to be attained (Stern 1927, p. 163).' This 'understanding introception' Stern regards as necessary in order to move beyond knowledge of human being in general to knowledge of persons in particular:

But even though a 'dis-egotized' (*entichende*) recognition [i.e., the kind of impersonal recognition pursued in the objectifying sciences] may enable the determination and explanation of the personal in terms of general categories, it is not able to grasp persons in their concrete substance. For this, the other, *understanding* form of recognition is required. (Stern 1924, p. 350)

Stern elaborated his convictions regarding the indispensability of this 'understanding' form of recognition as follows:

It is necessary whenever we want to inquire into not just personal categories but the concreteness of personal essence. This is why this method also has its legitimate place in psychology. The psychological diagnosis of any individual X can not be completed by psychographical description of his or her single achievements and the experimental testing of certain abilities. It is only when we know what these particulars mean in the personality structure of X as a whole that we get an 'understandable' picture. But what does 'mean' mean here? Again: the integration of these particulars into the contexts of signification and value inherent to X as an introceptive being. But the psychologist him- or herself, too, can only comprehend this through introception. (Stern 1924, p. 376, translation by Kolja Lehmann-Muriithi)

Stern's notion of 'understanding introception,' then, as the highest kind of recognition of being, is clearly very close to, if not identical with, the phenomenological concept of empathic apprehension, and Stern even assigns the concept a central role in understanding a person as an introceptive and holistic-teleological being behaving in goal-, meaning-, and value-oriented ways. Here and elsewhere, Stern places himself squarely within the tradition of the 'understanding' psychology advocated by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911). Like Wilhelm Windelband

(1848–1915), Dilthey (1894) stressed the methodological differences between the human sciences and the natural sciences. But even more so than Windelband (cf. Windelband 1998), Dilthey was convinced of the plausibility and importance of a psychology oriented toward the human science, and toward investigative methods suited to those disciplines.

In his *Selbstdarstellung*, Stern (1927) openly expressed his regret over the fact that during his student days, he had not taken better advantage of Dilthey's tuition. Nor were Dilthey's contributions in this direction lost on Husserl. On the contrary, in his *Phenomenological Psychology*, we find the following:

Dilthey had penetrated to the recognition that scientific description on the basis of external experience designates a performance which differs essentially and fundamentally from scientific description on the basis of internal experience, the experience of the purely mental. He saw that scientific description in the region of mentality already includes as its result a complete clarification, precisely because of the capacity of all mental intertwinings to be relived, including the intertwining of motivation. Pure analysis and description pursued far enough explain, and indeed in completely satisfactory fashion, what concrete, historical, socio-cultural science inquires about, because, here, explaining can have no other sense than that of making apparent on mental grounds the internal necessities of mental genesis, of mental origination. Mentality includes, purely in itself, a species of causality, the causality of motivation. And it itself belongs to the content of lived experience and is therefore directly accessible to simple intuition and description. To understand the origin of a work of art in the way of socio-cultural sciences is not to do psychophysics; it does not mean inquiring into the psychophysical causalities which occur between the psychic life of the artists and physical nature. It means, rather, to project oneself into the living and striving of the artist, to bring it to an appropriate and fully living intuition and to make intelligible on the basis of his motives the system of goal-positings and realizing activities. If that is done completely, then no meaningful question is left for history of art. (Husserl 1925, pp. 6–7)

Clearly, Husserl's phenomenological method fits this description of the conditions of understanding called for in the sociocultural sciences, and it was none other than Dilthey who drew Husserl's attention to the congeniality of their respective approaches. As Husserl notes:

Dilthey himself established this relationship; for, unfortunately, under the influence of Ebbinghaus's brilliant rebuttal,⁸ I had considered it unnecessary to read Dilthey's great work, all the more so since I had little receptivity at all for the significance of Dilthey's writings in those years. In my internal struggle for a fundamental overcoming of positivism, I had to repulse the strong tendency toward positivism which had appeared in Dilthey's previous work, the *'Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften'*. I was at first not a little surprised to hear personally from Dilthey that phenomenology, and indeed the descriptive analysis of the second, specifically phenomenological, part of the *Logical Investigations* were in essential harmony with his *'Ideen'*,⁹ and could be regarded as a first fundamental piece of an actual phenomenologically matured execution of the psychology which he had in mind as an ideal. Dilthey always laid the greatest weight upon this coincidence of our investigations, in spite of essentially different points of departure, and in his old age he took

⁸Husserl's reference here was to Ebbinghaus's (1896) harsh critique of Dilthey's 1894 call for a *verstehende* psychology.

⁹By this, Husserl meant the above-cited work by Dilthey (1894).

up once again with sheer youthful enthusiasm his investigations in the theory of the socio-cultural sciences, which he had dropped. The result was the last and most beautiful of his writings on this subject – from which he was unfortunately taken by death – ‘*Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt*’ (‘The construction of the historical world’) in the *Abhandlungen der Berliner Akademie* (Proceedings of the Berlin Academy). (Husserl 1925, pp. 24–25)

It would seem, therefore, that both Husserl and Stern saw the necessity of an understanding psychology in the spirit of Dilthey in order to grasp or make sense of human being through inquiry into the intentional orientation in and valuation of the respective lifeworlds of individual persons. Interestingly, this complementarity works both ways: Not only did Stern acknowledge the necessity of a phenomenological method (though he did not term the method ‘phenomenological’), but also Husserl, for his part, recognized the need for a ‘personalistic attitude’ (*eine personalistische Einstellung*) as a condition for empathy, i.e., the necessity of recognizing the personhood of the other as a condition for empathy (*Einfühlung*). As a precondition for empathizing at all, one must conceive of the other as a human being with basically very similar physical and psychological qualities as oneself—not just a body, but also a mind, with both facets of being directed in teleological fashion toward the fulfillment of goals.

Without question, Husserl saw a close connection between the essence of the phenomenological method and the object of its application, intentional experiences, on the one hand, and the teleological essence of the human personality and the actions occasioned by it on the other hand (Jalbert 1988). Thus did he write in his *Phenomenological Psychology*:

The psychic nexus is a nexus of efficacy, a nexus of development, and is governed throughout by an immanent teleology which can be exhibited analytically. A directedness towards values runs through life, a unitary striving toward happiness, toward contentment, an instinctive or consciously purposeful directedness. (Husserl 1925, p. 6)

Further on in the same work, Husserl proclaimed:

Whoever does not see what is essential to intentionality and the particular methodology pertaining to it, does not see what is essential to personality and personal productions, either. (Husserl 1925, p. 169)

Conclusion

In his fine article on William Stern, Wilfried Schmidt (1985) stated that while Stern was not a phenomenologist, ‘he was able to give good phenomenological descriptions, especially toward the end of his career’ (Schmidt 1985, p. 156). He then gave the following example, based on a discussion by Stern in 1932 of the personal dimensions of space and time:

I am here now, reading this paper. 'Here now.' What does this mean? Here is certainly not the zero point of coordinates in the sense of mathematical space; ... now just as certainly is not that infinitesimally small and sharp dividing line akin to the zero point in a mathematically calibrated time line – somehow, both are *extended* and at the same time *formed*.

'Here' is the total complex of my person together with the lectern, while you, the listeners, are 'there.' But 'here' is also the auditorium in contrast to the 'there' on the street; 'here' is Copenhagen in contrast to Hamburg, my usual 'here.'

And 'now' is the time during which I utter the whole of this sentence. 'Now' is also the time that I present the whole of this paper. 'Now' is the time of the congress, in contrast with the past or the coming week. Indeed, it makes sense to utter the paradox: I am 'now' teaching in Hamburg – although I am not there.

It transpires therefore that my person not only lives in an extended 'Here and Now,' (in contrast with the segmented 'Here' and 'Now' of mathematics), but at the same time at different 'Heres' and 'Nows', which form layers and cross each other (mathematically an impossibility) – and which, depending on the particular situation and the personal attitude, stand either in the foreground or in the background and give to my mode of existence a particular structure, a particular 'presence.' (Stern 1932, as quoted in Schmidt 1985, pp. 156–157; parentheses in original)¹⁰

In this passage, we find ample evidence of Stern's comfort with the phenomenological method, and this further underscores the compatibility of his thinking within the framework of critical personalism with the ideas of other phenomenologically oriented thinkers such as Dilthey and Husserl. It is our hope that establishing these philosophical connections has enhanced the appreciation among readers for the rich potential of Stern's critical personalism as a framework for understanding human being, i.e., for understanding a teleologically conceived entity that, as a coherent whole, is oriented toward values and purposes, and whose behavior thus can only be grasped fully by inquiring into its particular intentional perspective.

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¹⁰In her work *Introduction to Philosophy*, Stein (1991/2003) makes a point very compatible with Stern's observation here. Specifically, in discussing the problem of individuality in the natural sciences, the reference is strictly to **numerical** individuality and so admits of expression in strictly quantitative terms. In the cultural sciences, however, individuality must be understood and expressed **qualitatively**, because the same personality can be, simultaneously, in 'different' places and times. This view conforms to Stein's understanding of the constitution of the living human's body as both a natural object and a spiritual one, since it delineates a human personality.

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Chapter 13

Values and Their Ways of Guiding the *Psyche*

Angela Uchoa Branco

Within the realms of art, literature, and philosophy, values and beliefs held by individuals have always played a major role in making sense of human life, what is expressed in people's actions and interactions that knit the very nature of the complicated tales found in cultural narratives. The struggle between right and wrong, impregnated by claims for the prevalence of moral values over the power of dominant selfish values, can be found everywhere, from the Old Testament to Sophocles, from the Bhagavad Gita to Shakespeare, and lies at the basis of the literary success of all commended novels ever written. All powerful cultural narratives confer meanings to human experience in diverse cultural–historical contexts, and their artful quality promotes reflexivity among readers as they portray the relations between actual collective and individual cultural values and beliefs. Hence, we can say that cultural narratives, and the meaning-making processes they activate, in certain ways manage to guide further semiotic elaborations on topics relevant for everyday life experiences, as well as for future cultural practices and actions.

Human Motivation from a Cultural Perspective

Human motivation no doubt guides human actions as we strive through life troubles and obstacles to achieve, intentionally and non-intentionally, the complex goals that provide meaning to our everyday life. The concept of motivation, then, is central to understand human psyche and its ways of relating to the world, herein including the way we relate to other people, different contexts, as well as to ourselves. The construct of motivation is exceptionally broad and complex (Ryan 2014), since it refers to the emergence, nature, and dynamics of those affective-semiotic signs that ultimately guide our conduct as we interact with others and world events in culturally specific contexts.

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From a cultural psychological approach, motivation is conceived as a hierarchical yet fuzzy dynamic developmental system which encompasses psychological field-constructs such as goal orientations, general beliefs, and, particularly, affect-laden values that continuously change and stabilize the dialogical self-system as time goes by (Branco et al. 2008). Goal orientations (Branco and Valsiner 1997), beliefs, and values are intimately linked to each other, although different degrees of similarity and contradiction are empirically verified and theoretically expected. The motivation system operates in the here and now through goal orientations and, along irreversible time, some particular affective-semiotic fields acquire progressive psychological power, as they become more and more impregnated with feelings and affectivity. Incipient preferences, motives, and tendencies may end up mostly guiding the subject's actions, and providing some stability and coherence to the system as a whole, what results, in a sense of continuity and identity as the individual develops—change—throughout life. However, changes in one's values may still occur at any age due to specific events or experiences (ruptures). Branco et al. (2008) analyze a couple of instances of this nature, demonstrating how radical values change experiences can actually be (see later in this chapter).

As it happens with any other sub-system composing the person's self-system, the motivation system develops along ontogenesis as the person moves through her flux of experiences across varied contexts (mesogenesis) and social interactions (microgenesis). This means that the motivational system emerges and develops within the dynamic of the dialogical self-system, and, in order to understand the issue of values, we need to investigate their emergence, functions, and development, i.e., their ontogenesis. Considering, then, the fundamental part played by the higher dimensions of human motivation—namely human values—I wish to highlight the significance of a specific question: why psychology, as a scientific endeavor, ended up putting this subject aside, as something that would only matter to philosophy or anthropology? To this query I also add a corollary question: why, when mainstream scientific psychology eventually include this subject in its agenda, does it reduce the topic to a nonsensical search for a bunch of discrete, imaginary, fixed, and independent categories inferred from questionnaires, tests, and rating-scales? How is it possible that the so-called scientific psychology fools itself by reducing such complex phenomena into statistics built on the prevalence of a few categories derived from such scales and questionnaires, what definitely does not help making sense of human contextualized actions?

Along this chapter I claim for the necessity of dealing with complex psychological phenomena such as the issue of values and their way to guide individuals' lives. To support this claim, first I bring to the reader's attention some of the major principles and processes that cultural psychology has identified along its theoretical efforts vis-à-vis empirical findings (Bruner 1990; Valsiner 2014). Then, I draw my arguments concerning the emergence and ontogenesis of human values, stressing their fundamental power as specific affective-semiotic hypergeneralized fields co-constructed along the past–present–future time dimension. The goal, therefore, is to elaborate on their ontogenesis and its foremost function of orienting the individual's

actions, as he/she integrates aspects of the past and present in anticipation of the future, moving, in the present, toward the uncertainty of the future.

The Mutual Construction of Cultural Practices and Semiotic Fields from a Developmental Dynamic System Approach

In this section, I highlight a key principle that sustains the theoretical edifice of the cultural psychological approach. Culture (Bruner 1990; Boesch 2012; Cole 1998) encompasses both the sociocultural practices and semiotic activities, the last mostly expressed by what Vygotsky conceptualized as the symbolic dimension of thought and language (Vygotsky 1988). However, we still detect—in the discourse and research practices of many socioculturally orientated theorists that contribute to the scientific literature in the area—a visible tendency to privilege the study of either observable cultural practices, i.e., collective activities (Cole 1998; Engeström et al. 1999; Rogoff 2005), or the dynamics of meaning-making processes revealed in discourse and narratives (Brockmeier 2012; Bruner 1990; Harré and Gillett 1994). It seems that for many theorists the pursuit of those divergent goals could be difficult to reconcile. However, the opposition between the study of observable activities and interpretative analysis of discourse can and should be conceived as an essential task for cultural psychologists, who need to investigate this issue from an inclusive-separation approach (Valsiner and Cairns 1992). As Marková (2014) discusses complementarity conceived as an epistemology of life, along the line proposed by Niels Bohr, she criticizes the exclusive separation approach defended by Cartesian perspectives on scientific knowledge construction. Such perspectives demand clear-cut separations of subject and object and of the opposite poles of the same phenomena. For example, from a Cartesian framework, cooperation and competition are viewed as radical opposing categories, and not as parts of the whole phenomena involving the coordination of human interactions vis-a-vis the attainment of a goal (Branco et al. 2012). Marková (2014) argues for the necessity of taking into account the dualistic nature of any phenomenon, as the matter of light as particle and wave, and she reasons that even though each part needs to be differentiated and analyzed, they still compose a whole with particular qualities. Consequently, the parts of the whole consist of a duality that require being studied in their specificities, but need to be conceptualized as inclusively separated from each other.

In other words, physical and semiotic activities are the two (interacting) sides of the same coin, and they must be conceptualized and studied as the complementary dimensions of the same psychological phenomenon, namely the coconstruction of human development within historically–culturally organized developing contexts. Notwithstanding, some theorists insist on claiming that the ‘true’ pathway to serious investigation in cultural psychology lies exclusively with their own preferences

(Ratner 2002; 2012). By doing so, they reduce the systemic complexity of psychological phenomena to just one particular aspect, instead of recognizing the requirement for an integrated study of the intertwined dimensions of culturally contextualized practices and the ever-active human psyche.

Human Development from a Systemic Viewpoint

Once recognizing the polarized, twofold nature of the psychological phenomena, the first step to be taken is to approach the study of human development from a systemic and cultural–historical viewpoint. The best way to summarize such systemic and integrated approach to psychology is to acknowledge the mutual, reciprocal constitution of cultural practices, and *processes of meaning coconstruction, i.e., the processes of semiosis* (Lotman 2005; Peirce 1995; Rosa 2007). *This dynamic coconstitution flows along time linking the past, present and future dimensions into a past–present–future dimension: in fact, we act in the present time building upon past experiences, taking into account the present circumstances, and anticipating the immediate and long-term future.* The irreversible time dimension also needs to be approached from microgenesis to ontogenesis, as well as from mesogenesis and from what can be conceived as the cultural–historical time (Rossetti-Ferreira et al. 2002).

The ability to conceive the human psyche as capable to integrate past, present, and anticipated future experiences is a singular human characteristic, and to bear this in mind is crucial to make sense of psychological phenomena. Therefore, the best way to face the challenge regarding the complex dynamics of human development is to consider our object of investigation—the person—as an open system in permanent transactions with all sorts of other surrounding open systems. Such continuous transactions involve other people and different aspects of the contexts, situated at micro-, meso-, and macro-levels, all operating as a complex systemic network characterized by the simultaneous activation of change and stability dynamic processes (Ford and Lerner 1992; Tehlen and Smith 2006).

The general picture of bringing together developmental systems theory and cultural psychology indeed provides an excellent basis for further theoretical exploration. In fact, what defies our creative thinking is to find a way to analyze and account for the complex multi-causality of psychological phenomena. This has to be done, though, in total awareness of the principles of determinism and indeterminism (Fogel et al. 1997), which operate simultaneously along dynamic systems development.

Beyond Language and the Redefinition of Semiosis. The Fundamental Power of Affect, or Affectivity, Over Semiotic Processes

May it be intentional or not, human motivation impels our actions as we go by, although it changes its orientations in different degrees as sociocultural contexts produce their own suggestions, constraints, rules, affordances, requirements, or strict obligations. Frequently, we are surprised by how our goal orientations, and consequent actions, completely switch over from one to another, leading us to unexpected directions. Nonetheless, in any case what prevails—in the affect-cognition unity that steers us around—is the affective tone, or feelings, that back our ongoing decisions. The fact of motivation being a psychological construct laden with potent feelings and emotions is nothing new (Ryan 2014). However, to study and make sense of the affective dimension of human phenomena is immensely more difficult than making sense of cognition and rational thinking, due to the easier access to the last processes (reason, cognition) through the mediation of language. I am far from suggesting that such processes are not impregnated with feelings and emotions; I simply remark the existence of much more research projects targeting language and cognition in comparison with the study of affectivity. Many of such projects rely on the definition of units of analysis which are more prone to be investigated by current well-established methodological tools. After all, science is built on the assumption that there exists a scientific language that must and can be (objectively) shared among peers. Hence, psychological processes such as language, memory, and cognition in general have been vastly investigated by researchers in the context of psychological science (Branco 2006, 2009). On the other hand, practical psychologists dealing with their occupational duties, particularly clinical psychologists, have to face the challenge of investigating the nature of feelings and emotions one way or another, and they conduct their studies trying to give priority to the analysis of the power of drives and emotions, not necessarily with successful results. In short, emotions and feelings in general, i.e., the dimension of affectivity, cannot be easily understood by the use of language—science’s rational knowledge construction celebrated tool. Consequently, the study of affectivity requires much more complex procedures associated with a lot of theoretical convincing interpretation, in order to concede the knowledge resulting from the study with credible scientific status. As feelings and affectivity are progressively acknowledged in psychology as playing a central role in psychological processes as a whole, methodological innovations such as the inclusion of multiple procedures, especially techniques that rely on observations and not just on discursive material, will be fundamental to provide researchers with better tools to analyze and make sense of the sensuous nature of human experiencing.

Affective-Semiotic Regulation of Psychological Processes

No matter how difficult the task is, it needs to be tackled anyway, and the theoretical constructions advanced by cultural psychology open new venues for the investigation and scientific enquiry of the intermingled nature of the affect-cognition unity, long proposed by Vygotsky theory. The immediate consequence of such endeavor is the conceptualization of semiosis: It can no longer be narrowed down to mostly linguistic phenomena, but, instead, semiotic processes must be seen as processes that have their very roots in human affective experience (Branco and Valsiner 2010). Taking that into account, Valsiner (2014) elaborated a model specifying a hierarchy composed by five levels, consisting of four affective-semiotic fields, from category-like feelings (the specific emotions) to hypergeneralized complex signs, with increasing degree of regulatory power over human psyche and conduct (values). His model, summarized below in Fig. 13.1 after the version published in Valsiner (2014), describes how the affective-semiotic dynamics of psychological functioning is hierarchically organized at five levels, from level zero (physiological excitement, no explicit semiosis yet) to preliminary feelings (level 1, incipient semiosis) to verbally categorized emotions (level 2), to generalized feelings that may turn too difficult to describe (level 3), up to level 4, which lies at the top of the hierarchy and is characterized by hypergeneralized powerful affective-semiotic fields. Such fields—or values—then exert a strong dominance over the other levels and over the individual’s actions and psychological processes, among which perception, interpretation, meaning construction, and expectations regarding the future.


LEVEL 4 Hypergeneralized Affective Semiotic Field	One cannot describe it clearly, but feels it is extremely important to one’s life ...	Values, prejudices : hypergeneralized powerful affective signs
		Increased difficulty in verbal referencing to affective signs
LEVEL 3 Generalized Categories of Affective Signs	I feel good / bad about this, this is ‘right’ / ‘wrong’ ...	
LEVEL 2 Specific Categories of Emotions	Joy Sadness Disgust ...	Feelings labelled as emotions
		Emergence of verbal referencing based on further differentiation of feelings
LEVEL 1 General Feeling Tone	Good excitement Discomfort, aversion ...	(Emergence of semiosis)
		Pre-verbal differentiation of feelings based on physiological arousal
LEVEL 0 Physiological Level (excitement and inhibition)		(physiological arousal)

Fig. 13.1 Affective-semiotic regulatory model (after Valsiner 2005, 2014)

Examples drawn from everyday life can be helpful to clarify the way affective-semiotic hierarchies work. Imagine a teenage girl with a history of overweight due to her intense appreciation of food. After successive failures to find a boyfriend, and after bullying by family and friends, she starts to visit Web sites which, though intending to promote slenderness, may end up promoting anorexia. After a while, most of her everyday actions are governed by an obsession to be as thin as possible. Even when her current boyfriend complains about her anorexic figure, she does not give into reason and makes sure that all her life choices abide by keeping her awfully skinny shape, never thin enough vis-à-vis her distorted self-image. Her actions, interactions, emotions, and feelings all become subordinate to that hypergeneralized value sign (thinness), which tyrannically commands her psyche.

Another example could be drawn from actual news concerning the increasing wave of terrorism in the West world: How can one explain why some youth born in European countries end up choosing to join radical, fundamentalist ideologies that prescribe murder and self-sacrifice? How do they turn around to adhere to values which not only celebrate the killing of innocent people, but also endear the sacrifice of their own lives as they slaughter these people? Resisting to torture to keep relevant information from the enemy's ears is another powerful example, no matter the moral nature of the specific values held by the unfortunate prisoner. All the examples given above clearly demonstrate the complete dominance of human actions by deeply affect-rooted values, even when those cherished values cost a terrible suffering, including the loss of one's own and others' lives.

The Individual as a Complex Dynamic Developmental System: Dialogical Self-System

The concepts and theory regarding the dialogical self-system have been elaborated by Hermans and colleagues (Hermans 2001, 2002; Hermans and Kempen 1993; Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 2010; Hermans and Salgado 2010) based on the fruitful contributions of George Mead, William James, and Mikail Bakhtin. The dialogical perspective has been advanced by other authors (Andacht and Michel 2005; Bertau 2008; Grossen and Salazar Orvig 2011; Leiman 2002; Raggatt 2010; Richardson 2011; Salgado and Gonçalves 2007) with interesting results, and it comprises, together with cultural psychology, the theoretical foundations of the research projects we have developed at the Laboratory of Microgenesis in Social Interactions, at the University of Brasilia (Branco and Lopes de Oliveira 2012). Some of those projects targeted the development of I/self-positionings in children attending to early childhood educational centers (Roncancio and Branco 2014) and elementary school contexts (Freire 2008; Freire and Branco 2010, in press). To pursue this goal, we draw on some key ideas proposed by three major contributions: the developmental perspective grounded in cultural psychology (Salvatore 2013;

Valsiner 2007, 2014; Zittoun 2006, 2012), Herman's dialogical self-theory, and other theoretical elaborations on the dialogical approach (Bakhtin 1982; Lyra 2010; Marková 2003; Richardson 2011). As mentioned before in this chapter, the dialogical and the cultural theoretical approaches are compatible (Mattos 2013; Mattos and Chaves 2013) because both build upon sociogenesis as their epistemological standpoint, advocating the vital significance of alterity and the dynamic construction of psyche in irreversible time. Cultural psychology's epistemology is rooted in the mutual constitution of personal and collective cultures, meanings, and practices taking place through complex and interconnected inter- and intrapsychological processes governed by a dialogical dynamics. Yet, the same sort of dynamics lies at the core of the dialogical approach to the configuration of self, generating continuous dialogs between I-Positions coconstructed along interpersonal (social) and intrapersonal (psychological) interactions.

Cultural psychology affirms that affective-semiotic psychological phenomena are generated by cultural practices and activities, which simultaneously generates the emergence of meanings that guide and promote such practices and activities, translated in individuals' actions and interactions within specific contexts. Both dimensions—observed actions and semiotic processes—are mutually constitutive, and the continued operation of a constructive, active subject is epistemologically granted. Moreover, in accordance with a systemic approach, cultural psychology presupposes the dynamic quality of the hierarchical configuration and reconfiguration of personal cultural semiotic systems—as the subject moves along irreversible time throughout life experiences within diverse cultural contexts. The experiences lived through by individuals in their developmental trajectory are impregnated by multiple—sometimes contradictory—complex meanings created within sociocultural practices, giving rise to what we designate as the person's dialogical self-system (Branco et al. 2008; Freire and Branco, in press; Roncancio and Branco, in press).

Departing from cultural psychology and from a dialogical perspective, within a developmental system theory framework, we ultimately conceptualize of the dialogical self-system as a dynamic system that undergoes permanent hierarchical configuration and reconfiguration, due to the flux of individual's social encounters and experiences along ontogenesis. The dialogical self-system—DSS—results from dialogical processes located at both interpersonal and intrapersonal levels within specific cultural contexts, which generate multiple 'I/Self-Positionings' along irreversible time, from micro- to ontogenetic time lines. The DSS can be conceived as the constant interplay of its dual aspects: the 'I,' or the agentic aspect of the system, and the 'self,' or the reflexive aspect (Hermans 2001; Mead 1934). The best way to describe or to refer to the DSS, therefore, should be the 'dialogical I/self-system'; however, the abbreviated format designation to the DSS as 'dialogical self' may facilitate the theoretical elaborations within the dialogical paradigm.

As a dynamic system, the DSS development is characterized by the operation of centrifugal forces consisting of instability, diversification, and change, as well as the action of centripetal forces that provide for the relative stability, integration, and

continuation of the system along time. The components of the system are dynamically organized and linked to each other by multidimensional processes that confer interdependence to the system’s constituents, according to an array of complex interactions between the individual and her contexts. Such interactions occur at both the inter- and intrapsychological levels as the system develops and grants its uniqueness due to its dynamic stability.

The sense of continued oneness, self-awareness, and agency plays a central role in the psyche by providing for the system integration, reflexivity, and willful actions. The DSS, though, shows an extremely important characteristic that is singular to our species: The presence of areas of awareness and non-awareness intermingled in complex and fuzzy ways to produce intentionality and non-intentionality zones. These zones overlap and mix up in such ways that usually defy both self and observer regarding the motives or reasons for specific actions. For instance, a man trying to impress a lady during their first date may very much want to demonstrate his winner profile, but as he is terribly afraid of engaging in any sort of commitment, he may instead scare the woman away with his excessive show off of self-confidence and arrogance. The complexities involved in the interplay and intertwined nature of such zones, though, are beyond the scope of the chapter’s present goals.

As depicted in Fig. 13.2, the major dynamic components of the DSS can be envisioned as *I/self-positionings sustained by specific Affective-Semiotic Fields—ASF*, whose hierarchical organization in terms of dominance over the system continuously change (we will elaborate later on how ASF lie at the origin of a person’s values).

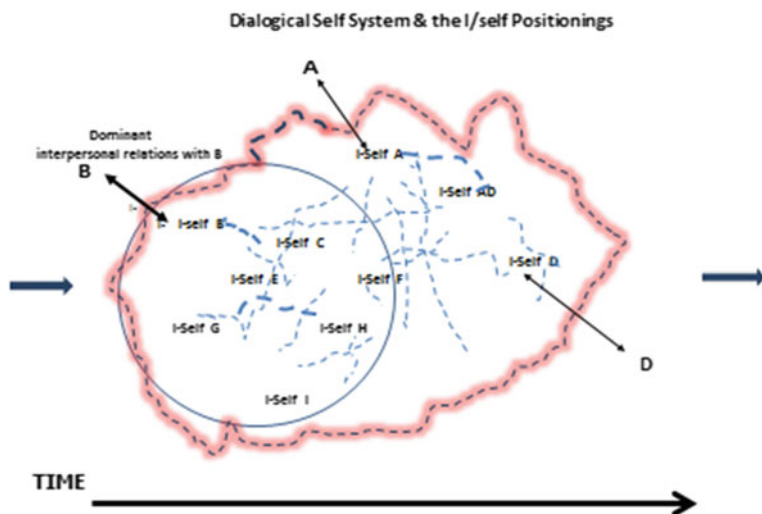


Fig. 13.2 The dialogical self-system and the *I/self-positionings* (after Branco and Freire 2010) (Obs: the *circle above* circumscribe the dominant affective-semiotic field—ASF)

Figure 13.2 provides a simple picture of the DSS at a certain moment and context. Hence, we have to keep in mind that the dynamic hierarchy of the systemic is in constant organization and reorganization flux. As the DSS changes, it undergoes a dynamics of configuration and reconfiguration throughout development, and the various I/self-positionings linked to affective-semiotic fields are generated through permanent intentional and non-intentional negotiation processes at both inter- and intrapersonal levels, i.e., many negotiation processes happen without the person's awareness.

The plurality of I/self-positionings ('I-Positions' according to Hermans' terminology) grants a dynamics of constant change and the emergence of novel positionings, side by side with the fading away of some positionings and the transformations of others with time. We came up with the concept of 'I/self-positionings' (Branco and Roncancio 2014) to invest the 'I-Position' concept with the necessary dynamics lacking in Hermans' terminology. I/self-positionings, therefore, are clusters of self-related meanings that converge into specific 'positionings' within the system, and they are supported by hypergeneralized affective-semiotic field-like signs highly invested with affect (the ASF). These signs or affective-semiotic fields (ASF), on their turn, play a significant role in mobilizing the dialogical self-system (DSS) throughout the individual's life. Some will prevail, some transform, others disappear as life goes by. Such fields (ASF) are also characterized by a continuous tension due to varied levels of both significance and ambiguity, and derive from internalization and externalization processes (Lawrence and Valsiner 2003) occurring along cultural canalization processes. Culture canalization works by the activation of multiple strategies used to attune the DSS to the context's constraints and demands, while maintaining the system with a sense of self-continuity along ontogenesis. The more affect-laden the cultural messages are, the more effective the internalization process. Next, we discuss an empirical example in order to clarify the way the psychological constructs proposed above can be helpful to make sense of the DSS development. The discussion of the example aims at bringing back to the picture the ontogenesis of values, and their formidable—yet complex—ways of guiding our lives.

Affective-Semiotic Fields as Primary Hypergeneralized Signs Lying at the Emergence of Values

Affective-semiotic fields are coconstructed along child's interactions with social others and internal dialogs. They provide the basis for the I/self-positionings created across child's (or individual's) life experiences and results from affect-laden cultural canalization processes together with the operation of the DSS as an active agent over its own development.

The study of Gisele's DSS development during her transition from preschool to the first grade of elementary school was carried out in Brasilia (Branco and

Roncancio 2014; Roncancio 2015). The study's goal was to analyze children's dialogical self-positionings along that transition, and her case was selected to be discussed as an illustration of the ideas put forth in this chapter. Several procedures were used to achieve the longitudinal research goals since we were aware of the substantial limitations and difficulties of interviewing young children as a source of information. Hence, after a long period of familiarization with children and context, we did intensive observations of ongoing social interactions in both educational contexts along one-year period—six month at preschool and six month at the first grade. Other procedures were used, as semi-structured play contexts, story-telling and playful activities, drawing diaries, informal conversations and interviews with child, parents, and teachers.

Gisele was five years old at the onset of the study. She lived with mom, dad, and older sister Barbara. Sister was the perfect daughter to her parents: The blond blue-eyed girl was considered by family and friends as 'exceptionally beautiful' and 'intelligent.' During the interviews with parents, particularly dad seriously doubted Gisele had a 'normal' intellectual development. Both parents said the girl suffered because she was not as beautiful as her sister, who had taken after their father's fair hair and blue eyes. During the research, Gisele never complained about her darker skin color, hair, or brown eyes; however, she very often referred to her sister as the most beautiful girl in their school. When asked about her own characteristics, particularly during preschool, she at all times emphasized how beautiful she (Gisele) was: She constantly said she was the most beautiful girl of her class—stressing how her peers loved her because she was beautiful and so on. In fact, Gisele was very popular and the leader of play activities, always playing the role of the princess, or the bride, in her preferred kind of pretend play, i.e., fairy tales with wedding ceremonies. This sort of pretend play was enacted by girls with the eventual participation of a few boys, and all peers paid homage to the 'beautiffulness' of princess Gisele. The teacher, also, praised the girl for being beautiful and devoted to her a special fondness.

In short, taking into account all information from the procedures employed, the picture we got of the girl's DSS in development suggested the presence of two powerful affective-semiotic fields, particularly during the preschool period: (1) 'beautiful X not beautiful,' as the dominant one; and (2) 'intelligent X developmentally slow,' as the other. The social others related to each pole of the tensions found in those ASF were, on the one hand, dad, mother, and sister positioning Gisele as a non-beautiful girl, and dad and mother clearly positioning Gisele as developmentally slow; on the other hand, there were her peers and the teacher, at school, who positioned Gisele as beautiful, popular, and smart. Figure 13.3 depicts Gisele's DSS during the last semester of preschool.

Data clearly established Gisele's family values as 'white people are beautiful, you are not white, therefore....' According to mother, she often said she would like to look like her white, blond, blue-eyed sister. But Gisele herself never verbally expressed any tension concerning her beauty within the corresponding ASF. Instead, she insistently created situations and actively pursued praise for her beauty from peers at preschool, granting herself positive feedbacks on her beautiffulness

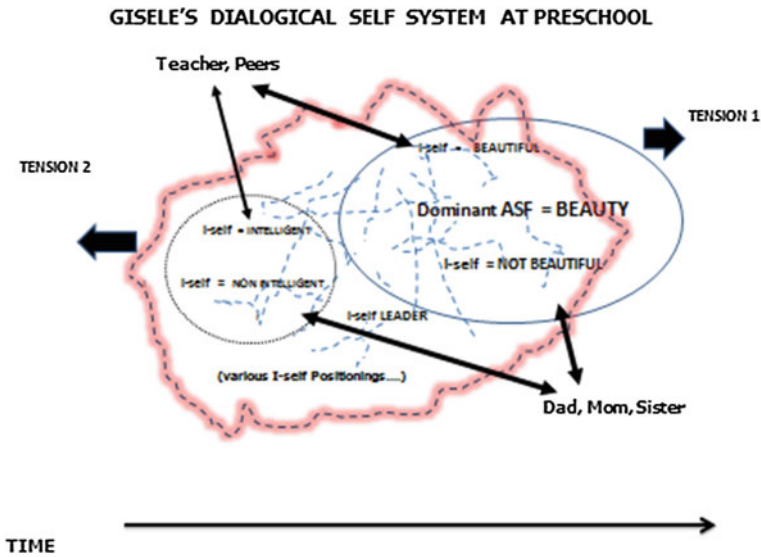


Fig. 13.3 Gisele's DSS during preschool (after Branco and Roncancio 2014)

from them and from teacher. Only when she entered elementary school's first grade did she overtly admitted she was not the most beautiful girl in class: The transition initially made her very sad, and the 'heart-on-tears in its way to school' she drew in her diary could not be more graphic about her sadness. After all, the new context did not provide her with enough space or time to engage in pretend play, and school expectations converged on reading and writing activities. Only little by little did the girl start to enjoy school activities, what happened due to her drawing abilities and how they became very well appreciated by teacher and peers in the new context.

The example above shows that for a period of Gisele's life the affective-semiotic field composed by the two opposite signs—'beautiful versus non-beautiful'—was dominant and guided most of her actions and interactions, particularly during preschool. Then, the field underwent transformations, but the point to be made here is that there is a significant possibility that the ASF of 'beautiffulness' may, eventually, become especially prominent within her DSS, giving rise to powerful affective meanings that, in the future, could turn out as an influential value. If that happens, 'beauty' will operate as an important regulator of Gisele's interpretation of the world, of herself, as well as it will become a major incentive or motivation for the coconstruction and direction of her life trajectory. The analysis of Gisele's DSS, together with the analysis of other participants of the study (Roncancio 2015) and the results of other research projects developed by our team (Freire and Branco 2010, in press; Rengifo-Herrera 2014) then consists of an excellent illustration of what we are presently proposing as a possible pathway to the ontogenesis of values. Figure 13.4 makes a rough draft of the basic idea above suggested:

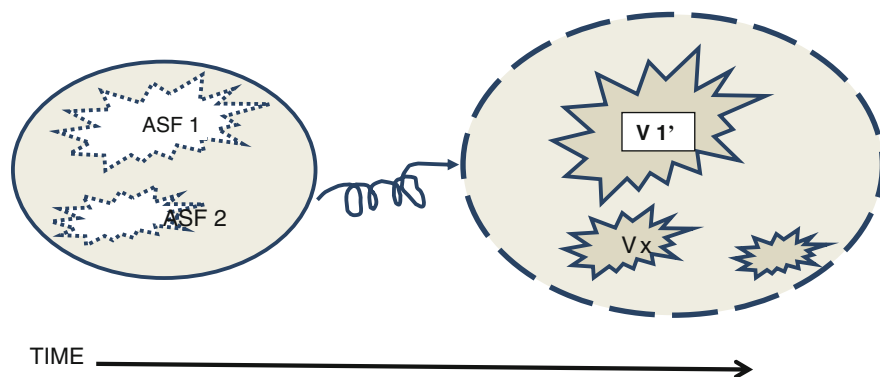


Fig. 13.4 Ontogenesis of values

But what would be the major principles of values ontogenesis? Affective-semiotic fields emerge, get empowered, transform, or disappear along ontogenesis. The ASF empowered enough through active internalization processes mobilized by significant others and effective cultural canalization may indeed develop the characteristics of a personal value along life experiences. In other words, ASF are constantly configured as the child's personal culture (subjectivity) transacts with the collective culture, especially with significant social others in specific contexts. Within each ASF, we find particular 'I/self-positionings' grouped together based on relatively similar quality. The permanent configuration and reconfiguration that DSS undergoes through time end up fortifying some particular empowered meanings—organized in clusters we named as affective-semiotic fields—which in different ways guide the developing child's conduct. Gradually and progressively, such ASF provide for the emergence of a hierarchy of values within the DSS along childhood to adolescence to adulthood. The ontogenesis of values, though, follows unique trajectories considering that individuals' development is also unique. In some individuals, values can be identified more clearly from indicators at both *verbal and nonverbal levels*. In others, values may be too weak or too transitory, but then, again, in all cases reconfigurations of the system may occur. New values may emerge, others dissolve, and the system dynamically try to attune to context demands even though preserving those characteristics sensed as fundamental to keep its oneness.

The impressive impact of values over conduct and developmental trajectories can be explained by the way values function as a decisive leading lens through which meaning-making processes operate (Branco 2012; Branco and Valsiner 2012). Perception of the world, in general, and of others' meanings during communication and metacommunication processes are mostly determined by values, hence their power to create interpretive frames for the DSS, based on which the person feels, thinks and acts all the way through life experiences. However, the DSS is also sensitive to significant ongoing events. By now I believe there is no need to remind the reader the dynamic quality of personal values, and their sensitivity to context and experience. Nevertheless, being more resistant to change due

to its deep-rooted affective quality, values play the centripetal role within the open system as it interacts with the world: Their role is to grant a certain degree of stability to the system in order to allow for a sense of self-uniqueness, persistence, or a sense of oneness that invest the 'I' with power to retain a certain degree of control over the DSS. This power is translated in what we acknowledge as the individual's intentionality and will, or the ability to reflect upon and intentionally choose among life possibilities and alternatives. This sense of oneness and relative control is fundamental for the notion of identity across time and context, despite DSS change and development. In the next section, I will bring a couple of empirical evidence concerning the role of values in activating affective-semiotic regulatory processes and devices that enable the person to adapt to radical and/or threatening events, and yet creatively keep a sense of continuity in reconstructed life trajectories.

The Intricate Interplay Between Values, Ruptures, and DDS Development

The coconstruction of individual values occurs at the thin personal-collective cultural border (Marsico et al. 2013). Yet the power of person's experience may configure a clear-cut rupture in his/her life trajectory (Zittoun 2006, 2012). Such ruptures or turning points, then, rearrange the DSS and the emergence of new values comes to dominate and lead the developmental trajectory. The stories of Pedro and Rosanne provide distinct evidence regarding the creativity of DSS in dealing with possible opposite or contradictory values that drive developmental trajectories in totally distinct ways.

Pedro was a 37-year-old man being treated for AIDS. His story came up in an interview carried out within the context of a research project on drug-addicted adolescents and their families (Branco et al. 2008). He developed many health complications due to his illness, which obliged him to completely change his lifestyle, previously dedicated to women hunting, irresponsibility toward family and utter fun. At the time of the interview, he was participating for two years of a program oriented to give support to parents to better deal with adolescents' drug-addiction problems. He confessed the major reason to do that, at first, was the insistence of his own therapist, who believed that a better handling with his 13-year-old son Luiz would be important to improve Pedro's health. According to his narrative, that was his first motivation; but as the time went by, he discovered a brand new 'self,' a new 'I/self-positioning' built upon his love for his son and his other kids (two younger daughters). In one of his emotional narratives, he said:

In the past there was not that kind of respect between father and child, mother and son, no one could tell who the father was, who the mother was (...). Nobody could tell, 'Is this boy my son?' I'm not even sure I ever was a father before...(…) Today I know I am a father,

my kids are mine, I have responsibilities concerning them, I have a commitment to them, they are my children! I changed my behavior so they could change their behavior as well.

In a few words, the emotions derived from his life threatening health condition, and from the feelings of loss of his first born child, together with his new deep love feelings for his kids, all converged into new values that completely changed his life: he transformed his routine, struggled to save his son, and his concerns became devoted to help his kids and promote their happiness. As a result of the father dedication, Luiz gradually improved and finally made explicit to his parents that he would not fall back into drugs.

Rosanne's case was somehow different: Instead of experiencing a rupture and taking on an alternative trajectory, the 25-year-old woman found a way to deal with two compelling yet divergent 'I/self-positionings': being gay and being Catholic. Each positioning was certainly deep rooted in irreconcilable values, permanently promoted by the social others belonging to each community. She also referred to herself as a family girl rose in a good traditional and well-structured family, what was in frontal opposition to the values of the gay community she belonged to. During her narrative (Branco and Madureira 2008), Rosanne craftily described how she created, along life experiences, a third new positioning where her DSS was able to conciliate being happily gay and Catholic at the same time. She ingeniously constructed a missionary 'I/self-positioning' that enabled her to live according to both values, which she explained as the only way to bring the lost souls of the gay community to the embrace of Jesus. She, as a missionary, had lots to do concerning helping those people. In her own words,

Then... I go, like, I approach and start talking with the person, and she starts telling me that she has this and that kind of problem, problems, ...it's kind of curious, you can count on your fingers people that... belong to this group, and don't have any problems with something (...) people that are searching...there are people that are there because they are lost! I see it this way...

The existence of lost people, according to her reasoning, justified her belonging to their community, because it enabled her to approach them and do her Christian duty: bring them to the love of Jesus.

Next, I sum up the most important elaborations put forth in this chapter regarding values and the dialogical self-development:

- (a) The dialogical self, here conceived as the 'dialogical I/self-system,' is a dynamic system in continuous development as it transacts with historical-cultural contexts along irreversible time.
- (b) The affective-semiotic nature of psychological processes integrates affectivity and cognition in a complex unity that can be characterized as the dialogical self-system (DSS).
- (c) Cultural canalization occurs within specific cultural contexts especially through the mediation of significant social others. The presence of high levels of affectivity leads to successful active internalization/externalization

- processes that give rise to affective-semiotic fields (ASF) and dynamic I/self-positionings (DIP) that arise from those fields within the DSS.
- (d) Dynamic I/self-positionings (DSP) are plural, hierarchically organized and in continuous movement as social and cultural contexts change along life experiences.
 - (e) The tensions between affective-semiotic fields—and between corresponding I/self-positionings—operate as an active force to promote the DSS development.
 - (f) Values, as well as prejudices, are hierarchically and dynamically organized within the DSS, and they guide human actions and interactions along life trajectory, keeping a relative stability and sense of continuity that results from their resistance to change, granted by its powerful deep roots within the system.

The Big Quest: Psychology, Values, and the Way Ahead

In our studies, we emphasize the central role of personal values—conceived as particular affective-semiotic fields empowered through ontogenesis to exert a guiding function over human development, i.e., psyche. We argue that the ontogenesis of the dialogical self-system consists of a promising field for the investigation of the way multiple experiences of varied affective-semiotic qualities contribute to the emergence of novelties and to the relative stability of the self-system along time. In our affective-semiotic approach to cultural psychology, we draw on the complexities of developmental processes related to the dialogical self-system as we search for specific mediators which role is to promote particular life trajectories and the emergence of personal characteristics.

In this book, we relish to find productive elaboration on relevant yet dense matters, among which I would draw the reader's attention to 'Complex ethical actions in social contexts' (Rosa 2016, this volume) and the 'Affective semiosis as the basic human 'stuff'' (Innis 2016, this volume). Briefly stated, my point is to argue that psychology's efforts can no longer distance itself from scientifically facing the issue of how human values develop and orient individuals' and groups' life experiences. Methodological challenges have to be met in order to identify the emergence and development of processes related to the dynamics of goals, expectations, beliefs, and values, as life trajectory unfolds throughout similar, diverse, and often contradictory cultural contexts.

In Marková's (2014) theoretical discussion over the topic of complementarity, she quotes Niels Bohr's words affirming that 'evidence obtained under different conditions cannot be comprehended as a single picture, but must be regarded as complementary in the sense that only the totality of the phenomena exhausts the possible information about the objects' (Bohr 1949, p. 210, in Marková 2014, p. 41). Drawing on the arguments elaborated along this chapter, and the far-reaching

meanings of Bohr's words, some possible venues to investigate the ontogenesis of values can be proposed. They should be built within the frame of longitudinal studies aiming at following individual trajectories from childhood to adolescence to young adulthood, i.e., from early significant affective-semiotic fields—as Gisele's concerns re beauty—all the way up to full blown values, for instance, Rosanne's Christianity. As case studies progress, information can be drawn from diverse procedures, some triggering verbal accounts, others focusing on observations in both natural and semi-experimental contexts, the last creatively constructed to provoke verbal and nonverbal actions that might eventually reveal the operation of subjacent powerful affective-semiotic fields. As I figure at this point, these are some guidelines for research that may prove especially productive for the investigation of the dynamics of values development throughout life trajectories.

To approach this subject in fruitful ways, though, it is essential to acknowledge the centrality of meaning constructive processes and assume a systemic perspective that confronts the complex and dynamic nature of the phenomena, stressing simultaneously historical, sociocultural, and subjective factors. Such a theoretical-methodological approach will then enable researchers to explore the productive tools at our disposal to analyze the intertwined processes lying at the interface of personal and collective cultures, as past, present, and future necessarily meet in our everyday life experiences. In a few words, psychology urgently needs to take the investigation of microgenesis and ontogenesis of values seriously, analyzing the role of mesogenesis through cultural canalization processes taking place at institutions and specific contexts, like family and school. However, assuming sociogenesis as the cornerstone of human development does not justify narrowing down psychological research to the study of observed activities, or the inference of meaning-construction processes: it is necessary that research in psychology takes into account, and creatively investigates, the fundamental role of the subject and the impact of individual's agency over internalization processes.

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Chapter 14

Obscuring Cannibalism in Civilization: Amerindian Psychology in Reading Today's Sociocultural Phenomena

Kleber Ferreira Nigro and Danilo Silva Guimarães

This chapter presents a selection from the research “Other Cannibals—Jaguarized theater against the colonization of thought.” This study originated from the work developed by the first author in the scenic arts project *Jaguar Cibernético*,¹ conceived and implemented by the Brazilian playwright Francisco Carlos after more than twenty years of research and scenic–textual experiments. *Jaguar Cibernético*'s main results were the public performances, in the early 2010s, of four dialogical plays that contextualize and discuss several consequences of the contact made between Amerindian societies and European invaders in the lands of South America.

Aesthetics was discussed by classical authors of psychology as James Mark Baldwin, William James, and Lev Vygotsky and is still brought to the writings of contemporary authors of cultural psychology as Ernst Boesch and Jaan Valsiner. The importance of the dramatic arts in the history and development of humanity is fundamental and unquestionable, due in particular to the changes and effects it causes on those who are directly or indirectly influenced by it over time. Voloshinov (1976) discusses sociological poetics in cases in which art and society have a close connection, explaining that

...art, too, is just as immanently social; the extra artistic social milieu, affecting art from outside, finds direct, intrinsic response within it. This is not a case of one foreign element affecting another but of one social formation affecting another social formation (p. 95).

¹We chose to keep the original titles, since they have ever been translated to any other language. *Jaguar Cibernético* can be translated as *Cyber Jaguar*. The next Portuguese titles will be translated on the footnotes.

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The research that originated this chapter was developed regarding these assemblages, flows, and interactions between theater and society, and was based on the theoretical and methodological horizons of cultural psychology.

In being created and published, the artistic work—understood as a symbolic object of mediation (Boesch 1991) that establishes a dialogical relation (Marková 2006) between its author and the cultural field (Boesch 1991) it is inserted in—causes various nuclear reverberations on this *socius*, as does a small stone thrown on still waters. A certain aesthetic work, once exposed to the community, affects directly or indirectly the whole social tissue. Its effects are not limited to those who directly witness it, but also extend indirectly to those who know little or nothing about it:

The aesthetic function has an important place in lives of individuals and the whole society. The circle of people coming into immediate contact is limited [...]; but art, by the consequences of its activity, also reaches those who have no direct relationship with it (for example, the influence of poetry on the evolution of the linguistic system) (Mukarovsky 1993, p. 22).

Just like artistic thinking differs from ordinary thought (Vygotsky 1999), deeply influencing the social communicative processes as a whole, its perception differs from the ordinary perception of the world (Baldwin 1915), leaving also up to psychology the task of providing a way to understand the relationship between aesthetics and culture, also art and society, or theater and spectators. The artist presents his unusual thinking through the aesthetic object and thus introduces new forms of perception and relationship with the world in the cultural field.

William James used examples from art to formulate and defend many of his philosophical theories, focusing the aesthetical selection humans make in order to internalize the sensible world. Based on his study on the pragmatic aesthetics of James, Shusterman affirms that “the world we perceive is the product of human selection in which the selective process involves different levels and can be likened with artistic creation” (Shusterman 2011, p. 350).

The theorist James Mark Baldwin, whose classic book “Genetic Theory of Reality” (1915) was dedicated “to all those who find in art the noblest instrument of spiritual life,” goes in a similar direction, saying that “reality is just all the contents of consciousness so far as organized or capable of organization in aesthetic or artistic form” (1915, p. 303). By watching a theatrical performance, we have the chance to experience different realities and points of view from a secure and protected place, without having to experience these realities in our everyday lives. Baldwin affirms that, after watching a play, or

after the play is over, after the intense concentration of the mind on the depicted situation, there is a violent return, a reaction amounting sometimes to a shock, to the partial interests and concerns of every-day life (1915, pp. 281–282).

The tension arising between the aesthetic (in this case a theater performance), and the extra-aesthetic, or the “mundane,” allows the individual to experience what Baldwin translated as aesthetical synthesis.

Besides being one of the most important theorists in psychology, Lev Vygotsky was also an artist who had direct relations with many of the artists of his time, such as Sergei Eisenstein and Maksim Gorky. Vygotsky was a theater admirer since his childhood, and later he had an intense involvement with stages: He was an actor (played Hamlet!), director, and producer, and brought from these experiences much of the knowledge he used to relate, insightfully, aesthetics and psychology:

Thus, poetry or art is a special way of thinking which, in the final analysis, leads to the same results as scientific knowledge (Shakespeare's plantation of jealousy), but in a different way. Art differs from science only in its method, in its way of experiencing and perceiving, in other words, psychologically (1999, p. 34).

It is from the scientific tradition of these theorists, nowadays considered fundamental to cultural psychology, that our research on psychology and dramatic arts started. Theater history is intertwined with the history of mankind, and its importance has remained to the present times, generating a natural approach from contemporary cultural psychology authors to the universe of the dramatic arts.

Here, we bring part of a broader study about the aesthetical object we consider one of the most complete and unique theatrical works on Amerindian realities, *Jaguar Cibernético*, which relates different cultural forms of practices and concepts construction and focuses on the tensions generated by these processes. We aim to achieve a better understanding about how these persons and cultures relate among themselves and the long-term effects originated by these tensions that still remain as living forces in contemporary Latin American societies.

Author–Aesthetical Object–Cultural Field

Francisco Carlos, author of *Jaguar Cibernético*, was born in the Brazilian state of Amazonas, where a great portion of the largest rain forest in the world, the Amazon, is located, and where many indigenous communities and peoples can still be found keeping alive their cultural practices and ancestral knowledge.

At the time of the first European invasions, the lands that later came to be called Brazil were inhabited by a native population estimated between 2 and 4 million people from more than a thousand different ethnic groups, distributed throughout a vast and rich territory. More than five hundred years later, their population was reduced to just over 800,000 inhabitants, living among a total population that exceeds two hundred million people today. The exploratory mind-set of the invaders and the consequences of their political acts caused these populations to decline intensively in the early years of contact and gradually over the centuries, leading many peoples to extinction throughout the continent. Peoples are extinguished, and their cultural practices and knowledge disappear with them. Pierre Clastres called ethnocide

[...] the systematic destruction of the modes of life and thought of people who are different from those who carry out this destructive enterprise. In short, genocide kills their bodies, while ethnocide kills their spirit. [...] Ethnocide shares with genocide an identical vision of the Other: the Other is difference, certainly, but it is above all a bad difference. [...] The others are bad, but they can be improved, by obliging them to transform themselves to the point of total identification, if possible, with the model proposed to or imposed on them (2004, p. 83).

Not only the genocide, but also the ethnocide of indigenous people can be observed in Brazil throughout its history as a constant and relentless fact. It always had the approval and the support from governments and religious structures in order to format, in a perpetual motion, indigenous bodies and minds, by this masking the theft of their lands and the destruction of their cultures. As a result, indigenous peoples remain unseen in contemporary Brazilian society and their knowledge, kept illegitimate, to a certain extent, in relation to the understandings that guide decision-making, is not capable of affecting society in general.

Francisco Carlos seeks to confront and shed light on the darkness of his time by bringing to *Jaguar Cibernético* a broad variety of unusual Amerindian knowledge, relating and/or opposing it to the concepts, values, and practices of the contemporary world based on Eurocentric thinking that moves toward an ethnocidal leveling of differences between the indigenous and the non-indigenous Western citizens.

Although his academic training was in philosophy, Carlos has dedicated the last 40 years of his life exclusively to theater, as a playwright and director—he does not stage other people’s plays, only his own. The peculiar synthesis presented in his creations made us consider them, in our research, as part of what Lehmann (2011) called *post-dramatic theater*: a set of heterogeneous practices that emerged around the world in the last decade of the twentieth century which constitute a theater characterized by risk and experimentation, carrying a disquieting poetic that breaks classical drama precepts (as blind devotion to textuality, or continuity) and establishes dialogues with multiple artistic, scientific, and philosophical matters. Such practices are especially interesting to psychology because they cause profound impacts on the perception of those who witness their actions, since “the texts do not match the expectations with which people often face dramatic texts” (ibid, p. 38), being part of a “multiple and new theatrical landscape, for which general rules have not yet been found” (ibid). The stage is no longer a mere reproduction or representation of reality and becomes understood as “origin and starting point, not the place of a copy” (ibid).

Francisco created, in his dramatic work, a subset of plays focused on the Amerindian subjectivities that became known as *Peças do pensamento selvagem*,² about which he spoke in an interview of 2011:

It was at that period, between 1980 and 1990, that I built the *Pensamento Selvagem* phase, with very deep studies on Claude Levi-Strauss, Gilles Deleuze, this whole anthropological

²“The wild thinking plays,” in a reference to Levi-Strauss classic “*La pensée sauvage*” (1998).

side of Antonin Artaud regarding the plays of the Mexican Indians [the Tarahumara], of a shamanic writing, I made a connection with the beatniks, the automatic writing proposed by André Breton, I sought to understand Levi-Strauss' connection with surrealism, especially with Max Ernst [German painter] and his union with the classical structuralists, from which Lévi-Strauss built a system that then triggered more mythological in what has become today the structural anthropology system. All this, I was thinking that time. I could not build an ethnographic drama without thinking deeply about it all. And then there were two tasks: the first was to understand it deeply, a subject that interested me deeply, and the other was that I had to think how this could be linked with my drama, with my dramatic writing. This could not be a thesis, it had to be a theatrical text (Carlos in an interview with Santos 2011).

Carlos' speech makes clear the theoretical range of his "ethnographic drama," developed from then until the present day, and from which *Jaguar Cibernético* is the masterpiece. Also known as *Tetralogia Canibal*,³ the work develops in four plays: (I) *Banquete Tupinambá*,⁴ (II) *Aborígene em Metrôpolis*,⁵ (III) *Xamanismo—The Connection*,⁶ and (IV) *Floresta de Carbono—De Volta ao Paraíso Perdido*.⁷ Each of these fragments discusses different forms of interaction: between persons, groups, or different cultures; also among those people, groups, and cultures and the forces of nature, the cosmos, politics, and society; and among many other assemblages, as we are going to see further on this chapter.

Friction Between Europeans and Peoples of Latin America

The initial shock between the Native Americans and the European invaders was called by Todorov "the most surprising encounter of our history" (1999, p. 4). It was marked by a concomitant radical strangeness that reverberates until today, and is still pronounced, in the societies that later arose on those territories. What Eurocentric history calls discovery, indigenous people call invasion or massacre. What Todorov refers to as an encounter might be considered by indigenous thinkers as the beginning of a war or the end of the world. As Henri Michaux so fittingly put, "the white man has a quality that has made him open his way: disrespect" (1994, p. 23)—disrespect for others, for nature, and for oneself, in America or in any other part of the world where they found radically different ethnic background. Influenced by the Christian–European spirit of the time (and largely written by Christian missionaries), the first reports produced on the native peoples living there had disparaging views on their ways of being: They were infantilized, demonized, or dehumanized while analyzed under partial and deeply contaminated lens: The

³Cannibal Tetralogy.

⁴Play I: *Tupinambá* Banquet.

⁵Play II: Aboriginal in Metropolis.

⁶Play III: Shamanism—The Connection.

⁷Play IV: Carbon Rainforest—Back to Paradise Lost.

indigenous people were classified as subhuman, or like animals, destitute of rationality.

It seems that exactly the ambivalent status of the savages in the psychological world of Europeans—as kind of like us but unpredictably different—is a challenge to that world. As the challenge could lead to a verdict of Europeans’ inferiority, the *best defense against that outcome is to semiotically construct the inferiority of the other* (rather than risk one’s own inferiority to surface). (Valsiner 2000, p. 90).

Practices such as nudity, polygamy, and ritual cannibalism were then the core explanations for countless acts of subordination, domination, neutralization, suppression of differences, behavioral infliction, and domestication of thoughts, activated at that time and that are still live spectra under the skins of most inhabitants of the countries that arose in Latin America since then. This implacable domination was given the name Colonialism, understood as

[...] The doctrine and the institutional and political practice of colonization. While colonization is the process of expansion and conquest of colonies, and the submission, by force or economic superiority, of territories inhabited by peoples who are different from those of the colonial potency, Colonialism defines more precisely the organization of **systems of domain**. [...] Colonialism is what provided the form of the cultural models and especially of the school educational systems at all levels. And it also shaped the tastes and lifestyles of the emerging middle classes (Bobbio et al. 1998, pp. 181–185, emphasis added).

We have inherited from the colonialism that founded all Latin American societies a pervasive structure of domination that permeates bodies and receives different names: post-colonialism, neoliberal society, global empire, integrated world capitalism, new world order or complete “productification” of life, among many others. It is aimed at imposing a hegemonic, universalizing, and dominant thinking, thus acting over large numbers of members of these societies who submit themselves thoughtlessly to polymorphic forces that cannibalize them and which they are, as noted in the definition quoted above, historically taught to ignore.

Cannibalism and Philosophical Notions of Alterity

In the narrative of *Jaguar Cibernético*, the dimension of alterity (and its different philosophical notions) assumes to a certain point a main role, as can be seen through the constant tensions between differences that appear in each of the plays. In *Festa Canibal*,⁸ a critical review published about the plays, Francisco conceded an interview in which he turned to the issue:

“It’s the idea of tupinambá cannibalism that guides the Jaguar,” says the playwright. “The principle that eating another is a way to experience alterity. And, in a sense, this other is the Western society.” [...] “The Jaguar speaks of an eternal availability regarding the other”, considers the director. For him, it’s surrounding this “alterity” that the whole current debate

⁸Cannibal Party.

is centered. “All racism, all relations in our world today go through this difficulty one has regarding the other.” [...] With his tetralogy, Francisco Carlos demonstrates his search for altruism in theater and in life. “I use art to present the other,” he says. (Menezes 2011)

The matter of alterity points to multiple theoretical and metatheoretical confluences between cultural psychology, philosophy, and ethnology, in the scope of semiotic-cultural constructivism (Simão 2004), a metatheoretical framework within cultural psychology based on the production of classical authors such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Lev Vygotsky, and William James, among others. Alterity is in the core concerns of semiotic-cultural constructivism, and as Simão explains, “alterity is not an entity, but a particular nature of the I–other relationship, where the key aspect for its occurrence is a pre-reflective disposition of the subject to relate to someone who **exceeds** him/herself” (2003, p. 456, emphasis added). This “particular nature” of the I–other relationship is based on the difference, or asymmetry, between the poles: a permanent disability to apprehend the other completely, leaving always an **excess**, a **mystery**, a **gray area** on the border between the I and the other. This understanding becomes important in our studies because we are dealing with interactions between different ontological perspectives in which the asymmetry is extreme.

The dimension of alterity has gained more and more importance also in anthropological studies, of which the text *Jaguar Cibernético* reflects some philosophical impressions, still unexplored by cultural psychology, such as contemporary understandings about Amerindian ceremonial cannibalism. Regarding our researches, these notions emerged mostly from the deep ethnological knowledge articulated in the theater project as a whole, but they are manifested mainly in the narrative *Banquete Tupinambá*, matrix play based on studies about the Tupinambá people, who adopted anthropophagy as part of some of their ceremonial practices. The anthropologist Carlos Fausto offers aesthetics the notion of a “cannibal relation scheme” in which cannibalism is understood as the “violent appropriation of subjective capacities of entities endowed with proper perspective” (2011, p. 161), and which cannibalism would be a subspecies or a prototype, as he explains:

[...] anthropophagy, rather than an institutional fact or historically dated cultural practice, is a basic relational schema in indigenous cosmologies: a scheme that is not limited to the predation relationship between humans, but applies to the predation of all those endowed with subjective capacities. And in the indigenous case, as in other psychic systems, not only humans have verb and intention: animals in particular, but not only them, are also conceived as subjects, endowed with their own view of the world (ibid).

Jaguar Cibernético presents a very rare and peculiar reading on how interactions between multiple subjects that populate the indigenous worlds occur. It is largely based on *Amerindian perspectivism*, a concept developed by researchers at the National Museum–UFRJ under the intellectual leadership of South American ethnologist Eduardo Viveiros Castro, who, by establishing a connection between ethnology and philosophy, based his theories on ongoing studies and review investigations of past ethnographies to reach an understanding of the Amerindian

culture that is today the most reflected concept of Brazilian anthropology (cf. Saez 2012). *Amerindian perspectivism* refers to how South American Indians perceive the world and relate to it: a point of view on the indigenous point of view. Viveiros de Castro presented an innovative reading of the relationship between indigenous people and nature, founded in ancestral knowledge shared in a millennial diachronic development. According to *Amerindian perspectivism*, the identities of the subjects brought into relation are deeply determined by the others to which they relate, as they are positioned in a vast network that unites all beings and assemblages of multiple natures (people, other animals, natural phenomena, gods, etc.) and only allow the subject to know their own identity when contrasted to the *alter* with which it relates. The intersubjective asymmetry we referred to paragraphs above, if observed in the contact between an indigenous person and a non-indigenous person, is radical: While we distinguish **one** nature for many cultures, for the indigenous peoples, there is a cultural form that varies little, a type of relationship with **multiple** natures or supernatures.

After Descartes, the only thing whose existence one can be sure of is the I. Regarding the existence of the other, it is necessary to make a demonstration. The idea of evidence of the I and the non-evidence of the others, which is at the door of our modern metaphysics, is the exact opposite of that of the Indians, according to which it is the I that is under question. One can never be sure one is, because others may have a very different idea about it, and may get to impose it on us: the jaguar that I found in the forest was right, *it* was the human, I was only its animal of prey. I was a tapir or a deer, maybe a pig... The others, in contrast, are evident data. The problem for the Indians is not the absence or lack of communication. On the contrary, there is too much communication. If animals are humans, if things can house internal humanoid forms, if the thunder is a person, then everything communicates (Viveiros de Castro 2008, pp. 97–98).

In *Jaguar Cibernético*, the mythology related to the jaguar, common in various forms to the indigenous peoples of South America, and connected by some of them to cannibalism, establishes a dialogical axis that links the narratives of the four plays. Each one of them brings discourses and practices founded in indigenous cosmological conceptions set in opposition to discourses and practices based on Eurocentric cosmological conceptions, i.e., they tense these different subjectivities, or these different forms of interaction between multiple subjects that populate these worlds.

Dialogical Understanding of the *Jaguar Cibernético* Tetralogy

The starting point for our research were the contemporary notions about Amerindian cannibalism found in ethnological texts, also listed as one of the eight specific objectives on the project *Jaguar Cibernético*, as the “[...] presentation in dramatic-theme form of the very original concept of *Tupinambá* cannibalism, brought by the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, as a radical form of

alterity—the other as destiny” (Carlos 2011). From this, we have determined the objective of this research: to understand, based on the repeated tensions presented in these theater plays, the operation of forces that form cannibalism in different contexts and under different cosmological conceptions.

The multiple dialogisms observed since the beginning of the investigation indicated a methodological path, which we could pave with the support of Ivana Marková’s propositions, for whom “one dialogically based theory of knowledge requires the Alter-Ego and the object of knowledge to be the starting point of the investigation” (2006, p. 207). Our initial triad, consisting of author–object–receiver, functioned as a starting point for understanding the impact of the artwork on the cultural field in which it entered, observed through the analysis of discourses produced from its presentations that were published as critical reviews by news organizations or in personal Web sites. The direct contact with the author, a unique learning experience in itself and ground for much of our research, allowed access to other data that were analyzed: the full text of *Jaguar Cibernético*, which was not yet published; a version of its project, which had been subjected to cultural funding arrangements; videos of a full presentation of each of the acts; and a wide film bibliography consulted for its implementation.

From a methodological point of view, we define our investigative journey on two occasions called descending and ascending paths of dialogical analysis (Guimarães 2014). The first, regarding the descending path, has its starting point in the researcher’s point of view about the historical and social field in which the work takes place, observing and interpreting the dialogical relations of the focused work and its interfaces with other cultural productions. To expand the reach of the proposed objective, regarding the second path, the dialogisms internally established between the characters were analyzed, based on the theory of heterogeneous voices established by James Wertsch (1991, pp 93–118).

We selected, in this second stage, the textual aspect of the work, formed by constant and almost continuous perspective adjustments and shocks that, when seized by spectators, propel in them multiple affective effects, more so if we consider our greatest proximity to one of the tensioned views, the Eurocentric, and the almost complete lack of knowledge about the points of view that are opposed to it, the indigenous ones. It was through the understanding of the many inter-ethnic tensions presented in the textual body of *Jaguar Cibernético* that we sought to understand different readings about cannibalism, its conditions, operation, possible analogies, and the complex forces that surround it.

Play I: *Banquete Tupinambá*

The first play of *Jaguar Cibernético* gives us a detailed reading on the *tupinambá* world conceptions, their cosmopolitics, ritualistic and ceremonial practices, and organization and ways of being and relating, in short: how they construct their meanings, concepts, and practices according to their everyday experiences. The perception of an unusual thought about which little or nothing is known causes a series of constraints and ruptures when we relate it to our own life experiences. A model for understanding the notion of alterity according to the immanent

indigenous philosophies that apply to the *Tupinambás* and that can be observed in the play could be extracted from the studies of Agnolin:

Tupi cultural identity is always, continually, brought into play by alterity—ritually determined and controlled—which, therefore, necessarily constitutes the very core of identity. Taking this “identity in alterity” outlines, therefore, the feature that fully responds to the indigenous cultural model (2002, pp. 148–149).

Banquete Tupinambá begins with a sequence called “The arrival of the war prisoner,” in which a captured enemy is brought to a tupinambá village from ancient times, prior to European invasions:

CANNIBAL-FATHER-IN-LAW

You are entering the grounds of the enemy village.
I force you to scream, scream: I, your food, have just arrived.

PRISONER

(Screams)

I just got here I am your food-other,
I-Other enter inside of Others-I.

Where is the beverage, where’s the blood-wine manioc beer? If you don’t have manioc beer, I won’t die-enemy, I won’t transform, you won’t turn into god I won’t. I, your food-enemy am arriving.

KILLER

You will be transformed into brother-in-law.
Come in, I-other within another-I, I-Other.
Domesticated Enemy, converted enemy
Captured, we’ll transform you into brother-in-law, my enemy, the ones that were mine and that you killed will be avenged in you

The tension established between the enemy prisoner and the other characters is maintained throughout the act and is the main relationship of alterity established.

The interrelationships between the “I” and the “other,” in this case between the enemy and the Tupinambá father-in-law, teased throughout the act, are already announced in the introduction. The verbs “transform,” “turn,” “domesticate,” “capture,” and “convert,” present in the selected text, indicate a process of apprehension and transformation from one to the other, part of a long ceremonial in which anthropophagy happens as one of its stages.

Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1985) explain the operation of the continuous war engine that moves the *tupinambá* society, in which warriors seek to capture the enemy in battle and not to murder him on the battlefield. What drives this engine is revenge: They always seek the honor to avenge the ancestors who were captured in war, then killed, and eaten by the enemy in ceremonial practices. Anthropophagy is the act that makes full revenge (*ibid.*, p. 194) and that cannot be understood disconnected from its broad sense, as one of many steps in a long ceremonial of war.

By articulating various Amerindian cosmologies in an anarchic aesthetic and ethnographic synthesis, Francisco Carlos offers psychology the possibility of a broad and unusual understanding of the complex workings of the forces and agencies that form their societies. Comparing the ways each culture constructs its different meanings about the experiences they live becomes, therefore, a way for *Jaguar Cibernético* viewers, so far almost solely, or solely, non-indigenous, to question their own thoughts, guidelines, allocations, crossings, and ways of being and relating with the world, with others, and with the cosmos.

Play II: *Aborígene Em Metrópolis*

The time reference displayed at the very beginning of the second play, “500 years after,” determines in a distinction from the previous play the presence, in the second, of the clash between the indigenous culture and the Eurocentric culture. The “Metropolis” mentioned in the title, according to the original project (Carlos 2011), is a mixture of “São Paulo, Paris, London, and New York,” generically represented with traits common to all the great contemporary Western megalopolises. *Aborígene em Metrópolis*’s narrative consists of tensions generated by multiple perspectives’ shocks that lead to different constructions of meaning in relation to experiences common to indigenous and non-indigenous settings.

The corporality is the axis around which the opposing polarities develop in this play. The forms in which Indians of South America traditionally conceive, manage, work, and manufacture their bodies differ radically from the tradition of civilized man, represented in the play by the world of fashion and *haute couture*. The body, a classic example of the common nature between members of any societies, indigenous or non-indigenous, is semiotically constructed and managed in different ways by each culture.

Temporality assumes different meanings: The ephemeral nature of standards imposed by fashion opposes itself to the Native American ancient worldviews. While the Western people cover their bodies with tissues in planned cuts, colors, and seams, which are coated with meanings determined by standards and markets, indigenous peoples conceive their bodies in permanent dialogisms with immanent forces and assemblages of varied natures and supernatures, in their daily lives or ritualistic and ceremonial practices. If for the civilized it is necessary to hide (the shame of) their naturally naked bodies with cloths that shape identities and build various social meanings, the indigenous corporality is a communion vehicle between the social and cosmic dimensions.

Aborígene em Metrópolis describes a civilization in malefic terms, referring to the long-term acts of segregation and extermination that populate indigenous memories and act upon their present. Political practices of “integration” of the indigenous peoples to the so-called civilized context have endorsed, for centuries, the transformation of their identities by imposing patterns of thought and behavior that are very far from their philosophical and cosmological principles and that offend their emotional perception of the world. The play relates the indigenous cannibalism to some of the forces that can be observed and felt by the inhabitants of

Latin America and presents the view of Kotok, a *Kamaiurá* Indian, about civilization:

KOTOK

Civilization is a bloodthirsty civilization
 You're a bunch of sadists
 It is always blood gushing
 A shower pouring a rain of blood
 you are worse than the wildest animal
 you are the wildest of all animals
 and it was nature that created you so wild,
 so fierce
 Of all animals the city man is the fiercest
 They built a city full of moral apparatus
 The higher law, thou shall not kill.
 Was it society and its implacable laws that made you so?
 Was it nature that made you so
 or was it civilization, that scarlet whore
 that dances foaming blood from her mouth
 until she dies in Tokyo or in Babylon?
 Was it the city cage or violent mother nature
 with her serpent heads and poison?
 Who poked you with so much poison and evil?
 Who injected in your genitals poisons of violence?
 but beware of the wolf
 this enemy of man
 that with its claws will scratch you
 right in the face, or the breasts, or buttocks
 or care for the man
 it is he who is the wolf of the man-wolf
 Nature this perverse crow!
 The legislated city this perverse crow!
 Who made you so, sadistic man?

The section highlights the profound influence exerted by the forces of civilization on the members of its societies that shape and determine their identities according to interests that they are exogenous to. Identities are always called into question by several alterities, often ritually determined and controlled, causing people to take, as Agnolin said about the indigenous culture, "identity in alterity." Those are the alterities that cannibalize the citizens, causing neutralization of their perceptions and deaths in multiple senses. We can therefore draw a parallel between the convulsive and violent contemporary metropolises and cannibalism:

Civilization is thus not just occurrence but certainly exhaustion. As exhaustion, as pure event, in short, civilization is pregnant of cannibalistic practices. In other words, cannibalism is the most complete translation of what we understand as civilization. (Antelo 1998).

The speech of Kotok, directed to the inhabitants of large cities, brings the inevitable question: Who are the savages? What consists, in fact, in savagery? Wouldn't the perennial barbarism of civilization, manifested through constant acts of genocide and ethnocide, be considered a form of savagery?

Play III: *Xamanismo—The Connection*

Placed inside a subjective pluriverse, Play III makes clear the author's sensibility to present psychic dimensions while being crossed by diverse social or cosmological fields. If the first play of *Jaguar Cibernético* took the symbolic task of contextualizing, and the second the task of updating, then we can say that it is up to the third the task of virtualizing. The play provides an understanding of the internal mechanisms related to the action of nature *devenirs* and cosmic proliferations over human affections. The narrative takes place in a dream space, which alternates between polymorphic numb hallucinations, pathological delusions, revolutionary contexts, cyber activism, and heavenly parties. Concepts from multiple ethnographic sources on Amerindian shamanism are presented to offer a better understanding about the jaguar *devenir*, understood as an epidemic affection or pest that can affect everyone and everything.

The relationships that the indigenous person establishes with the surrounding environment (and in particular with other animals) become the main discursive axis of this act, which makes clear that internal distinctions between dualities such as nature–culture or subject–object, as we understand, are not applicable to the Amerindian thought.

What we would call the natural world, or “world” in general, is for the Amazonian people a multitude of intricately connected multiplicities. Animal species and others are designed as so many types of “people” or “peoples”, that is, as political entities. It is not the “Jaguar” that is “human”; The individual jaguars are the ones that acquire a subjective dimension (more or less relevant according to the practical context of interaction with them) to be perceived as having “behind them” a society, a collective political alterity. [...] There is no absolute difference of status between society and environment, as if the first was the “subject”, and the second the “object”. Every object is always another subject, and it is always more than one. (2014, pp. 93–94)

The meanings and practices constructed by the Amerindian people in their interactions with each other and with the environment always refer to this immanent cosmological dimension of forces to which we, Westerners, present still embryonic understandings. After presenting a peculiar reading of such forces, this play presents them into urban situations and contexts, in an exercise of affective parallelism, dream, madness, and freedom. During the play, we can see angry and rebellious mobs who rise up against the oppression of the state, the market and the product orientation of life, and the deification of money and social control, as noted in the following excerpt:

GROOM

See that man inside that armored car?
 He is Mr. State
 the unwavering,
 His car window is unbreakable,
 It's useless throwing stones on his roof.
 His father is a god, the god market.

YOUNG SHAMAN

And where does the father of this Mr. State live?

GROOM

"The market, this ghost institution"
 Here comes the ghost,
 The Market,
 the ghost of the World
 he comes to collect the tithe,
 our amazing ghost,
 thank the Lord he comes
 to charge taxes
 still badly,
 he charges
 the tax that we owe him
 through his rejected child,
 Mister State

BROTHER

Here comes the ghost,
 our ghost,
 covering our world
 of hauntings.
 HUUUAAAAA!

(They flee frightened, Mister State is laughing hard,
 they piss themselves afraid of the ghost-Market.
 The Ghost-Market is a ray of light, a shadow ray,
 projected by a light cannon hidden invisible in an invisible center,
 the walls of the city's buildings as in Gotham City,
 causing panic and panicking people of the city-hell.)

The parallels presented in this Play III between different forms of affections and assemblages within the indigenous universe and within civilization make us question our perceptions of the world and the forces that evolve (often without us knowing) and sometimes manipulate our identities according to interests that are not ours. The others-affections, or *cannibal alterities*, described metaphorically or directly, are the forces of the state, the economy, and the market, which pervade civilization and subjectivities as an immaterial tsunami with devastating effect

indistinct to almost all the inhabitants of the great metropolises. In the transcribed text, it can be observed that the author shifts the metaphysics of predation of the indigenous multiverse to life in contemporary Western civilizations: Those are the immanent alter-forces of the state and the market that determine and shape the identities of the members of these societies and, in a polymetamorphic character, that cannibalize them all. The current ideologies and political practices of nations based on a colonial cultural model still turn to the domestication and standardizing of thoughts, feelings, and actions of members of their societies, reducing them to numbers, machines, nothings, defendants, prisoners, slaves, names, classifications, and other types of generalizations that are often accepted in a thoughtless way as unique and immutable realities by those who are traversed by such forces. They act, therefore, according to exogenous interests and have their lives ruled and dominated by economic, political, and social forces that serve interests that are not their own.

A more careful understanding of the forces that affect us, consume, cannibalize, and void in civilized living can allow us, by considering the multiple realities experienced in nature and the cosmos, to manipulate and form our identities according to our interests, which will bring us freedom and autonomy from a power structure that, among many other evils, led humanity to a cycle of destruction of nature and the consequent environmental setting that can lead to the extinction (or expulsion) of the human species from the Earth (see, in this sense, Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2014).

Play IV: *Floresta de Carbono—de Volta ao Paraíso Perdido*

If we attributed verbs to the previous plays, we will do the same with this one, whose function is *to politicize*. Play IV also updates all the issues discussed so far, bringing them to a conflict border zone of the present time, in the Amazon rain forest. The heterogeneity of voices that is perpetuated by the four acts is emphasized in this act, which opposes or combines views of the civilized, the Indians, religions, official power structures, and mythological crossings.

The references to classical Greco-Roman mythology proliferate throughout the play, appearing in personified form in this play in special appearances of mythological characters like the prophetess Cassandra or the Argonaut Jason, whose only speech is transcribed below:

Argonaut Jason

What is not mirror is ugly, is marginal, is out of line, is monkey face, is red skin. The mirror is blonde white male adult civilized Western. The mirror is Eurocentric. It is the center of the crooked globe. Reflections, reflections, thoughts, torments, correct is to philosophize in European or in the wild language, I do not know if I'm supposed to be confused, I am or I am not.

Although we have formed ethnically heterogeneous societies in Latin America throughout the centuries, their main cultural references were and still are founded on Judeo-Christian–European logocentrism and its mythological bases. The imposed cultural patterns always obey the European logic that sees the white man

as superior and the indigenous person as savage, animalistic, and devoid of capabilities and intelligence. Hence, the character stating that “the mirror is the white civilized Westerner,” where any possible difference that can be neutralized, will be. Those who somehow resist becoming equal to the exogenous model imposed on them become marginalized, illegitimated, outcasts, persecuted, or even killed.

Throughout the act, the presented characters represent forces linked to Christian churches or the state government structures, always abetting in harsh and ruthless attacks on indigenous Jawat, which at one point explodes:

Jawat

Angel-of-Death and the Police, you turn everything around, dog-angel, selfish-mutt. There is a constant-chorus of people who are discontent with the demarcation of our indigenous-lands. Rice farmers, state politicians, businessmen, state governors, Angel Michael, this chorus accuses, plants fake news in the global-press, slanders, false information campaigns, deceitful, channeled by the press (media) by a handful of pollutant rice farmers, politicians and men from the mining business, stock exchange, and there are plenty of declarations from certain military men, from that military Angel Michael, seeking to cancel or modify the demarcation of our lands in border areas, violence and aggression from some rice farmers against the Indians, lawsuits filed by farmers and by the state government, prosecution, the Indians will deliver the borders areas to the old foreigners, the Indians threaten national sovereignty Aaaarrrrrrr, I’m tired, broke down, I’ve fallen, been defeated, I get up, fight, make war, howl, curse, scream, evil wildling, I protest, hurrrrr, and we who have always been at the borders, defending those national borders.

The transcribed speech is emblematic as it gathers in itself many of the forces against which the indigenous people have fought in a systematic and often disproportionate way over the past five centuries.

The territorial dispute is the issue that currently most haunts the remaining indigenous communities, who are largely banished and confined to small plots of land that do not provide conditions for a dignified existence, to maintain their cultural practices and, consequently, their ancestral knowledge.

A bevy formed by Christian churches (from the initial Jesuit missions to evangelical churches today), governments at all levels, legal structures at all levels, the press at all levels, landowners, agribusiness entrepreneurs, and all its interested partners act abetting inside and outside the law to progressively erase from society those who somehow do not obey their interests. With their stupid and greedy acts, these power structures destroy completely indigenous cultures, steal these peoples’ land, poison the joy of living of the members of their societies, and kill them, in a systematic engine of deaths and cultural suppression that has been working nonstop for five centuries.

The feeling that remains after we experience the four plays of *Jaguar Cibernético* is of being crossed by a complex of forces as powerful as it is unexplained. We do not know whether they came from the theater, nature, the indigenous people, the gods, the Kosmos, the city, or any of that. We conclude that *Jaguar Cibernético* is an anarchic treaty about forces. Forces acting in the Amazon or in São Paulo, Moscow, or Tokyo, *anyone* can feel them.

Final Thoughts

If cultural psychology intends to be universal, it must be able to construct knowledge that allows us to understand multiple cultural processes, from those involving Amerindian cannibalism to those related to the creation of a theater play, among many others.

All Latin American countries, to a greater or lesser extent, still find themselves under cultural domain systems founded on colonialism, subjugating most of their populations to a complex of forces that intends to shape their identities, feelings, and actions according to external interests. *Jaguar Cibernético* brings serial ruptures to these control forces, by presenting different Amerindian ways of constructing subjectivities, corporalities, thoughts, concepts, practices, and cultural systems, based on ancestral links, cosmic assemblages, and diverse everyday experiences.

The aesthetical apprehension of another culture through a theater play allows us to have a better understanding about some of the tensionings from our own culture that might not be sufficiently clear for all of us. Art, therefore, is a very efficient way of presenting and understanding the other, which leads, consequently, to a better understanding about ourselves and about how we can relate to this Other.

Cannibalism, as pointed by Valsiner (2000, p. 93) and Jahoda (1999), can be considered one of the most appropriate “semiotic tools” for understanding the I–other interactions. *Jaguar Cibernético*, also known as cannibal tetralogy, brings important philosophical notions from recent ethnographies like the Amerindian ceremonial cannibalism and the Amerindian perspectivism that can offer psychology different reading possibilities about how I–other relations occur and about some of the processes directly related to them. Verbs such as “transform,” “turn,” “domesticate,” “capture,” and “convert,” related to the *Tupinambá* cannibalism explained by Play I, also refer to general processes of identity transformation and human development. Studying these interactions more deeply might allow us to notice and understand nuances of these processes still little perceived or explored.

Jaguar Cibernético also presents dichotomic concepts about corporality construction and a whole flow of inter-ethnic tensionings and semiotic regulations that fall directly upon the human body, sometimes imprisoning it and sometimes emancipating it. A free aesthetical affective construction of corporality allows the person to understand and better deal with some of the obscuring or enlightening forces that affect and influence their subjectivity construction. The mass media, mainly through TV, Internet, and publicity, is shown as a standard imposer that leads its audiences to a blinding and almost unnoticed uniformization of subjectivities, bodies, feelings, thoughts, and actions. Religious, military, economic, educational, legal, and governmental structures are also shown functioning the same way, as silent identity shapers and emotion controllers.

To Amerindian peoples, the body is understood as an extension of the surrounding environment, in perennial relational processes with a large variety of worlds, natures, entities, and beings, which leads to a very complex notion of

“human being,” with no specific or phylogenetic distinction to place *Homo sapiens* apart from their counterparts.

The problem isn't, therefore, in seeing the native as object, and the solution isn't to place him as subject. There is no doubt the native is a subject; but *what can be* a subject, that's exactly what the native makes the anthropologist call into question (Viveiros de Castro 2002b, pp. 118–119).

As said before, the Amerindian native is placed inside a pluricomunicative nature web during their everyday experiences, where animals, natural phenomena, and cosmic assemblages might as well be considered subjects, endowed with verb and intention, and about which they construct multiple practices and concepts.

I do not think the American Indians ‘cognize’ differently from us, I mean, that their ‘mental’ processes or categories are different from any other human. It's not the case to imagine the Indians as having a peculiar neurophysiology, which otherwise would process the diverse in a diverse way. Regarding me, I think that they think exactly ‘like us’; but I also think that what they think, i.e., the concepts they give themselves, the ‘descriptions’ they produce, are very different from ours, so that the world described by these concepts is very different from ours (Viveiros de Castro 2002b, p. 124)

In inter-ethnic dialogue, the direction of the actions presupposes the construction of a sharing that, as we know, is illusory (cf. Guimarães and Simão 2007), in which both parts, seeking these acts of sharing, negotiate. Dialogue, however, depends on an availability to negotiate meanings, and the Eurocentric West constantly refuses to discuss certain concepts that threaten its interests: There are meanings and directions non-negotiable, submitting us to certain powerful forces that give no possibility of reflection about or reaction, excluding our freedom of self-determination. Indigenous peoples, like any other culture, are also ethnocentric, unavailable to negotiations and closed enough to maintain essential practices and meaning constructions according to their millennial traditions. The parts involved must, then, have a careful inter-ethnic dialogue in order not to be captured or seduced by the Other perspective.

Based on our research, we can say that cultural psychology is not seeking to understand psychic processes' differences or similarities, but to understand the different ways that each culture construct their realities and the effects brought by the relations among these different constructions. We can also affirm that these contacts are crossed by affective tensions originated by the different meanings, concepts, and practices constructed by each culture about their realities. The psychology that opens itself up like science, from now on, therefore, is a psychology that studies identities and alterity construction processes through dialogical relations, but also comprising the coexistence of dimensions that are not brought into the dialogue, as well as processes that undermine alterity, hindering any form of dialogue.

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Chapter 15

Bridging Micro, Meso, and Macro Processes in Social Psychology

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Social psychology and cultural psychology have long been concerned with exploring the relationship between individuals and society (Valsiner and Rosa 2007). A broad division has evolved toward the study of this relationship, with North American researchers focusing more on individual-level processes and European social psychology giving relatively more attention to collective processes. A few researchers have attempted integration, on the assumption that the successful elaboration of the individual's relationship with the social world requires an analysis that acknowledges the multiple levels of analysis (Doise 1980; Valsiner and Rosa 2007). At least three levels of analysis should be acknowledged in research on social behavior:

- the *micro* level constitutes the smallest unit of analysis, typically the individual. This may include inter alia personality traits, cognitive styles, attributional tendencies, and individual attitudes;
- the *meso* level focuses on the various social group memberships of the individual, such as their family, neighborhood, ethnicity, and nationality;
- the *macro* level may be considered the highest level of analysis and would include societal ideologies and social representations, such as the Indian caste system which organizes caste groups within a hierarchical system, or the state ideologies of assimilation versus multiculturalism.

More integration is needed to merge “psychological” researchers exploring social behavior, focused on the micro level and individualistic theories which view the individual as the primary unit of analysis (see Powell 2007), with “sociological” researchers focused on the meso and macro levels of analysis and viewing societal structure as a key starting point (see Rohall et al. 2011). The lack of integration of these levels of analysis has resulted in partial explanations of complex social

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psychological phenomena (Jaspal 2014; Harré and Moghaddam 2012; Moghaddam 2002). Thus, the puzzle of individual–society integration remains, despite all the progress we have made in developing theories in psychology, despite what seem to be countless empirical studies using traditional and non-traditional methods, and despite growth in a vast range of non-mainstream psychologies, including cultural psychology, critical psychology, and narrative psychology. The puzzle remains, despite the apparent influence of Lev Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner, and Rom Harré, and despite the growing visibility of progressive journals such as *Culture and Psychology* and *Feminism and Psychology*. Despite all this, micro-level approaches to psychological phenomena remain the dominant paradigm and there has been little attempt to synthesize the three prime levels of analysis. In this chapter, we explore the interdependent relations between behavior at macro, meso, and micro levels.

To better understand the puzzle, consider the example of human rights and duties. We know from the research of Willem Doise and his group in Geneva that the ideas integral to the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* are now shared by young people in many different countries around the world (Doise et al. 1998, 1999). Through what mechanisms are these ideas spread? Why do we observe differences in attitudes among specific groups and societies? In our ongoing research at Georgetown, we are finding that there are differences between the attitudes of men and women on human rights and duties: Women tend to be more supportive of rights associated with health, education, and social welfare in general. In attempting to explain these gender differences, one might point to “socialization processes,” but this is too vague. In our view, differences in attitudes and perspectives arise from the complex interaction between the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. Social constructions of reality are processed by the individual in accordance with both their individual identities consisting of personality traits, attitudes, and knowledge structures and their group memberships and the ideologies and knowledge structures associated with them. Answering these questions necessitates an integration of the various levels of analysis.

Critics have repeatedly pointed out that traditional psychology is reductionist and focuses too much on the self-contained individual. Traditional studies examine intrapersonal processes in a vacuum. Studies on group processes, focusing on “conformity,” “groupthink,” and other such meso-level phenomena, have identified ways in which individuals and groups are meshed together. Studies on stereotype threat, values, and attributional style have examined how aspects of culture can influence individual-level thinking. But the puzzle remains: What *in practice* are the means by which the macro level processes become linked to meso and micro level processes? Pointing to “culture” is not enough. We need theoretical ideas that point to more concrete links and more practical mechanisms of influence. One proposal has been a theoretical synthesis of Identity Process Theory and Social Representations Theory as a means of integrating the three prime levels of analysis and of providing an analysis that is *social psychological* in essence.

Social Representation, Identity, and Action

A central proposition in this chapter is that a social psychological framework that can integrate the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis is necessary (see Jaspal et al. 2014). In exploring the micro level, it seems that individuals strive to maintain and protect their identity, that is, their understanding of *the kind of person they are* and *what makes their groups the kinds of groups they are*, in the face of challenges to it—incidentally, these challenges often originate at the meso and macro levels. For instance, new legislation that is perceived as discriminating against one’s group in society or a state-level revolution that forces one to rethink one’s position in the state can both challenge identity at the micro level. In attempting to articulate the interrelations between the micro, meso, and macro levels, two theories from social psychology—Identity Process Theory and Social Representations Theory—have proven to be particularly useful.

Identity Process Theory (Breakwell 1986; Jaspal and Breakwell 2014) sheds light on how people construct, regulate, and protect their identities. The theory proposes that people construct their sense of identity through engagement with two psychological processes, namely (i) assimilation–accommodation and (ii) evaluation.

- The assimilation–accommodation process refers to the absorption of new information in the identity structure and to the adjustment that takes place for it to become part of the structure. For instance, when the Islamic Revolution took place in Iran in 1979, many Iranians simply did not think of themselves as religious beings—some only nominally self-identified as Muslim but did not view this as a particularly meaningful aspect of identity. After the Revolution, Islam was rendered a salient identity element and a primary means of self-definition and was, thus, assimilated to identity. Yet, in order for this to become a part of identity (accommodation), room had to be made for it in the identity structure—some people begin to question the other activities and practices that they engaged in, which were now defined as “un-Islamic” by the Iranian authorities.
- The evaluation process confers meaning and value upon the contents of identity. For instance, with the emergence of the self-category African American, which has gradually replaced the category black, Americans of African descent are able to think about their identity in terms of cultural heritage, rather than race (Philogène 1999). This enables individuals to construct an identity that can overcome the historical legacy of racism and, thus, focus on positivity rather than negativity.

These processes function to create specific desirable end-states for identity, which are referred to as “identity principles.” Identity processes are guided by the following principles:

- Continuity—a continuous temporal thread connecting past, present, and future
- Distinctiveness—uniqueness and differentiation from others
- Self-efficacy—competence and control
- Self-esteem—personal and social worth

The theory suggests that when identity processes cannot, for whatever reason, comply with psychologically salient principles, identity is threatened and the individual will engage in strategies to cope with the threat. A coping strategy is defined as “any activity, in thought or deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity” (Breakwell 1986, p. 78). Coping functions at three levels:

- Intrapyschic strategies include *inter alia* denial and reconceptualization.
- Interpersonal strategies are those that rely on altering one’s existing relationships with other people in order to minimize the threat, such as self-isolation.
- Intergroup strategies make use of intergroup dynamics in order to safeguard identity and include making strategic use of multiple group memberships and actively seeking group support through social networks or consciousness raising/self-help groups.

A central proposition of the theory is that people do not construct their identities in a social vacuum but rather through engagement with social norms, values, ideologies, etc. These can be collectively referred to as *social representations*. Moscovici’s (1998) Social Representations Theory explains the development and dissemination of social knowledge. Social representations are defined as systems of values, ideas, and practices regarding a given social object. They are context specific and create what one might call a shared social reality in which thinking and discussion regarding issues such as politics, science, and technology can take place. Moreover, social representations are *tools* for communicating with one another—we understand each other, not just through language itself, but also through the social representations that underpin the words and phrases that we utter. Moscovici (1988) outlines two processes that give rise to social representations, namely (i) anchoring and (ii) objectification. Anchoring refers to the process of making something unfamiliar understandable by linking it to something familiar. For instance, when the first AIDS cases emerged in gay communities of New York and San Francisco, the virus was often linked to the plague (e.g., “gay plague”). Objectification is the process whereby unfamiliar and abstract objects are transformed into concrete and “objective” commonsense realities. For instance, the metaphors of “freedom fighter” versus “terrorist” demonstrate the radically different social, political, and ethical perspectives that Israelis and Palestinians often take in relation to their long-standing intergroup conflict (Jaspal and Coyle 2014).

In modeling the individual’s relationship with a social representation, which is an important way of reconciling the micro, meso, and macro levels, Breakwell (2014) points to the following factors:

- Awareness—people differ in their level of awareness of a social representation. For example, many people living in the West are exposed only to negative social representations of Israel/Palestine, which are anchored in conflict and violence, and may be unaware of more positive social representations of Israeli contributions to science and of Palestinian contributions to culture, for instance.

- **Understanding**—people vary in the extent to which they understand a social representation. For instance, although many Iranians are aware of the social representation that Israel is an illegitimate state, they may not all understand the historical and political underpinnings of this representation.
- **Acceptance**—individuals accept a social representation to varying degrees. Although political institutions may attempt to encourage positive social representations of Islam in the face of growing Islamophobic prejudice, some individuals may simply refuse to accept these representations and perpetuate the view that Muslims are “Other.”
- **Assimilation**—once accepted, the social representation needs to be assimilated to the network of existing social representations held by the individual. An American who votes for the Republican Party may accept the social representation of anthropogenic climate change, but this will then need to be reconciled with other potential social representations, e.g., that the theory of anthropogenic climate change is a scam designed to undermine the US economy.
- **Salience**—individuals’ awareness and understanding of a social representation will likely depend on the extent to which the representation is salient in any given context. The media, for example, play a pivotal role in rendering salient social representations and have, therefore, been described as performing an agenda-setting function.

Breakwell’s (2001, 2014) formal alignment of Identity Process Theory with Social Representations has opened up further opportunities for integrating the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. Identity Process Theory acknowledges the importance of social representations in determining identity content (i.e., the information that is accepted and assimilated) and the impact that social representations can have for identity processes (i.e., whether they are threatened or enhanced). For example, a social representation that challenges one’s self-esteem, continuity, and so on is unlikely to be accepted, simply because human beings are motivated to protect their identities. It is argued that this integrative framework of representation, identity, and action can be useful in understanding how the micro, meso, and macro levels relate to one another in psychology.

Symbols and Identity: The Islamic Veil and the Confederate Flag

In 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini led the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which led to the departure of the Shah and his family from Iran and to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Prior to the Revolution, Iran had been seeking rapprochement with the West and had close alliances with both the USA and Israel. While officially a Shia Muslim country, the Iranian monarchs presented themselves as more European than Middle Eastern and this was mirrored in the abundance of cinemas showing Western films, French cafes, bars, clubs, and so on. After the

Revolution, this all changed. The USA and Israel, once Iran's allies, were positioned as the Big Satan and Little Satan, respectively, and the Islamic identity was to be rekindled and restored in Iran. The powerful leadership and charismatic rhetoric of Ayatollah Khomeini, the new Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, paved the way toward a complete transformation of the social, political, and ideological landscape of Iran. Post-revolution Iran itself provided an exciting natural laboratory for the examination of social psychological phenomena. It clearly reflected the interrelations between macro-level ideologies (anti-Americanism, anti-West, Islamization) and the meso-level, that is, how groups and identities in Iran were aligned with these ideologies. The underpinning mechanism was the construction of social representations reflecting these ideologies and their dissemination to the public—they were rendered salient, and Iranians were expected to accept and assimilate them to their identities.

What was particularly fascinating about the post-Revolution era was what Islamic fundamentalists in Iran had to say about *hijab*, the Islamic veil. The third author of this chapter travelled around his native Iran, asking people “Why do you give so much importance to a piece of cloth? Was the great revolution for a piece of cloth? Does the focus on this piece of cloth not trivialize the revolution?” These questions sought to explore the meaning and significance of the *hijab* both to the Islamic Revolution and to Iranians themselves. At this point, Islamic fundamentalists were using every means possible, from verbal persuasion to lethal violence, from social pressure to throwing acid in the face of “immorally dressed” females, to force Iranian women to wear the veil. The *hijab* had come to constitute a social representation, that is, a tangible objectification of the Islamic Revolution and the ideals for which it stood. For the Islamic revolutionaries, it epitomized *inter alia* modesty, morality, and Islam, and it represented much more than a piece of cloth but a means of distinguishing post-Revolution Iran from the “immoral” Iran of the Shah. In this context, we can see how the macro-level state ideologies of Islamization and assimilation were objectified in terms of the *hijab* and then used, at the meso-level, to delineate those faithful to the ideals of the Revolution versus the “heretics.” The power of this symbol is further demonstrated by the ways in which the Islamic veil has continued to create such scandal in French public schools. Indeed, “[b]y late 1989, many Islam as a new threat and Muslim students as its carriers” (Bowen 2007, p. 66). The veil, as a social representation of Islam, came to transform individuals into members of this threatening outgroup, blurring the boundaries between micro and meso.

In Iran, the requirement that all women wear this symbol of the Islamic Revolution ensures the salience of this social representation and serves to encourage its acceptance among the Iranian population. Even the way in which the *hijab* is worn by women is often used as a marker of their political identity—Iranian women who wear it loosely with much of their hair visible are often viewed as attempting to evade the legal requirement of wearing the *hijab* without actually contravening it and they may in fact be chastised by police officers for the misdemeanor of “*bad hijab*,” while those women who wear it more tightly with none of

their hair visible may be viewed as buying into the ideals of the Islamic Revolution. This use of the *hijab* itself reflects particular group identities.

In thinking about how Iranians themselves respond to this social representation of the state, identity processes are important. Those Iranians who participated in the Revolution with hopes for greater social and political freedoms would plausibly experience threats to their sense of continuity when they were faced with the imposition of the *hijab*. Conversely those who perceived the Shah's modernization processes as "alien" to Iranian culture may have experienced a boost to their sense of continuity since the "threat" of Westernization had passed and the *hijab* symbolized a return to their "origins." Thus, the constant salience of the *hijab* was experienced as a threat to identity among some and as an enhancement of identity among others, and how it was experienced depended, and continues to depend, upon group identities and political loyalties.

How individuals responded behaviorally is also significant. As discussed above, some Iranian women attempt to challenge authority by wearing the *hijab* unconventionally, which may be conceptualized as an act of negativism, that is, "the state of mind which one is in when one feels a desire or a compulsion to act *against* the requirements or pressures from some external source. This may mean refusing to do what others wish or even doing the opposite of what is required or expected in a given situation" (Apter 1983, p. 79). This interpersonal strategy for coping with threats imposed at the macro level can provide, at meso and micro levels, the perception that one is self-efficacious and has agency over one's identity, life, and future. Conversely, others embrace the *hijab* as an important aspect of their identities as Iranian women and proudly wear it to symbolize their entwined national and religious identity, as per the ideology of the Islamic Revolution. In short, the *hijab* constitutes a social representation in Iran—it is embraced by some and rejected by others. The meanings that this representation activates for people are entwined with their individual and social identities, as well as their histories and political affiliations.

The Islamic veil is not the only piece of cloth that can acquire meaning and significance for millions of people. Another example is the perception held by many US Southerners toward the Confederate Flag. It is seen by some as representing a proud, valiant, and gracious South, and by others as symbolizing a South still mired in racism, bigotry, and backwardness (Coski 2005). Like the Islamic veil in Iran, the Confederate Flag had come to be fiercely defended by many people in the South. For some, it represents the distinctiveness of Southern identity and constitutes a source of regional self-esteem. It evokes particular social memories (Lyons 1996), which serve to bolster identity among some Southerners. Like the Islamic veil in Iran, the Confederate Flag can provide a sense of continuity over time, keeping in tact an identity that is grounded in the history of the South—it connects past, present, and future. The sense of continuity is of course further maintained through the establishment and maintenance of monuments commemorating those who served on the Confederate side in the American Civil War. For many Southerners, the Confederate Flag poses a threat to identity because it is a social representation that evokes low self-esteem on the basis of Confederate principles which may be

perceived as racist and as glorifying the practice of slavery. Conversely, for others, it may actually promote pride and, thus, self-esteem on the basis of the ingroup's history. Although the Islamic fundamentalists defending the Islamic veil and the Southerners defending the Confederate Flag would see one another as being very different, they do in fact converge in one key respect: They both adopted a piece of cloth as a cultural carrier. The respective pieces of cloth have come to constitute a social representation which evokes ideas, images, and affect in people's minds.

Cultural carriers are the means by which the values, attitudes, and the normative system of a society are propagated and passed on to the next generation. Social representations like physical entities, such as flags and standards, ensure that these values, attitudes, and norms are safeguarded and communicated across generations. At a basic level, these representations facilitate collective remembering since they anchor the present to the past by fixating on a specific symbolic aspect of our group's history. The Confederate Flag evokes the Southern identity in opposition to the Northern identity. Consider the following example from the novel *War and Peace*:

“This is my hour!” thought Prince Andrei, seizing the staff of the standard and exulting as he heard the whistle of bullets unmistakably aimed at him. Several soldiers fell.

“Hurrah!” shouted Prince Andrei, and scarcely able to hold up the heavy standard he ran forward in the unhesitating conviction that the whole battalion would follow him.

And it was indeed only for a few steps that he ran alone. One soldier started after him, then another, until the whole battalion with a shout of ‘Hurrah’ had dashed forward and overtaken him.

Tolstoy (1869/1957, vol. 1, p. 325).

The hero rallying soldiers around a military standard during a battle, school-children saluting the national flag in front of their school, and sports fans cheering the team mascot are all familiar scenes, involving well-known story lines. When Tolstoy describes in *War and Peace* how Prince Andrei turned the tide of battle by picking up the regimental standard, running with it at the enemy, and inspiring other Russian soldiers to turn around and fight the French invaders, we immediately recognize what is happening. When Prince Andrei is wounded and falls with the flagstaff in his hand, losing blood and moaning “like a child,” and when Napoleon passes by and says of the Prince “That’s a fine death!” (Tolstoy 1869/1957, vol. 1, p. 338), this is a story line we know well. The regimental standard carries us along with it inspiring images of heroism, glory, love for country, and sacrifice. It is easy to see how the group's self-esteem may be embodied by the standard.

Uniforms, medals, regimental standards, national flags, the military salute, the sound of the military bugle—these are all cultural carriers that we understand and are influenced by. They facilitate feelings of continuity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and distinctiveness, and provide a sense of “us” versus “them” (Lyons 1996). They ensure that group identities, and the ideologies that underpin them, remain salient and that the positive images associated with these identities are accepted and internalized by every group member. These are concrete mechanisms through which macro societal processes become wedded to meso group-level processes and micro individual-level processes.

Human Rights and Duties

The domain of human rights and duties is a similarly fruitful arena in which to explore the interconnections between the micro, meso, and macro levels of societal functioning. The National Archives houses many important symbols of human rights and duties. In this building, many thousands of documents and articles are stored and thousands of others are on display—Michael Jackson’s white gloves, Michelle Obama’s dress when Barack Obama won the 2008 election, and many historical documents. Each of these items and many others in the National Archives is a *personal* item belonging to an individual which has acquired greater social significance—it represents their owners and, perhaps more importantly, what their owners themselves stood for. More generally, each document is placed within the Archives because it is seen as of historic importance. However, “historic importance” can be interpreted in many different ways. Imagine, instead, a different kind of display: a room filled with the listings of the latest Yellow Pages, or of the list of decisions made by a local schoolteacher. While possible, such a room was not on display.

Instead, there are exhibits of famous individuals throughout history—photographs of the first astronauts, the first television appearance of a President, and letters sent from Presidents to friends, loved ones, and dignitaries. There is not a room with photographs of the “average Joe” from the office, or “average citizen” who reads the current trends in science. Instead, we are faced with rooms filled with meticulously selected objects, intending to evoke certain experiences within the viewers. The objects link the individual viewers with the collectively known personalities and events. They function as social representations as they evoke social memories among visitors. These items construct a sense of continuity, sustaining aspects of the ingroup’s history and reminding citizens of the highs and lows of the journey to where we are now. They render salient those aspects of our history that can provide a sense of pride and self-esteem, ensuring that self-identification with the group and its ethos continue. Crucially, each visitor is targeted individually, clearly demonstrating the synthesis of the micro and macro levels. Groups also strive to construct their past, present, and future as being characterized by unity, rather than division, and differences between the ingroup and outgroups are often accentuated. This maintains the group’s distinctiveness (through internal cohesion) and, thus, its integrity.

The main attraction in the National Archives is presented in a very special way. After a long line, behind an ornate gate, with a security guard controlling the number of people who pass the gate, you can walk around this large rotunda and view the original copies of the *Bill of Rights* and the *United States Constitution*. The extravagance, the security, and the reverence placed on these two historic pieces of paper create a feeling of importance and sacredness. It also elevates the pieces of paper to symbolic status, demonstrating their centrality to the state and the ideology underlying it. Here, the foundation of a country, built on rights for all (free) men, is protected, watched over, and revered. The unique treatment of these documents, the

restrictions and limitations on their viewing and holding, gives them special importance. Here, through their distance, they become even more impressive. It is therefore a social representation of the nation.

The display of the *Bill of Rights* shows how cultural carriers are exhibited in such a way as to transfer the values of rights and duties to the next generation. Here, we have various levels of distancing—the large empty room, the bulletproof glass, and the limitation of the number of viewers at any one time. The security guards are present to protect these documents and what they stand for. The Archives is a display of duty—to honor and remember the past, to instill the ideas of the rights written down from long ago. Their display shows both the longevity and the continued relevance of these rights. The reverence of these documents ensures that they stand out from all others and that the social representation of the nation remains salient in the eyes and minds of visitors. It communicates the underlying ideology (macro) to the individual (micro).

Important cultural carriers are also found outside the National Archives, in broader society. Consider the case of Martin Luther King Jr., a man who spent his life creating and defining a movement of freedom and equality for all. It took eighteen years after his death to have a national holiday memorializing his actions and the actions of so many that forever changed the country. The development of Martin Luther King Jr. as a personification of equality took years of hard work, demonstrations, and recognitions from the State to the Federal level. Dr. King is used as a social representation to remind us all that freedoms are not so easily given, but that those who are oppressed can find the strength to fight back and gain what they deserve. Again, we see the power of rights, and the duty of all citizens to ensure the equality of these rights, focused through the idolization of Dr. King. We are able to propagate the normative system of rights through these objects and individuals by distancing their reality until they are generalized beyond themselves—hyper-generalized into a notion and a feeling of pride and sacredness, that is, a social representation.

One of the most sacred locations to visit in the Washington, DC area is the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*. There are guards at this site twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. While on duty, the guards are not ranked, so as to not outrank the lost soldier. A serious atmosphere is maintained, and the guards are quick to scold anyone who breaks the rules. People come to watch soldiers march back and forth for hours at a time. Of course, there is more to the ceremony than pacing back and forth. Each step, each second, is meticulously planned and practiced to indicate the utmost respect for those who fell in past wars. This social representation too evokes social memories and allows for a sense of continuity between past, present, and future in service of the nation. It instills pride and esteem in citizens and clearly demonstrates the self-efficacy of the ingroup and its members.

Yet, if there is a single cultural carrier for the American political system, it lies in the heart of Washington—the White House. Not even the statue of Abraham Lincoln or the home of George Washington is as powerful as the White House in representing and propagating American political values. Irrespective of the particular individual who serves as President at any one time, the White House carries forward

values and beliefs that are part of the American heritage. The evolution of the White House as a national carrier reflects influence from macro, to meso, to micro levels: Powerful political and economic (macro) forces use and propagate the White House as a national carrier reflecting power and status, schools and other meso level groups (e.g., the family, the church) assimilate and further communicate the meaning of the White House as national carrier, and individuals (particularly children) are socialized to perceive and adopt this meaning for the White House. Throughout the centuries, although the White House has been rebuilt a number of times, the national role it plays has remained constant. However, cultural carriers become transformed as well, as we saw when the Twin Towers are destroyed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Freedom Tower was built to carry forward American ideals.

Concluding Thoughts

We have discussed what continues to be the greatest challenge for social psychology, explaining the integration of individuals and societies. An interesting possibility is that Social Representations Theory and Identity Process Theory may provide an integrative heuristic framework for understanding the links between macro, meso, and micro processes. Objects, places, and spaces can become social representations of the state, its ideology, and other macro-level phenomena, which are subsequently displayed and brandished so that they can resonate with groups and individuals within society. These social representations, or cultural carriers, are continually being transformed, as individuals and groups compete to make their own meaning systems dominant in interpersonal, intergroup, and societal relationships. Just as the Islamic veil and the Confederate Flag, “just pieces of cloth,” are fought over, so too is there a fight around the globe about the meaning of the *Twin Towers* and *Freedom Tower*. At a global level, also, social representations are in continuous transformation and dispute. Yet, those that are central to identity will be maintained and defended with fervor.

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Part IV
Human Being as a Generalizing Meaning
Creator

Chapter 16

On Abstraction, Generalization, and Theoretical Constructions

Yair Neuman

Topology is one of the main branches of mathematics. It deals with shapes as preserved under certain deformations. For topology, a doughnut and a coffee mug are the same at least in terms of their homeomorphism, which means that a continuous deformation of the doughnut, involving stretching or banding but not tearing or gluing, can transform the shape of the doughnut into the shape of a coffee mug and vice versa.

The idea that we can “smoothly” transform one shape to another shape establishes the abstract relation of a similarity between the shapes, a property described above through the mathematical concept of homeomorphism. A coffee mug is *similar* to a doughnut in an abstract sense that is grounded in a concrete operation that involves the continuous deformation of their shape. In this case, similarity, albeit an abstract concept, is grounded in concrete operation (e.g., the deformation) as it unfolds in time, and therefore, similarity has a clear temporal aspect. The *similarity* described above between the coffee mug and the doughnut, as with other forms of similarity, is a basic property underlying what we call “*abstraction*” or “*generalization*.” After all, if a horse is somehow similar to a cat, then they may be grouped together under the general category of “mammals.”

In itself, generalization is not necessary and probably in most cases is not a general property according to which each object is a universal substitute of its similar one. Let me explain this argument through the topological case. Despite the topological similarity of their shapes, no reasonable man or woman would try to eat the coffee mug or to drink coffee from a doughnut. Therefore, the generalization applied by topology to the doughnut and the coffee mug is valid *only* within the context of topology where the criterion of shape homeomorphism is applied.

Why is it important to emphasize this point? When we move from the Platonic world of mathematics, the idea of generalization becomes even more difficult to grasp, as in order to determine the “scope of generalization,” we should examine the extent to which objects may *substitute* for each other in different contexts. As the concept of *substitute* involves the exchange of “value,” which Saussure identified

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with “meaning,” we are easily led to the realm of semiotics where the notion of meaning has been a prey, too easy a prey, to the ideas of naive realism on the one hand and relativism/postmodernism on the other hand.

Up to now, we have discussed the “cognitive” aspects of generalization where the scope of generalization is determined by the extent to which the objects in a given “universe of discourse” can be substituted in the value/meaning sense. In this context, and by moving to the realm of psychological theories, we may better understand Valsiner’s call for generalizing theories in (cultural) psychology (Valsiner 2014). Psychology needs to find its own mechanisms of generalization, the same as topology, but with the reflective understanding that its generalization mechanisms should be of relevance for the particular context of psychology, which means to the particular context of “meaning-making” (Neuman 2008).

The theories Valsiner is seeking should also go beyond the particularity admired and praised by some postmodernist thinkers, as he suggests, and on the other hand beyond the superficial “generalities” such as those used in psychology and limited to the statistical inference from sample to population.

How should we address the challenge of reconstructing the “abstract generalized whole” proposed by Valsiner? (p. 148). Generalization is the same as abstraction, the process through which we extend our concepts to less specific concepts, but in psychology, we are quite limited in understanding the “process mechanisms involved” (Valsiner 2014, p. 118) and cover them with “nice words” (ibid.). In other words, for gaining significant progress in psychology, we should address the challenge of generalizing theories that describe the *actual mechanisms* involved in generalization and therefore in meaning-making.

From a meta-perspective, a psychologist also needs “mechanisms” to assist him in approaching his subject matter and gaining meaningful generalizations. That is, he needs maps to guide him in seeking the appropriate mechanisms of generalization. S(he) needs maps of generalization maps. Put simply, the reflective psychologist who is seeking to develop a generalization should have some guiding maps and such guiding maps can at least metaphorically draw from the way human beings construct generalizations.

It goes without saying that heroic ventures such as Piaget’s *Structuralism* (1970) aimed to address this challenge, but our reflective understanding in the current *Zeitgeist* invites new and fresh approaches that on the one hand acknowledge the heroic ventures of the past while on the other hand reflectively and critically acknowledge their shortcomings.

Here, I would like to sketch one possible direction that may be meaningful for psychology in seeking generalizing theories. I do not pretend to propose the guiding map, but to examine several ideas regarding the process of generalization/abstraction in human cognition, and to propose them as guidelines of thought for the psychologist.

My point of departure is *Funes the Memorious* (Borges 1962), the hero of Borges’ short story, who is an *Idiot Savant* manifesting prodigious memory capacity while understanding nothing. Funes’ idiocy is expressed through his failure in generalizing from the information stored in his mind. More specifically, it

results from his inability to forget (Neuman 2007) and to transcend the concrete. As I have argued elsewhere (Ibid.), to gain meaning, generalization, and understanding, we must erase some information stored in our memory, whether our personal memory, institutional memory, or cultural memory. There is no construction without loss and oblivion, Borges reminds us, from the death of cells in embryo development to the construction of theories in psychology.

Funes, like the postmodernists described by Valsiner, is living in a world of particularities. In fact, he is *overwhelmed* by particularities to a degree where he cannot see the forest for the trees. In contrast, people like the patient from Sacks' *The man who mistook his wife for a hat* (1998) live in a world of abstractions. For the person described by Sack's case study, there are no trees but a forest only, no difference between a doughnut and a coffee mug, and therefore, he is living in a world of *empty generalities*.

What is the lesson we can learn from Borges' story? The first lesson is that generalization necessarily involves the loss/forgetting/deletion/erasure of some information. This is not a trivial issue as we have to understand what is the meaning of "information" and how much (and which) information should we "drop" to gain relevant generalities. However, at the most basic level, we have to acknowledge that to gain generality we must deliberately lose some information. In this context, and quite surprisingly, the psychologist may gain interesting insights from a field known as the *Physics of Computation* (Bennett and Landauer 1985).

Although "computation" is a process that is associated with artificial computing machines, computation may be generally described as a process/mechanism through which we get some output from some input, such in the case where we apply the arithmetic operator "+" on 1 and 2 (i.e., $1 + 2$) to gain the output "3." This process should be considered in the most abstract sense so that we can apply it to our inquiry. And here arrives the punch. Rolf Landauer's remarkable insight was that an irreversible process of computation, that is a process in which the input cannot be reconstructed from the output, is a process that *must* involve a minimal loss of information, which he was able to specify.

Let us take as an example the arithmetic expression $1 + 2 = 3$. Why is this process an "irreversible" process? The answer is that given the operator "+" and the output "3," we cannot simply reconstruct the input "1" and "2," as the output "3" may be the outcome of $1.5 + 1.5$ and so on. In other words, we cannot determine the inputs that have produced "3." We cannot reverse the process and determine the inputs, at least in this specific case.

Moreover, Bennett and Landauer (1985) describe "information" in simple terms of "*differences*." That is, whenever there are differences, there is information. For example, let us imagine two rubber balls of the same physical properties that are being dropped to the floor at the same time. The first ball is dropped from the height of 2 m, while the other ball is dropped from the height of 1 m. When hitting the floor, the balls bounce up while releasing some energy. The height of their jump, or more exactly the difference between the heights of their jumps, is information we can use to determine the height from which each of them has been dropped. However, after a while and as they lose energy, differences are lost until both balls

rest peacefully on the floor. In this context, too, differences and therefore information have been lost. That is, when we perform a computation process, which is necessarily a physical process according to Landauer, we must pay a price expressed in terms of losing differences.

The price we must pay in such an irreversible process is also evident in the psychological realm. For example, when a mother is interacting with her infant pointing at a Raven and saying "Bird" and then pointing at a Robin and saying "Bird," she is generalizing for her infant the particularities of the Raven and the Robin in favor of the more general concept "Bird." This process of generalization is a process of computation that necessarily involves the loss of some differences between the Raven and the Robin.

In sum, when generalizing, we do not uncover the hidden Platonic idea underlying the myriad particularities of the cases that we experience but give up some differences to gain other differences (e.g., a bird is different from a dog) that exist on a higher level of analysis.

This is an important point. Generality has traditionally been conceived in Platonic terms of uncovering the hidden form reflected in the particular and earthly instance. When this conception has been abandoned, it has been replaced by "uncovering" the particular through the abandonment of the general. The idea that generalities emerge from loss, challenges both dichotomies.

Landauer proposed that in the thermodynamic context, which is his basic frame of reference, the amount of information loss is fixed. The idea is that for an irreversible process of computation, we have to pay a price expressed in terms of information loss, unless we would like to overload our memory, to a point of unbearable load. This is exactly what happened to poor Funes where instead of paying the price of generalization, his memory has been overloaded to a point of total stupidity.

If we seriously follow Landauer's ideas, then when attempting to gain a generalization in psychology, we first have to commit ourselves to a minimal loss of information. This may seem a paradoxical conclusion for psychology, but it is a conclusion deeply grounded in the logic of life, the same as in the logic of computation. For instance, a psychologist may gain wonderful insights from a rich description of case studies. However, in gaining generalization rather than settling for rich description only, s(he) must commit herself to a minimal forgetting of certain differences as long as this loss is "compensated" for by value/meaning that is produced at a higher level of abstraction.

The psychologist may sensitively describe various expressions of bereavement in a given culture, but for gaining generalization, s(he) should identify all of the differences between the different expressions and delete some of them, giving up some information despite her enthusiasm for the rich description.

It is important to emphasize the idea that generalization starts with differences and not with similarities, and there is a good reason for the epistemological preference of differences over similarities in the process of generalization. The preference is explained through the physics of computation.

Differences are easier to identify than similarities as similarities assume some generalization, which should be its end product rather than its cause, while differences rely on *negation* only (i.e., 1 is NOT-0 and 0 is NOT-1). In other words, a difference is primarily grounded in *Negation*; a cat is NOT a dog, a dog is NOT a cat, and so on.

At this point, it is very important to understand that the negation operation is a *reversible* operation and therefore *does not involve any loss of information*. For example, let us take the values True and False. Given the negation operator and the output “True,” we can conclude that the input was “False” and vice versa. To recall, information is lost only when we have an irreversible process of computation. If we produce differences only through negation, then no price has been paid. Therefore, differences are the *perfect primitives* of generalization as they do not involve the loss of information, while similarities are gained only when several differences are lost in favor of higher level abstractions (i.e., a difference that makes a difference).

The questions though are not only what is the minimal amount of information/difference that we should drop in scaling up, but also (1) *which* information or differences should we ignore and which keep, and (2) what is the optimal loss of information? These are interesting questions that should be discussed and developed in a different context. However, for the limited context of this “insight” chapter, let us examine this process of information loss and generalization in the very specific context of Valsiner’s discussion of the opposition Dirty/Clean in their cultural context. As opposition theory has made far-reaching arguments in favor of oppositions, such as clean and dirty, as the foundations of mind, the particular case discussed below is of general interest.

Let me start by arguing that the concept “Dirty” is not only an adjective holding a linguistic status but a basic epistemological *behavioral* category with deep embodied roots. Even a cat that has no language to describe dirt is behaviorally avoiding dirt such as in the case of its own fetches. Therefore, “dirty” is primarily an epistemological pre-linguistic behavior grounded in our avoidance of harmful substance. In this “behavioral” context, the cat for instance does not have to be familiar with formal logic in order to understand the negation of DIRTY.

The negation of dirty—NOT-DIRTY—does not hold the same status as DIRTY because it is a *default* of the system’s inferential engine; whenever there are no signs of dirt (e.g., smell of decay), the default is NOT-DIRTY. In other words, we may assume that the negation of DIRTY is formed through default reasoning.

This default form of computation does not produce a positive property, i.e., being NOT-DIRTY does not logically entail being CLEAN. It is an abductive form of inference *à la* Peirce manifested in a default behavior: If a food is not DIRTY, then it is NOT-DIRTY, and one can eat it, for instance. As negation is a reversible operation, there is no loss of information in moving from DIRTY to NOT-DIRTY and the cognitive resources needed to “decide” that a certain food is safe, for instance, are kept at the minimum.

However, here comes the difference between a human being and a cat. Human beings through their unique semiotic capacity can name NOT-DIRTY as CLEAN. In other words, a cat can smell a certain food and given the absence of olfactory

signals of danger conclude by default “NOT-DIRTY” and eat the food. A human being can signify this default conclusion by name: “CLEAN.”

In this context, the movement from NOT-DIRTY to CLEAN is not through simple negation but through semiosis, and therefore, it is an irreversible process in which something has been lost and something has been gained: value/meaning. This is a crucial point for understanding the emergence of generalities, a point that exists on the boundary of behavior and semiosis, and reversible and irreversible cognitive processes.

Let us start with the gain. When naming NOT-DIRTY “CLEAN,” we gain a *positive* property that can be shared by several objects. Let us recall that NOT-DIRTY is a default defined by the negation of DIRTY. When approaching a certain food and identifying no smell of decay, we may conclude by default that the food is NOT-DIRTY and therefore safe. The food, however, may be poisoned while having no olfactory signs of danger. Therefore, the default NOT-DIRTY does not imply a positive conclusion that the food is CLEAN. However, when we name NOT-DIRTY “CLEAN,” we positively affirm the object’s property and generate a sign that can be generalized *beyond* a particular context, and through its affirmative value may gain various connotations that the default negated situation cannot have.

Here, we can complexify the situation by negating CLEAN and producing the output NOT-CLEAN. In this case, this is a negation of a *sign* that in a circular way may be named “DIRTY” closing the circle DIRTY→NOT-DIRTY→CLEAN→NOT-CLEAN→DIRTY.

We can now understand that the basic process of generalization, as evident in the opposition of DIRTY/CLEAN, starts with a negative property that should be avoided: “Dirty.”

Through negation, which is an irreversible process of computation, we get NOT-DIRTY, which is a default conclusion gained through the non-existence of certain signals in a concrete context.

By naming NOT-DIRTY, we gain a positive property CLEAN that is disembodied. Negating CLEAN, we get NOT-CLEAN, which is named as DIRTY, providing positive properties to a situation that was basically a purely behavioral and context-dependent situation. This process therefore describes the way in which generalization is generated through the interplay of loss/gain, reversibility and irreversibility, and behavior and semiosis.

Why cannot we just directly produce CLEAN as an antonym of DIRTY without the mediating process of negation (i.e., NOT-DIRTY)?

The shift from the behavioral state DIRTY, shared by me and my cat, to the culturally mediated sign CLEAN is far from trivial and involves a quantum leap from a behavioral and situated context to a general sign.

“Computing” CLEAN from DIRTY would have demanded a quantum leap that is hard to imagine. In contrast, applying the default conclusion gained by a reversible computation of negation—NOT-DIRTY—provides us with a mediation that is a significant support for climbing the mountain of abstraction.

In this context, the relation between difference and similarity and negation and naming can be summarized. First, we have a difference; for instance, a smell of

decay. This is a “difference that makes a difference” (Bateson 1972) between life and death.

The default behavior produced by negation and its naming and negation produces general categories that express similarities. If for instance fetches that are dangerous and therefore BAD are DIRTY in the semiotic sense, then my enemy, which is dangerous too, is “by similarity” DIRTY. This is the way the mechanism we describe above produces generalization which is specifically expressed in *connotations*.

Now let us further pursue this process, this time by examining Peirce’s concept of *Hypostatic Abstraction*. Wikipedia presents Hypostatic Abstraction as an operation “that transforms a predicate into a relation; for example ‘Honey is sweet’ is transformed into ‘Honey possesses sweetness’.” The relation is created between the original subject and a new term that represents the property expressed by the original predicate. However, the actual process in which this operation takes place remains a mystery.

Using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (Davies 2009), we find that the concrete objects modified by the adjective “sweet” are mostly food such as “sweet chocolate” and “sweet potato.”

The adjective SWEET is actually grounded in our taste for food rich in carbohydrates such as sugar. Like DIRTY, SWEET is primarily a form of behavior initiated by the activation of taste buds on our tongue.

Something that is NOT-SWEET can be salty or sour, but if we understand the evolutionary value/meaning of SWEET as GOOD, then the negation of SWEET is necessarily BITTER, the name we give to an unpleasant taste that results from natural compounds *that are in many cases toxic*.

When computing NOT-SWEET, we lose no information as it is a default conclusion produced by the reversible operation of negation. However, by computing BITTER from NOT-SWEET, we lose some information about the particularities associated with this default and can gain a positive property of BAD TASTE, which can be also applied to bad taste in the metaphorical sense, as someone who is creating in us a negative/bad impression may be described as a BITTER person. If something is NOT-BITTER, then it is SWEET in the abstract sense of a category (SWEETNESS *à la* Peirce) that can be applied to non-tasteable objects as well (e.g., sweet dreams).

Again, what we have seen is a process through which the interplay of differences (e.g., NOT-SWEET) formed by negation, similarity (e.g., BITTER = NOT-SWEET) formed by signification, and the interplay of loss and gain produces our ability to abstract and generalize.

What is the lesson we can draw from this analysis for thinking about generalization in psychology? As suggested by Josephs et al. (1999)

The theoretical and empirical study of meaning-making [i.e., the dynamic process of meaning-making, YN] implies two basic assumptions: first, the *oppositional duality* of any meaning complex, which is the condition for any process of transformation and novelty... and second, the *dynamic hierarchical organization* of meaning in which higher-level signs operate as catalysts on the process of meaning construction (p. 278).

This process is captured in the above theorization in which a basic contextual behavior (e.g., Dirty) is subject to a reversible process of computation in which through the negation operation, a default category assuming no abstraction is produced (e.g., NOT-DIRTY). Through the use of signs, this category is signified where its signification is an act of “meanacting” as the sign CLEAN, for instance, is not a fixed meaning attached to a positive object or property but the signification of a *default inferred behavioral category*. This act of meaning making produces a disembodied sign (e.g., CLEAN) that exists on a different level of the “dynamic hierarchical organization of meaning” as proposed by Josephs et al. (1999).

Applying the negation operation on CLEAN, we gain in a spiral way the sign DIRTY, but this time not as a behavioral category but as an abstract sign that dynamically gains its meaning from its opposition to CLEAN. This process involves the delicate interplay of difference and similarity and reversible and irreversible processes of computation in which certain particularities are lost in favor of higher order differences captured through signification.

In seeking generalizing theory, psychology in general, and cultural psychology in particular, may seek theories that detail the mechanism in which meaning is formed as a dynamic process through the interplay of the biological, ontogenetic, and cultural processes and through the reversible/irreversible process of “computing” meaning and semiosis. The mechanism underlying this process has been detailed in the current chapter, but fully understanding it and its relevance for theoretical psychology is an open challenge that may be of great interest in the future to come.

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Chapter 17

Otherness is Everywhere to Bring About Your Self: An Inquiry into the Whimsical Emergence of Children's Selves

Koji Komatsu

Children's selves have been one of important subjects of educational psychology and developmental psychology for many years, and researchers developed many devices that are considered to describe children's selves. However, a very basic understanding, how "children's selves" emerge to be observed in everyday lives, is not elaborated in these studies. In this paper, first I discuss several instances in which children's selves become clear in relation to school education, through observations of children's daily environments and their daily sign-construction activities. Second, as an attempt to construct an integrative understanding of discussions I make, I propose that various types of otherness that are provided for children in irreversible time and social environments are the essential—if not the one and only that initiates children's meaning constructions that lead to the emergence of their selves.

School Education, Meaning Construction, and Children's Selves

In modern societies, educational institutions are important not only for their diverse activities carried out with formally intended objectives (e.g., children's learning of the three R's, acquiring new knowledge), but also for boundaries and transitions they make in the lives of children and adolescents. The transitions appear both as daily activities (e.g., children's going to and back from school) and as developmental tasks (e.g., adolescents' search for professional identities) (Marsico et al. 2013).

These transitions provide children with chances to realize *who they are*. For example, in Japanese elementary schools, children use desks, shoeboxes, and shelves standardized in their size and design (see a, b, and c in Fig. 17.1) that do not exist in their home. Each of them has a name tag showing it is assigned to a specific

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Fig. 17.1 Classroom, shoeboxes, shelves, and children's paintings in a Japanese elementary school

child. Through these surroundings, each child can find his/her *uniqueness* in relation to others with formal forms of representation (e.g., “I have *my* shoebox in the second tier, because the nameplates of the boxes are in alphabetical order and *my* name begins with K”), and personal constructions of meaning (e.g., “I like the girl whose shoebox was next to *mine*”). These meaning constructions are possible in an exhibition of children's drawings (see Fig. 17.1d). Here, very simple examples show that the selves of children are closely related to their crossing the border to encounter with the meaning system of the school, and emerge in the dialogical process occurring between the system and children.

Komatsu (2015) inquired if such emergence of children's selves is observable in the lessons in classroom. In the discussions of 6th grade Japanese language class, the teacher asked children to construct two types of relationship with the story they read. One is a relatively formal and standardized relationship, for example, children's reading the text aloud according to the teacher's instructions. Another type of relationship making is required when teacher asked children to present their own understanding of the text, insisting on the importance of imagining what did not appear in the text. In Komatsu's (2015) analysis, children did not express much

about their understanding in the classroom, but they sometimes wrote about their thinking on the text and their classmates' comments in their notebooks to clarify themselves in relation to the text (e.g., "Because *I* also respect *my* mother who works in a dress shop, *I* can understand *Taichi* (a boy who appears in the story)'s thinking about his father.") (Komatsu 2015, p. 61).

Thus, children's going to school embodies that "we migrate psychologically even in the middle of most mundane everyday activities" in which we inevitably construct meaning, and what is important in this migration is that "some of the meanings created within such mundane environments can give rise to impetus to temporarily exit from such environments" (Valsiner 2006, p. 372). The impetus here may affect not only temporary exit but also children's constant movement for their future, their *development* in our society. In the followings, I discuss this process focusing on how meaning constructions of children are achieved to clarify their selves in school education.

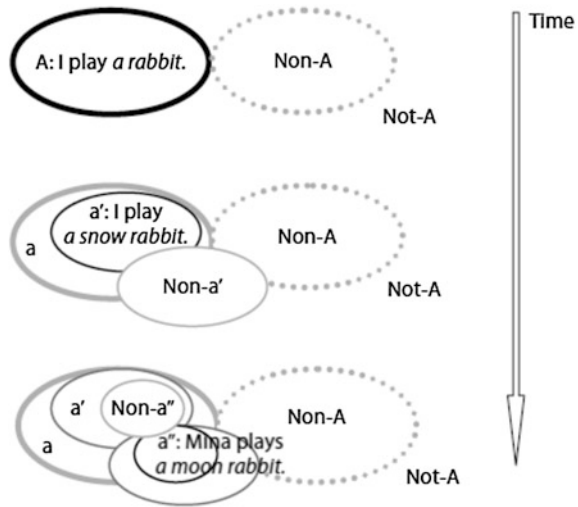
The Self as Meaning Construction

The processes in which children's selves emerge through their meaning construction as exemplified in the former section cannot be grasped by standardized methods of psychology. In many studies of educational psychology and developmental psychology, researchers relied on questionnaires (e.g., Harter 1982) and interviews (e.g., Damon and Hart 1988) that asked children to evaluate or describe themselves. They were initially created to enable our asking, or rather, forcing children to describe themselves using common, generalized items. Further, it is assumed that children's answers to the questionnaires and interviews will not change largely when we ask the same question repeatedly. These theoretical and methodological orientations presuppose a child's self as an internal and stable entity he/she has, as James (1890) discussed.¹ This perspective does not fit with our understanding of the process how children clarify "*I*" in environments that lead to their unique meaning construction.

For this reason, I borrowed from the approach of semiotic psychology to develop a new theoretical framework to understand children's selves. Semiotic psychology insists that the dynamicity of the self—a personal-cultural phenomenon—is supported by the flexibility of meaning system (Valsiner 2007, p. 158). Valsiner (2007) also stressed that *meaning construction is our relating with the world*, and the process of our meaning construction is described as the dynamic transformation of the field of opposites, "A <> non-A" (p. 160). When we say, write, or think about something (A), it includes the field, non-A, which is the non-actualized area for meaning construction, and a new meaning appears for us from both of these fields,

¹"In its widest possible sense, however, a man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his" (James 1890, p. 291).

Fig. 17.2 Fields of meaning constituted in the interaction between a child and her mother presented in Excerpt 1, lines 4–8 (Komatsu 2010, p. 222, Fig. 1)



A and non-A, and replaces the existing meaning. Finally, it becomes a new field that leads to subsequent development of meaning (see Fig. 17.2 for an example of this process).

On this fundamental framework, I have investigated two types of children’s meaning construction that have close relationship with school education, and elaborated the theoretical concept of the *presentational self*. One example of children’s meaning construction and the emergence of children’s selves is discussed on the basis of an analysis of recorded conversation in which young children and their mothers talked about children’s experiences in kindergarten (*yochien*) or daycare center (*hoikuen*) (Komatsu 2010, 2012, 2013). Exploration of the conversation (see Excerpt 1 for an example) determined the self as what emerges in two aspects of the conversation. One is the configuration of the child and others that are presented through the conversation, that is, how the child and his/her friends are talked about to form one unified image that includes all of them. The other is the act of positioning (Harré and van Langenhove 1999) by a talking child in relation to his/her mother, which is accomplished in their continuing negotiation. Further, the role of the observer who finds children’s selves in recorded interaction was also discussed. In these discussions, the presentational self is defined as “a genre of self that emerges from the configuration of a child and others in conversation that creates unique meaning to observers” (Komatsu 2010, p. 209).²

²The term presentational self comes from “*die Vorstellung*” in the German language that is used by von Ehrenfels (1988), signifying presentation (Komatsu 2010).

Excerpt 1 Example of mother-child conversation (Komatsu 2010, p. 215, Excerpt 1)

1. Mo: What is Saito Taku [Mina's friend, boy] (yes) going to play in the theater performance? (1 s)
2. Ch: A bat. (2 s) And Mina [I play] a rabbit.
3. Mo: In the dance by the rabbits? The bat? (1 s) [Does he appear in] Another dance?
4. Ch: After the bats, (uh hum) then maybe rabbits, (hmm) bunny rabbits.
5. Mo: Mimi, the bunny ... Oops [I guess I was] wrong, snow rabbits!
6. Ch: Mina, the snow rabbit xx [inaudible]
7. Mo: Mina is [You are] a moon rabbit, aren't you? (Oh, [you are] right) A yellow rabbit, aren't you?
8. Ch: [I'm] Not a snow rabbit. (1 s) xx [inaudible]?
9. Mo: A flower rabbit. (Wrong) Mina, the moon rabbit.
10. Ch: That's right. Sayuri [Mina's friend, girl] and Sada Miki [Mina's friend, girl] play flower rabbits, don't they? (yes) Iiyama Mina and Sanae [Mina's friend, girl] are, well, moon rabbits, two moon rabbits and (yes) the white rabbit is, well, Tano (1 s) Tanokura (yes) Tano ... Tanokura, yeah, Tanokura Nagisa [Mina's friend, girl].
11. Mo: Tanokura Nagisa.
12. Ch: And then, Matsuzaka Aika [Mina's friend, girl] (yes) Machida Mina, [Mina's friend, girl] (yes) you see?
13. Mo: Yes, I see.
14. Ch: Three girls do that together, right?
15. Mo: Yes, but Mina [you] play in two, don't you?

Note. The child, Mina, is 4/4 years old. The names are pseudonyms. Ch = Mina; Mo = Mina's mother; () = short answer and duration of silence (approx. figure); [] = contextual and additional information; ... = short pause.

On the basis of this theoretical inquiry that considers the self what observer finds as a kind of *Gestalt quality*—"a positive content of presentation bound up in consciousness with the presence of complexes of mutually separable (i.e., independently presentable) elements", (von Ehrenfels 1988, p. 93), Komatsu and Konno (2014) analyzed stories by children about their experiences in home, written as a part of their homework assignments that is commonly seen in Japanese elementary schools (Excerpt 2). They discussed that several types of *shift* of children's perspective appearing in their writings, in comparison with a simple enumeration of events, clarified children's unique viewpoints on what happened to them or who they met. For example, such a shift is found in a child's connecting experiences that happened or will happen in different times (see underlined sentences in story 2-2, in comparison with a simple listing of events in story 2-1). Thus, another example of the presentational self as a result of children's meaning construction can be found in their writings. Here again, the self is not what children find by themselves, but what

we observe in the configuration of writing child and others or objects described in the stories.

Excerpt 2: A Child's stories in her diary (Komatsu and Konno 2014, p. 331, Table 4)

2-1 (June 28)

Title: A whole day in the mall Today, [we] visited an Italian restaurant with a buffet at the mall. [The dishes] were very delicious. First, [I] ate some spaghetti and a hamburger steak. Next, [I] ate spaghetti and a hamburger again and this time a roasted chicken too. For dessert, [I] ate a pudding, several cream puffs, and a pudding again. [They] were awesome. And then, after some shopping with mom, [we] went to the bookstore. [We] read books for a long time there. And [we] watched a movie. [It] was fun. Mom, Sayaka [the child's sister] and I enjoyed it. Because there were sudden interruptions of the sound twice, [they] gave [us] free tickets for some juice [as compensation for the accident]. [We] did some other shopping and returned home. Because [it] was raining when [we] went home, dad came [to help us]. [It] was a very long day today.

2-2 (February 25)

Title: Mom's milk jelly Today, three of Sayaka [the child's sister]'s friends came [to my house]. [We] all enjoyed snacks. The sweets all [the friends] brought us, petit doughnuts, potato chips, and chocolate, and juice and milk jelly that [my] mom made yesterday. I love mom's milk jelly very much. [It] is really delicious. Yamamoto [a friend]'s mom gave [us] the recipe for the jelly when I was in the kindergarten. [My] mom promised [me] to show [me] how to make it when I get older. [I] am looking forward to it.

Note. Both stories were originally written in Japanese and translated into English by the author. Small revisions were made from the original. All the names are pseudonyms. Words in brackets show contextual and additional information included for clarification. Pronouns in brackets were added in translation, for the subject is frequently omitted in the Japanese language. As the academic year in Japan begins in April and ends in March, diary 2-1 was written earlier in an academic year.

A Remaining Problem: Self as a Coincidental Bricolage?

In relation to the concept of presentational self, I point out a fundamental characteristic of children's daily lives that sets up the two sites of children's meaning construction discussed in the former section. It is children's moving from one social relationship to another (e.g., from kindergarten to home, from home to elementary school). On the basis of such a structure, children talk about their experiences in *yochien* or *hoikuen* in very private spaces (e.g., car ride, home), and children write

about their experiences at home and bring what they wrote to school. This implies that children's moving between different environments and interpersonal systems strongly promotes their meaning making about their experiences.

As I discussed in the former section, ignoring such contexts that are closely related to children's meaning construction and the emergence of their selves by presupposing a general self that is brought out with standardized procedures (e.g., interviewing, questionnaire) whenever researchers need is a widely shared perspective. However, this dispute on the nature of the self accompanies with a refutation of the presentational self that asks if children's selves do not exist when they do not speak anything and when there is no observer who finds their selves.

For the latter part of this problem, Komatsu (2012) discussed that the observer who finds the self is necessary for the discussion on the self, on the fact that many psychological studies of the self (e.g., self-understanding, self-esteem) implicitly introduce the observer who interprets study participants' *responses* to the question as their *selves*. Further, when study participants take the perspective of the observer, it makes the viewpoint of "I" to find out "me" in his/her meaning construction. Thus in children's diary writing, the story and meaning construction may emerge as the self that is different from children's subjective senses of self, because these meaning constructions leave *traces* children can read again.

The former part of this problem might be related to the *whimsical* nature of meaning construction. Children's meaning construction or the emergence of their presentational selves in mother-child conversation and diary writing are not reproducible. The examples used in my discussion were actually picked up from huge corpus filled with miscellaneous interactions or writings.³ Thus, the question "why does a meaning *sometimes* develop?" is important for understanding the nature of the self that emerges in mundane environments.

Everyday Environments as the Source of Otherness

For the problem how the signs-mediated process of self-reflection is triggered and facilitated, Gillespie (2007) theoretically introduced four reasons. They are "ruptures (problems with the subject-object relation), social feedback (where the other acts as a mirror), social conflict (in the struggle for recognition), and internal dialogues (through internalizing the perspective of the other on self)" (p. 689). As Gillespie (2007) discussed, these reasons are not in opposition, but focus on different dynamics of thought that lead to our reflection. The self-reflection here is relatively deep one, illustrated by stories an English traveler told in a specific environment, Ladakh in northern India. However, his discussion helps our inquiry

³The discussion of Komatsu (2010) is based on three excerpts of mother-child conversation about the talking child and her friends. In 34 h of recording from 153 days, 50 episodes of conversation that refer to the child and her friends were observed. This means such a conversational topic about self and others occurs once in 40 minutes of recorded interaction, on average.

into the ordinary lives of children. This is because these four reasons for self-reflection all involve others or objects that we meet in our moving, and the divergence between others and ourselves becomes the source of our reflection, namely the clarification of ourselves.

When we meet someone or something, we feel *otherness* of them in various ways. In the discussions on the semiotic foundation of the self, otherness is considered as “the existence of something on its own account, autonomously, independently of the I’s initiative, volition, consciousness, and recognition” (Petrilli 2013, p. 10), and “to be understood as the necessary second part of a dynamic relation” (Mladenov 2006, p. 149). Mladenov (2006) also explains otherness as follows.

It is a concept of mutuality, of affecting, hitting, brute-ness, of something that cries to something else in order to be recognized as such. In this respect, it is also a concept of identity, because the result of the interaction between two entities is the knowledge we obtain for them. (p. 149)

Considering the nature of otherness, it is possible to think that children’s moving to and from school makes them feel wide range of otherness, and children (sometimes) need to cope with otherness using semiotic tools, as I exemplified in the first part of this paper. The variety of otherness children encounter when they go to school can be hypothetically categorized as in Table 17.1. Thus, almost everything and everyone around children has the potential to become the other to let them construct meaning from it. In other words, children’s meaning construction can be seen their coping with very small clefts that appear in their lives, or their act of filling apertures that exist everywhere in our surroundings, by representing the otherness they experience.

This discussion shows that otherness in multifarious aspects of life and with varying degrees serves as the impetus to our meaning construction. For understanding this process further, next section will discuss *the degree of otherness* in relation to recurring events in our lives.

Table 17.1 Examples of otherness and subsequent meaning construction in children’s daily environments

Type	Source of otherness	Subsequent meaning construction
Material	Materiality and order of shoeboxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on the usage of equipment for the self • Finding oneself in the order the equipment shows
Interpersonal ^a	Observation of a friend’s behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the intention of a friend • Comparing behaviors of self and other
Intersubjective	Interaction with mother/teacher who does not know the child’s experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling/not telling one’s experiences

^aInterpersonal aspect of otherness may have characteristics of material otherness and intersubjective otherness. Meeting a friend may lead our focus on his/her clothing (material) or what program he/she watched on TV last night (intersubjective)

Otherness Appearing in Irreversible Time

We find meanings in the difference and relationships of what are presented consecutively over time. von Ehrenfels (1988) exemplified the concept of gestalt qualities using the relationship of a melody and notes. We find a melody in the sequences and relationships of notes, and analyzing each note in a melody separately does not make sense for understanding how a melody emerges. In understanding a child's presentational self, the configuration of self and others or the relationship of turns in conversation is compared to the relationship of notes in a melody (Komatsu 2010). How elements appear over time is also important in finding out children's presentational selves in their diaries. As formerly discussed, Komatsu and Konno (2014) found a child's presentational self in the shift of her perspective observed in her writings. In their discussion, how one description or sentence leads another to construct a story as a whole is important source of observer's feeling the existence of a child's unique perspective.

As meaning emerges in irreversible time, otherness also emerges in institutionally constructed succession of events over time. In examples I presented in the former section (Table 17.1), the nature of our lives to meet the *same* object or person repeatedly is important source of our feeling otherness. Children's going to school every day is one type of recurring events that provides them the sameness of objects and interpersonal environments. They use the same shoebox, desk and chair, and meet the same teacher and classmates. Returning home, they meet the same family members.

This sameness, however, is not strict one, for the relationship between objects, and the relationship between others and ourselves show small difference when we meet them again. For children, their classmates appear with slight difference in their clothing, hairstyle, or affective mood every time when they meet. Children's reunions with familiar person (e.g., mother, teacher) also give them the sense of sameness and difference of others they meet. Daily interaction with family members (e.g., dinner talk) also develops in the same way with small differences. Even material environments such as desks, chairs, or notebooks sometimes give us a sensation that they are different from what they were yesterday because of the changes of their forms or arrangements.

On the basis of these instances, here I propose a hypothesis that the balance of sameness and difference or non-sameness that children find in their repeated encounter with environments is the source of their feeling varying degrees of otherness. Ordinarily, small difference may lead to very weak sense of otherness that does not affect us to construct a new meaning. However, in a time of furious changes, we sometimes appreciate and construct a meaning of non-changing aspect of our environments. In this point, our meaning construction from otherness also differs according to how stable our lives are. Further, another source of variation may be in a child who meets the objects or persons, for the process of meaning construction is open to various possibilities. Thus the interaction among these features determines the quality of our and children's meaning constructions.

In this way, children's environments become meaningful because their lives are full of sameness and difference that provide them various senses of otherness. If I use the metaphor of music, what brings about the process of meaning construction resembles the repetition of one melody or motif in a piece of music. When we hear music, classical or pop, variation of a motif is important when we feel beauty, exaltation of our mood, or the technical originality of the composer. It brings us the sense of sameness with slight but ingenious difference that draws our attention to feel like *understand* it.

The exploration here suggests that we must consider the relationship between time and meaning construction at least in two aspects. One is the time of microgenesis that corresponds with the semiotically mediated meaning construction (Fig. 17.2). In this aspect, a child's meaning construction results in the emergence of his/her presentational self. Another is the recurrence in irreversible time that *arranges* children's repetitive encounter with their objective and interpersonal environments to provide them varying degrees of otherness as starting points of their meaning construction.

Conclusion

As I discussed in the first and second sections of this paper, school education and children's going to school are related to children's meaning making and the construction of their selves in various ways. After comparing this idea with a presupposition that the self must be internal and stable entity we have, this paper further elaborated why children's meaning constructions *sometimes* develop to become observable as in conversations or diaries.

For this discussion, most fundamental understanding is that our meaning construction is based on our relationship with material and social environments. If we discuss the consistency of ourselves, we must consider the consistency of our environments as the counterpart. Further, in our going through the environments, otherness of varying degrees works as the sources of semiotically mediated meaning construction. In other words, the divergence between the environment and us lets us *fill* it with semiotic devices. Further, this otherness varies in its power for us, and the variance was hypothetically explained with the balance of the sameness and difference (or non-sameness) that the objects or persons we repeatedly meet have.

This suggests that focusing on the recurring events in children's lives and understanding how they work are important for describing the emergence of children's selves as the result of their meaning construction. Our lives are constructed with various types of repetition and recurrence—from the micro-level as we find in a piece of music to the macro-level as the relationship between generations. In addition to inquiring into the nature and detail of otherness we feel in life, understanding such a characteristic of our lives and environments is the essential for figuring out the self.

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Chapter 18

Exploring the Workings of the Psyche: Metatheoretical and Methodological Foundations

Jana Uher

Among all the phenomena of life, the psyche is unique. Psychical phenomena constitute the reality of each of our waking moments, enabling us to perceive and conceive of the world. Albeit this intimate familiarity, the phenomena of the psyche are intangible; they have remained inaccessible to physical investigation, despite advanced technologies. Psychical phenomena can be perceived only by the individual him or herself but not by others, and their accessibility is strictly bound to the present moment (Uher 2015d; Valsiner 2012).

The workings of the psyche have fascinated and challenged philosophers and scientists for millennia. Entire disciplines and research traditions, each with their own particular perspectives, theories and methods, are devoted to their exploration (Fahrenberg 2013; Hirschberger 1980a, b). These explorations entail particular challenges because psychical phenomena are inherent to any science—they are the very means by which all science is made (Valsiner 2012; Wundt 1920).

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This research elaborates metatheoretical and methodological foundations for exploring the workings of the psyche by applying the Transdisciplinary Philosophy-of-Science Paradigm for Research on individuals (TPS-Paradigm). First, relevant metatheoretical foundations that the TPS-Paradigm provides for exploring individuals are outlined, focussing on psychical¹ phenomena of which various kinds are differentiated. These fundamentals are then used to derive methodological implications that appropriately consider the peculiarities of each of the different kinds of psychical phenomena and the challenges entailed for investigations. The aim of this research is not to comprehensively review previous lines of research but rather to complement the existing knowledge with new insights that can be gained from transdisciplinary and philosophy-of-science perspectives and that are not well considered.

The Transdisciplinary Philosophy-of-Science Paradigm for Research on Individuals (TPS-Paradigm)

The phenomena of the psyche are inextricably bound to the individual; a science of the psyche must therefore also be a science of the individual. The TPS-Paradigm is targeted towards making explicit and scrutinising the philosophical assumptions that different disciplines make about research on individuals and the metatheories and methodologies used for explorations. It comprises interrelated philosophical, metatheoretical and methodological frameworks in which concepts, approaches and methods from different disciplines are systematically integrated, advanced and complemented by novel ones (Uher 2011, 2013, Desiderata 1a, d, e, Uher 2015a, d).

In its philosophical foundations, the TPS-Paradigm explicitly considers that scientists are always individuals themselves who can perceive and conceive of the world only on the basis of their own psychical abilities (e.g. Kuhn 1962; Nagel 1974; Weber 1946). Hence, scientists exploring individuals and especially scientists exploring psychical phenomena cannot be independent from their objects of research. After all, how can a mind explore itself? This age-old question entails fundamental challenges that make the exploration of psychical phenomena even more important.

¹The TPS-Paradigm uses the term *psychical* rather than *psychological* because “events, processes and structures that are properly called psychical do not become psychological until they have been operated upon in some way by the science of psychology” (Adams and Zener in Lewin 1935, p. vii).

Three Metatheoretical Properties that Determine the Phenomena's Perceptibility by Individuals

Given that all science is made by humans, the TPS-Paradigm considers² three spatio-temporal properties that can be conceived in various forms for the phenomena studied in individuals and that determine the ways in which humans can perceive a given phenomenon under everyday conditions. Therefore, these three properties also determine the methods required to overcome the limitations of human abilities under research conditions for enabling scientific investigations.

1. *Spatial location in reference to the studied individual's body* is considered because, without technologies, humans can directly perceive only phenomena that are external to individuals (e.g. faces) but not phenomena internal to individuals' intact bodies (e.g. bones, muscles).
2. *Temporal extension* is considered because humans can perceive only phenomena that are present in the moments of investigation. Perceptibility is increased in temporally extended phenomena (e.g. facial structures) but complicated in momentary and fluctuating phenomena (e.g. facial expressions). Momentary phenomena can be recorded only in the moments in which they occur (e.g. heartbeats). This requires methods enabling the real-time recording of momentary phenomena, which are called *nunc-ipsium methods* in the TPS-Paradigm (from the Latin *nunc ipsum* for *at this very instant*).
3. *Physicality versus "non-physicality"* is considered because physical phenomena are spatially extended (see similarly Descartes' *res extensa*, Hirschberger 1980b); therefore, they are or can be made perceptible by multiple individuals. Material physical phenomena feature *spatial units* that are identically repeatable (e.g. atoms, molecules) or at least repeatable to considerable extent (e.g. cells, bones). Spatial units help an intersubjective consensus to be reached on how to demarcate and categorise events (e.g. different cells). Spatial units do not occur in immaterial physical phenomena (e.g. movements), but such units can be defined on the basis of the material phenomena to which immaterial physical phenomena are systematically related (e.g. facial muscles to demarcate facial expressions).
*"Non-physicality"*³, by contrast, denotes the immaterial properties of psychical phenomena that show neither spatial units nor systematic relations to the material or immaterial physical phenomena to which they are bound (see below; Fahrenberg 2013; Kant 1798; Wundt 1894).

²The presuppositions that the TPS-Paradigm makes about the three metatheoretical properties and the distinctions between various kinds of phenomena need not be consensually shared by all scientists. Scientists who do not agree or who agree only partially with these presuppositions must develop metatheoretical and methodological concepts other than the ones that are explored in this research, thus precluding direct comparisons (for details, see Uher 2015a, d).

³The term "non-physical" is put in quotation marks because it denotes properties that are not simply contrasted against the physical but are complementary instead (see below; Uher 2015a).

Different Kinds of Phenomena and Basic Principles of Phenomenon–Methodology Matching

The TPS-Paradigm differentiates (see Footnote 2) various kinds of phenomena⁴ explored in individuals—morphology, physiology, behaviour, the psyche, semiotic representations, artificially modified outer appearance and contexts. These differentiations are based on the *particular constellation* of forms that can be conceived for any given phenomenon with regard to the three metatheoretical properties. For example, muscles can be conceived of as internal, temporally extended and material physical, and behaviours as external, momentary and (mostly immaterial) physical (see below).

Their specific and different constellations of properties entail that each kind of phenomenon has its own *frame of reference* that is applicable to other kinds of phenomena only to some degree or not at all. These frames of reference therefore determine the ways in which information from one kind of phenomenon can be represented in another one; this is called *conversion* in the TPS-Paradigm. Conversions of information happen all the time individuals are communicating (i.e. transmitting meanings; see below; Uher 2015d).

Conversions of information are also fundamental to all methods of data generation—thus, to *phenomenon–methodology matching*. Specifically, the ways in which information from the phenomena under study can be converted into semi-otically encoded information depend on the particular constellation of metatheoretical properties that can be conceived for the phenomena under study and for the phenomena used as data (Uher [under review a](#)). Given this, the TPS-Paradigm derived from these three properties clear-cut criteria and basic principles that determine unequivocally which methodologies are appropriate for exploring a given kind of phenomenon. These foundations highlighted that insufficient differentiation between phenomena for which different properties can be conceived entails mismatches with the methodologies used for investigations (Uher 2014, 2015a, b, c).

Specifically, when the same constellation of properties can be conceived for different phenomena, then their frames of reference are considered *completely metatheoretically commensurable* (from the Latin *commensurabilis* for having a common measure). This enables *appropriate* conversions of information between them. But when only partial or no metatheoretical commensurability can be assumed because the involved phenomena differ in their forms with regard to one or even all three properties, then commensurability must be established on the basis of decisions. These decisions are made by the persons (e.g. observers, study

⁴In the TPS-Paradigm, the term *phenomenon* denotes anything that is or can be (technically) made perceptible and/or that can be conceived by humans. This differs from various historical thought traditions in which phenomena are conceived of as mere sensory perceptions and are differentiated from non-sensual concepts (sometimes called *noumena*; e.g. Kant 1781; for details, see Uher 2015d).

participants) who convert information from their perceptions and conceptions of the phenomena under study into semiotically encoded information (e.g. for generating data). When these decisions are made explicit and are intersubjectively specified, this is referred to as *consent-based commensurability* in the TPS-Paradigm.

The TPS-Paradigm specifies the particular constraints that arise from each of the three properties for appropriate conversions of information. *Conversion Principle 1* states that differences in the phenomena's spatial location relative to the studied individual's body (i.e. internal versus external) may constrain conversions of information if, through these conversions, the phenomena under study are altered in and of themselves. *Conversion Principle 2* states that constraints for conversions of information may arise if one or all of the phenomena involved have only brief temporal extensions (i.e. are momentary) and, in particular, if one or even both of them feature temporal units of variable extension that are therefore identically repeatable only to some extent. *Conversion Principle 3* states that differences in the phenomena's physical properties may constrain conversions of information between them if one or even both phenomena involved feature spatial units of variable extension that are thus identically repeatable only to some extent or if spatial units cannot be conceived at all.

These principles specify the particular challenges of phenomenon–methodology matching that arise in explorations of individuals' inner morphology, physiology and behaviour—and especially in explorations of their psychical phenomena (Uher 2015a, b, c, under review a).

What Is the Psyche?

The TPS-Paradigm defines the *psyche* as the entirety of the phenomena of the immediate experiential reality both conscious and non-conscious of living organisms (Uher 2015a, b, c, d; see Wundt 1896). Importantly, the term psychical denotes not only mental but also emotional, volitional and other psychical phenomena; hence, psychical is not synonymous with mental (Wundt 1896).

Psychical phenomena occur entirely internal⁵ to individuals' bodies. They can be perceived only by each individual him or herself but by nobody else no matter what invasive or technical methods are used. Therefore, one and the same event can never be perceived by multiple individuals and direct comparisons between individuals are precluded (Kant 1786; Locke 1689; Weber 1949).

Considering their temporal extension, the TPS-Paradigm differentiates experiencings (*Erleben*) from experiences (*Erfahrungen*). *Experiencings* are bound to the immediate moment and highly fluctuating—they are actualities (Gillespie and Zittaun 2010; Uher 2013; Valsiner 1998). Experiencings that are processed,

⁵For a differentiation to the concepts of internalism versus externalism, see the Section “Indirect Exploration Through Individuals' Behavioural and Semiotic Externalisations”.

abstracted and memorised become *experiences* that are interconnected with other experiences and integrated into the individual's psychical system that thereby continuously changes and develops (Le Poidevin 2011; Valsiner 2012). Thus, experiences are the a posteriori of experiencings; they are *memorised psychical resultants* that the individual retains of past experiencings in processed forms and that are therefore temporally more extended (e.g. psychical representations).

Memorised psychical resultants cannot be directly accessed; they can only be retrieved into an individual's experiencings. But a revived experiencing is never merely identically repeated. It is always reconstructed anew in the context of all other concurrent events both internal and external to the individual's body (Schacter and Addis 2007) before it is reintegrated again into the hitherto reached structures of the individual's psychical system.

The TPS-Paradigm differentiates two kinds of structures of memorised psychical resultants. *Compositional structures* refer to the contents of individuals' experiential reality, such as psychical representations of past experiences, ideas, beliefs and knowledge. *Process structures* refer to basic patterns in the processing of these contents, such as capacities for abstraction, (re)construction, memory span and self-organisation (Uher 2015c).

The TPS-Paradigm conceives of psychical phenomena as "non-physical" because spatial properties cannot be conceived (see similarly Descartes' *res cogitans*, Hirschberger 1980b; Kant 1798). The non-spatial properties of the psyche⁶ do not offer any point of reference that the introquesting individual could use to reliably demarcate and categorise in the continuous flow of experiential phenomena particular units that could be conceived as identically repeatable at least to some extent. Rather, psychical events can be demarcated only by mere thought, but the psychically demarcated elements cannot be kept isolated for enabling systematic demarcations, comparisons and categorisations (Kant 1786; Uher 2015a, d).

Further complicating is the fact that, unlike immaterial physical phenomena (e.g. electricity), psychical phenomena also lack systematic relations to the material and immaterial physical phenomena by which they are accompanied (e.g. brain morphology and physiology). This is the core of the body–mind problem, called the *psyche–physicality problem* in the TPS-Paradigm (Uher 2015a, d). In this problem, the TPS-Paradigm adopts the presuppositions of *epistemological complementarity*, which takes a metaphysically neutral position without either monistic or dualistic presuppositions (see Fahrenberg 2013; Kant 1798; Wundt 1894).

Epistemological complementarity was originally introduced by Bohr (1937) as a solution for the wave–particle dilemma in research on the nature of light. Bohr pointed out that, by using different methods, apparently incompatible information can be obtained about the properties of the same object of research. These properties seem to be maximally incompatible with one another but are both equally

⁶Given these non-spatial properties, the entirety of psychical phenomena cannot be conceived of as a material physical entity that could be directly perceived as is possible for individuals' bodies; thus, notions of "the psyche" in the TPS-Paradigm cannot and do not imply reification as a concrete entity.

essential for an exhaustive account of the results obtained, and may therefore be regarded as complementary to one another.

Given this, the Bohrian principle of complementarity rejects methodological compromises while implying no limitations to the application of methods. Rather, this epistemological principle argues for analysing the presuppositions and the appropriateness of the conceptual structures involved, and for conceiving for the different properties under study different frames of reference that are categorically different, self-contained and mutually complementary and that are all essential for exploring the particular object of research. The TPS-Paradigm builds on the principle of epistemological complementarity in several ways (for details, see Uher 2015a, b, c, d).

The metatheoretical properties of psychical phenomena thus specified allow for deriving methodological implications as explored now (see Uher 2013, Desideratum 7).

Perceptibility by Individuals: Extroquestive Versus Introquestive Methods

The TPS-Paradigm defines all procedures for studying phenomena that individuals can perceive as from outside of themselves and that therefore are or can be made directly perceptible by multiple individuals as *extroquestive methods* (from the Latin *extro* for beyond, outside). Under everyday life conditions, individuals' inner morphology (e.g. muscles) and physiology (electric brain potentials) cannot be perceived by multiple individuals. But this is possible under special conditions, such as by using invasive methods (e.g. surgery) and technical means (e.g. electroencephalography). Hence, all physical phenomena internal and external to individuals' bodies and both material and immaterial are or can be made extroquestively accessible.

Extroquestive accessibility of phenomena is important because it enables multiple individuals to perceive *one and the same* event. This helps an intersubjective consensus to be reached on how to demarcate and categorise events. It is also essential for establishing scientific facts, which requires that scientists make the observational facts that they believe to have established accessible to public scrutiny—for the direct and repeated perception by multiple individuals, especially colleagues (Uher 2015a, under review a, under review b).

Importantly, extroquestive methods are necessary for establishing objectivity, but their application per se does not guarantee that particular criteria of scientific objectivity are fulfilled. Rather, one and the same physical object can be perceived and conceived of in different ways depending on the particular presuppositions made (Collingwood 1940; Uher under review b).

Introquestive methods (from the Latin *intro* for in, within), by contrast, are defined as all procedures for studying phenomena that can be perceived only from

within the individual him or herself but not *by multiple individuals in principle under all possible conditions*. This applies only to psychical phenomena. One and the same psychical event cannot be made extroquestively perceptible, no matter what methods are used; psychical phenomena are accessible only introquestively. Therefore, objective facts about psychical events cannot be established (Uher [under review b](#)); this is often referred to as incorrigibility (Schwitzgebel [2014](#)).

Importantly, internal location of the phenomena under study is not sufficient for defining introquestion. For example, when, in medical investigations, individuals follow their own ultrasonic or endoscopic investigation on video screen, they extroquestively perceive records of their own bodies' internal properties (e.g. tissue structures). This is extroquestion because these internal physical properties are technically converted into external physical ones (e.g. ultrasound videos) that individuals can perceive as from outside of themselves (e.g. through their eyes), and this is possible for both the individuals themselves and others (e.g. physicians). But the sensations that ultrasound and endoscopic investigations may cause (e.g. pains) can be perceived solely from within and only *by the individual him or herself*, thus introquestively (Uher [2015c](#)).

The TPS-Paradigm introduces the concepts of extroquestive, introquestive and nunc-ipsium methods to denote the particular kinds of methods that were derived from the three spatio-temporal properties that it considers (Uher [2015a](#)). The concepts of extroquestion and introquestion differ from previous related concepts in important ways.

Differences to Introspection Versus Extrospection

The ending—*questive* or—*question* (from the Latin *quaerere* for to seek and enquire and from *quaestio* for enquiry and question) implies that these methods involve perceptions of all kinds (e.g. haptic, acoustic, olfactoric) rather than only visual ones as is implied by the ending—*spective* or—*spection* (from the Latin *spectare* for to look at, see).

Introspection commonly denotes individuals' inward perspective on their own experiencings; extrospection denotes individuals' outward perspective onto the "world" (Boring [1953](#); Schwitzgebel [2014](#)). These concepts thus refer to the epistemological *object–subject problem*. As methods, extrospection is often considered objective and introspection subjective. But, just as with extroquestion, perceptibility of one and the same event by multiple individuals is necessary but insufficient for establishing objectivity. Moreover, person perception cannot be as neutral as object perception can be to some extent because self- and other perception are known to interact with one another in complex ways, and the formation of impressions of others is known to be influenced by various kinds of attribution biases (Fahrenberg [2013](#)).

Importantly in individuals' immediate experiential reality, inward and outward perspectives are not given as separate channels of information. Rather at any given

moment, individuals perceive a multifaceted unity that emerges from the entirety of all information available—including conceptual representations previously developed (see Uher 2015d). The perceptually given is more than the sum of their components (see the principle of emergence⁷); their decomposition can therefore be reconstructed only *a posteriori* to some extent (Wundt 1896).

Individuals can always perceive and conceive of both external events (e.g. apples) and own psychical events (e.g. appetite); thus, individuals can extrospect and introspect at the same time—both the individuals studied and the researchers studying them (Kant 1781; Wundt 1896). This interwovenness entails major methodological challenges (see below).

Because *extrospection* and *introspection* are defined and differentiated with reference to the *particular individual under study*, they cannot be clearly differentiated as methods (Uher 2015a). By contrast, *extroquestion* and *introquestion* are defined and differentiated on the basis of (a) *the particular phenomena under study*, considering that various other phenomena may be present as well and that all individuals involved can introspect and extrospect at the same time; and of (b) *the particular persons who perceive the phenomena under study* and who represent information from their perceptions and conceptions of these phenomena in particular external physical phenomena that are used for communication or as data (e.g. spoken or written words, see below; Uher 2015a).

Psychophysics Relies on Extroquestion but not on Introquestion

Psychophysical experiments are commonly interpreted as introspective explorations because the individuals under study are asked to report about their perceptions of particular physical stimuli that are presented to them (e.g. light flashes; Fechner 1888; Wundt 1896). But psychophysics clearly rely on extroquestive methods—the stimuli are external to the individuals studied and can therefore be perceived by multiple individuals (e.g. researchers). As the focus on the individual under study does not allow for differentiating introspection from extrospection, scientists sometimes try to determine an investigation as either introspective or extrospective by wording their instructions differently (e.g. “tell me if you visually experience a flash of light” versus “tell me if the light flashes”; Schwitzgebel 2014). But perception is always involved; otherwise, individuals could not tell whether or not a light flashes.

⁷Given that complex organismal systems function as organised *wholes*, the so-called *principle of emergence* denotes that their properties cannot be deduced from the knowledge of the constituting elements and their interrelations. When such systems are assembled from their elements, new characteristics of the whole emerge, and these could not have been predicted from knowledge of their constituents and the interrelations between them. The whole has different properties, structures and functionings (e.g. Roths Schuh 1963; Uher 2015a, d; Wundt 1863).

The defining criteria of introquestion/extroquestion clarify that psychophysicists explore individuals' outward perceptions of external physical phenomena. Physical events can be quantified with physical methods (Uher under review a). It is these extroquestive methods that first enable experiments (i.e. systematically varied and identically repeatable conditions) and quantitative comparisons with individuals' perceptual judgements as described, for example, in the Weber–Fechner law (Fechner 1888).

Our perceptions of external physical events are determined by properties of these events for which we are sensually receptive (e.g. lightness). From invariants perceived, we infer properties that belong to these external events and we commonly experience these properties as features of these events rather than as intrinsic features of our experiencing (Gibson 1967; Harman 1990; Peirce 1902, 5.384; Uher 2015d).

Consequently, the quantitative relations of stimulus perception determined in psychophysics solely derive from the quantitative properties of the external physical events studied and from the internal physical events that are involved in the sensations⁸ elicited—but not from the psychical events that are involved in their perception. These *extroquestive findings therefore cannot provide any evidence that psychical phenomena in and of themselves are quantifiable* as widely assumed⁹. This erroneous generalisation laid the foundation for the large-scale application of so-called quantitative methods to explore psychical phenomena of all kinds rather than only those involved in extroquestion (Uher under review c). This vital point is obscured by the conceptual weaknesses of introspection.

Perceptions of external physical phenomena are always involved in any situation in both research and everyday life. *Introquestion* therefore requires that the phenomena under study—and not just their perception—are entirely internal to individuals.

Differences to First-Person Versus Third-Person Perspective Methods

The idea of exploring individuals from the inside versus outside perspective also underlies the concepts of first-person versus third-person perspective (Butler 2013; Roth 2012). The third-person perspective denotes the views that others have on the

⁸*Sensations* are physiological processes, operating at the border from the physical to the psychical into which they become processed as *perceptions*. Sensory phenomena enable conversions of information from external physical events into internal psychical events. Importantly, the patterns according to which sensations are converted into percepts are not fixed and sensations are not the only ways in which perceptions are generated (Gibson 1967; for details, see Uher 2015d).

⁹Wundt (1874) already emphasised that the possibilities for quantification are restricted to simple psychical phenomena accessible by psychophysical experimentation and that such possibilities are not given for higher and complex psychical phenomena for the exploration of which he developed his comprehensive research programme of cultural–historical psychology (German: *Völkerpsychologie*).

individual under study—thus, the public view that can generally be shared with others. The first-person perspective denotes the private view of the studied individual him or herself. This terminology suggests clear-cut differentiations between the observer and the observed, the objective and the subjective. But, as with extrospection/introspection, these two perspectives cannot be clearly differentiated; they are false dichotomies that ignore important epistemological questions (Fahrenberg 2013).

Moreover, first-person versus third-person perspective methods are frequently equated with introspection versus extrospection (Butler 2013; Roth 2012). But whereas concepts of introspection explicitly refer to individuals' own views on their own psychical phenomena (Schwitzgebel 2014), concepts of first-person perspective often denote only the studied individuals' own perspective but not what it is that is being explored from this perspective.

This vital difference is illustrated nicely by the methods of *first-person perspective digital ethnography*. In these methods, mobile devices such as miniature video or photo cameras worn at eye or chest level are used to (audio-)visually capture the individual's own perspective during a task or everyday activities (Lahlou 2011; Pink 2015). Hence, they capture individuals' *outward perspective* on external events including some of their own (e.g. manual and verbal) behaviours in the recording field. But these first-person records cannot capture individuals' *inward perspective* in terms of own perceptions and interpretations of the events recorded (aside from spontaneous comments made during recording). Their private views can be explored only in subsequent steps in which individuals are interviewed about their own first-person records (see below; Lahlou 2011).

Thus, the methodological concepts of introquestion and extroquestion introduced by the TPS-Paradigm differ from first-person and third-person perspective methods in essential ways. Specifically, the individuals under study can generate data about themselves using both extroquestive methods (e.g. recording their behaviours) and introquestive methods (e.g. externalising their experiencings)—both methods involve the first-person perspective and both are commonly categorised as subjective. When many persons judge a particular individual (e.g. using questionnaires), they apply introquestive methods (see below)—such methods involve the third-person perspective and are commonly considered objective.

Indirect Exploration of Psychical Phenomena Through Individuals' Behavioural and Semiotic Externalisations

The exclusively introquestive accessibility of psychical phenomena entails intricate challenges because the scientists themselves cannot perceive the particular events under study. Instead, psychical phenomena can be explored *only indirectly through individuals' externalisations* in phenomena that others can perceive (e.g. behaviours, spoken language; see Schwitzgebel 2014). Even if scientists and philosophers introquestively explore their own psychical phenomena (e.g. Brentano 1874; James 1890),

they ultimately have to *publish* their findings—make them public, thus extroquestively accessible to others. Otherwise, this would not be research and would not be known. The TPS-Paradigm therefore broadly refers to all methods of self-observation and self-report as introquestive methods (see below).

The TPS-Paradigm specifies that any externalisation from psychical phenomena involves conversions of information from internal “non-physical” phenomena into phenomena that are external and thus necessarily physical. This so-called *external physicalisation* (Uher 2015d) entails that information must be converted between frames of reference that differ in at least two of the three metatheoretical properties considered in the TPS-Paradigm (see the Conversion Principles) and that thus cannot be completely metatheoretically commensurable with each other. This lack of isomorphism precludes one-to-one externalisations of information from individuals’ psychical systems as well as one-to-one inferences from individuals’ externalisations to their psychical events. This is a crucial point for research methodology (see below; Uher 2013; Toomela 2011).

These conversions of information are further complicated by the ways in which psychical phenomena are connected with individuals’ external surroundings. The TPS-Paradigm conceives of psychical phenomena as located entirely internal to the body of the individual under study—just like the morphological and physiological phenomena with which they are connected in complementary ways (e.g. brain matter and neurochemistry). Through some of these internal physical phenomena (e.g. sensory organs), direct and highly flexible conversions of information are possible from phenomena in individuals’ external surroundings into their psychical systems (e.g. sensation and perception (see Footnote 8); Uher 2015d).

But in the other direction, from the individual’s psychical phenomena and the internal physical phenomena with which they are complementarily connected (e.g. nerve tissue and electric potentials), direct and flexible conversions of information to phenomena in the individual’s external surroundings are not possible. This is called the *one-sided psyche–external surrounding connection*¹⁰ in the TPS-Paradigm.

Bridging this gap requires externalisations, other kinds of phenomena that mediate¹¹ information from individuals’ psychical phenomena to phenomena in their external surroundings—these are the phenomena of behaviours and semiotic representations.

Behaviours—The Essential Bridge from the Individual’s Psyche to His or Her External Surroundings

Individuals’ primary externalising phenomena are behaviours. Behaviours are primary because they develop(ed) before semiotic representations during both

¹⁰Previously also called the *one-sided gap of the mind–environment connection* (Uher 2013).

¹¹The term *mediation* refers to the Latin *mediare*, to be in the middle.

ontogeny and phylogeny and because all semiotic representations inherently involve behaviours (Uher 2013). The morphological and physiological phenomena that are necessary for behaviours to occur (e.g. muscle fibres and enervation) cannot fulfil this mediating function¹² because these phenomena are internal and therefore cannot directly connect to phenomena in individuals' external surroundings (Uher 2015a, b, c, d).

The TPS-Paradigm defines *behaviours* as the “external changes or activities of living organisms that are functionally mediated by other external phenomena (Millikan 1993) in the present moment” (Uher 2013, 2015a, b, c). Hence, behaviours are not just movements (e.g. freezing) and not all movements, external changes or activities, are behaviours (e.g. heat as mere chemical by-product); they are behaviours only if their functions (see Footnote 12) have *reference to* other external phenomena or to connections with them (Millikan 1993). Importantly, behaviours are neither physiological responses nor mental activities because different metatheoretical properties can be conceived for these kinds of phenomena; this differs from previous research paradigms in psychology (Uher 2015a).

Behaviours are located entirely external to individuals' bodies. Behavioural events are momentary and of variable temporal extension (e.g. vocalisations). Behaviours can be conceived of as (mostly immaterial) physical phenomena; spatial units can be demarcated on the basis of the material properties of individuals' bodies or other external phenomena to which behaviours are bound (e.g. vocal cords, air). But these units often vary considerably in their spatial and temporal extensions (e.g. different intonations) so that behavioural events are identically repeatable only to some extent.

The behaviours' momentariness facilitates flexible and timely conversions of information from individuals' experiencings (see Conversion Principle 2). This nearness-in-time is essential for individuals' abilities to interact with and to adapt to dynamic and flexibly changing external surroundings, such as social interactions. Such flexibility and plasticity are not enabled by temporally more extended phenomena (e.g. outer morphology; Uher 2013, 2015a).

Behavioural phenomena are so flexible and so neatly intertwined with psychical phenomena that individuals commonly hardly notice their vital function for connecting with external surroundings. This may contribute to conceptions of psychical phenomena as “inner behaviours” (e.g. Koffka 1935; Skinner 1957).

¹²The TPS-Paradigm conceives of *functions* as temporal interrelations that regularly occur between particular kinds of phenomena, events or properties—thus, as established effects (derived from the Latin *effectus* for “worked out, brought about, accomplished”). Functions thus defined imply neither purpose nor intention because teleological properties presuppose that possible prospective outcomes are simulated and evaluated on the basis of a posteriori analyses of experiences made in the past, which is possible only for psychical phenomena (Uher 2015d). Moreover, functions denote not only causal connections of various kind (Kausal-Zusammenhänge) but also compositional connections (Gefüge-Zusammenhänge) in which the interacting elements co-occur in coordinated ways and match and cooperate with one another such that the entirety of their joint interactions results in complexes and functions of higher organisation (Rothschuh 1963; Uher 2015a, c, e).

The one-sidedness of the psyche–external surrounding connection, the vital function of behaviours for bridging this gap and the significance of differentiating psychical phenomena from behavioural phenomena become strikingly apparent in pathological conditions in which individuals lose their voluntary motor control for producing behaviours and thus their abilities for externalising information from their psychical systems (e.g. locked-in syndrome; Uher 2013, 2015a).

Species-specific behaviours have evolved for externalising information of vital importance in rather fixed (likely evolutionarily derived) ways. This limits the range of externalisable information.

Semiotic Representations: Composite Kinds of Phenomena That Are Both Internal and External to Individuals

Information can also be externalised in external changes or activities other than species-specific behaviours and to which information can be assigned in *arbitrary* and thus varying ways (e.g. vocalisations). These assignments make these externalisations functional—thus, (*semiotic*) *behaviours*. When multiple individuals make such assignments in socially shared ways, the particular behaviours become *behavioural signs* (e.g. gestures, spoken language). Information can also be assigned to material phenomena other than those of individuals' bodies (i.e. ink on paper) that thereby become *material signs* (e.g. written language; Uher 2015d).

Signs are created to represent *meanings*—i.e. psychical associations—in external physical events (see external physicalisation) to facilitate and enable the social co-construction of these meanings. Human communities have developed comprehensive systems of behavioural and material signs that help individuals to overcome the fundamental imperceptibility of psychical phenomena by others and to externalise complex information beyond the information externalisable in species-specific behaviours, thus promoting social exchange and coordination (see Uher 2015d; also Kant 1786).

Importantly, meanings are not inherent to the particular physical phenomena (e.g. movements, ink on paper) of which signs are composed; rather, meanings are only *assigned* to them by particular individuals. Because meanings are psychical phenomena, meanings are bound to the individuals who construct them. Thus, although meanings can be physicalised in material signs, they are inextricably *bound to the individuals who co-construct them*. The TPS-Paradigm therefore refers to signs as *semiotic representations* and conceived of them as *composite kinds of phenomena* comprising external physical phenomena that are tightly intertwined with psychical phenomena (e.g. meanings) and that cannot be understood as signs without considering these psychical phenomena.

Consequently, dualistic conceptions exploring signs (e.g. language) separately from the individuals who use them are inherently circular. Rather, the different

kinds of phenomena comprised by semiotic representations *can be conceptually separated from one another*—and thus from the individuals studied—*only inclusively* (see Valsiner 1987) using the three metatheoretical properties that the TPS-Paradigm considers.

Thus, semiotic representations are phenomena with *heterogeneous metatheoretical properties* that comprise both “non-physical” and physical events, both internal and external events, and they may also comprise both momentary and non-momentary events. Therefore, semiotic representations comprise phenomena with different frames of reference that can be metatheoretical commensurable only partially.

Signs can be used to refer to anything humans can perceive or conceive of—thus, any phenomenon (see Footnote 4). These so-called *referents of signs* are not the same as the particular physical and psychical events of which signs are composed. Signs can refer to other external events, such as a tree. But a tree is not the same as the letter combination TREE or an icon of a tree carved in stone that are used to semiotically represent real trees in necessarily more generalised and abstract ways. This is uncontroversial, but it is often overlooked that the same is also true if the semiotic referents are psychical phenomena (e.g. feeling nervous). The meaning of “feeling nervous” attributed to particular behavioural and semiotic externalisations is not the same as that feeling in and of itself. The meanings assigned to signs implicitly reflect abstractions and generalisations from concrete events—otherwise, signs could not refer to different events of the same or similar kind. Therefore, signs cannot reflect the phenomena, events and properties that they denote in the same ways in which individuals perceive them in a given moment (Vygotsky 1934).

The TPS-Paradigm’s conception of signs *as composite kinds of phenomena* comprising external physical and psychical events that are inclusively separated on the basis of three spatio-temporal properties differs from previous semiotic theories (e.g. Peirce 1902, 7.364; Mead 1934). It also opens up new perspectives on the *externalism-internalism* debate.

Excuse: Differences to Externalism Versus Internalism

The externalism–internalism debate in the philosophy of mind revolves around the question of how individuals’ can get to know about the world if their psyche is entirely internal to their bodies as assumed in internalism. Externalism contends that psychical phenomena are determined also by external phenomena and therefore cannot be only internal (Rowlands 2003). Like internalism, the TPS-Paradigm conceives psychical phenomena as being located entirely internal. But, unlike internalism, it refrains from idealistic assumptions of a priori knowledge (Kant 1781). Instead, on the basis of the three spatio-temporal properties and presuppositions of epistemological complementarity, the TPS-Paradigm specifies the ways in which psyche–external surrounding connections can be established in both directions for enabling individuals to get to know about, to adapt to and to intentionally act in their external surroundings (see Uher 2015d). The conception of signs as composite kinds of phenomena allows for incorporating various externalistic ideas, such as the idea that implicit

meanings and structures contained in semiotic systems (e.g. phonetics, semantics) also influence individuals' psychical systems (Lau and Deutsch 2014), while still conceiving psychical phenomena as being located entirely internal to individuals' bodies (Uher 2015a, b, c, d).

What to Externalise—Challenges to Be Considered

Researchers are often divided about what to consider *introspective* knowledge—e.g. whether this involves only conscious experiences or also beliefs (Schwitzgebel 2014). The TPS-Paradigm specifies the targets of *introquestion* as both experiencings and memorised psychical resultants.

To be introquestively accessible, experiencings need to be conscious or at least be capable of becoming conscious¹³. Commonly, experiencings of different kind are distinguished (e.g. visual percepts, thoughts, emotions). But experiencing is always given as a multifaceted unity that emerges as a whole in each given moment (see the principle of emergence (see Footnote 7); Wundt 1896). Hence, the workings of the psyche cannot be explored by studying only mental experiencings—even if such could be (hypothetically) isolated. Introquestive methods are therefore targeted at exploring *experiencings of all kinds* and however concrete or abstract, distinct or ambiguous, specific or global they may occur for a particular individual in a given moment. This diversity intrinsically calls for methodological pluralism (see epistemological complementarity, Uher 2015a; also Schwitzgebel 2014).

The concept of introquestion implies the assumption that individuals introquest spontaneously and fragmentarily in their everyday lives. Scientists capitalise on these abilities and introduce particular procedures for increasing individuals' awareness of their experiencings, promoting self-disclosure and facilitating externalisations and their recording (see below).

Memorised psychical resultants—both compositional structures and process structures—are targets of introquestion because they are accessible only while they are being reconstructed and executed, respectively, in individuals' experiencings. Moreover, as outcomes of the psyche's past workings, memorised psychical resultants constitute essential parts of individuals' psychical systems. Without these abstracted, processed and integrated experiences derived from past experiencings, psychical systems could perhaps not function at all. For example, the perceptual representations acquired early in ontogeny first enable individuals to perceive

¹³The corresponding German terms are *bewusstseinspflichtig* and *bewusstseinsfähig* (Hacker 1986).

material objects as steady and events as repeatable although single sensory perceptions are always fragmented and vary rapidly due to individuals' own movements (Uher 2015d).

Experiencings—and thus, memory reconstruction—are always interrelated to *all concurrent events* both psychological and physical, internal and external to the individual, which constitute the individual's *situation*¹⁴ in the TPS-Paradigm (Uher 2015a, d). Therefore, contextualised methods are always required (see below). The question on whether or not beliefs constitute introspective knowledge most likely arose from the widespread use of decontextualised methods in which individuals are asked to report about themselves in situations that hardly have any relevance to the psychological phenomena enquired (e.g. questionnaires; see below).

An essential difference between experiencings and memorised psychological resultants concerns their degrees of abstraction. Experiencings are more detailed, and they may be erratic, vague, inconsistent and multi-layered rather than logic and coherent as this is possible for memorised psychological resultants. Thus, if individuals are asked to provide clear and rational accounts of what is going on in their experiencings, then they may more likely reconstruct their pertinent beliefs of what they may or should have experienced rather than the specific experiencings that they actually have had. Interpretation, categorisation and analyses of externalised experiencings are secondary and tertiary steps of exploration (see below).

Experiencings and memorised psychological resultants can be differentiated meta-theoretically, but such distinctions are commonly not perceived by individuals. Rather, in the continuous flow of experiencings, events of the present merge indistinguishably with memories from the past and with their projections into an imagined future, making every moment unique and never repeatable (Le Poidevin 2011; Valsiner 2012). It is precisely this tight and smooth entanglement that first makes the workings of psychological systems so functional. This entanglement enables individuals to capitalise on experiences and abilities acquired in the past and to develop, maintain and refine psychological resultants that enable orientation, adaptation and action in complex and changing conditions and in the face of an uncertain future (i.e. to learn), while meeting the limited capacities of experiencings that can be processed simultaneously at any given moment (Uher 2015d).

Clear empirical differentiations between experiencings and memorised psychological resultants are not—and are not claimed to be—always possible. But their meta-theoretical differentiation provides clear criteria for scrutinising what kinds of psychological phenomena can be reflected by the empirical data that are generated by particular methods.

¹⁴A *situation* is defined in the TPS-Paradigm as the particular constellation of the *internal and external* events that are present in a given moment and that the individual can therefore directly perceive, consciously or not (Uher 2015a).

When to Externalise—Temporal Requirements

The momentariness of experiencings entails particular intricacies for their exploration. Once an experiencing ceased to be and is processed into an experience, it can only be reconstructed again in another experiencing. This new experiencing can be externalised, but it is not the same as that previous one (Valsiner 1998, 2012). Moreover, individuals always have experiencings during waking hours¹⁵, consciously and subconsciously. There never is a moment to hold on to become more fully aware and reflect on a given experiencing, because reflection itself is an experiencing yet a different one than the experiencing reflected on.

The momentariness of experiencings actually requires real-time explorations, thus *nunc-ipsum introquestion* (see concurrent introspection; Schwitzgebel 2014). But attention and externalisation inevitably change the course of experiencings (see Conversion Principle 1; Kant 1798). This hinders *nunc-ipsum* explorations of more complex experiencings, thus allowing for explorations of only brief and less complex experiencings (Wundt 1874; see Footnote 9).

In methods of *retro-introquestion*, individuals are therefore asked to reconstruct the experiencings that have occurred during a specified time (e.g. while completing a task)—thus, *ex post facto* and without disturbing them (see Bühler 1907; James 1890; Rosenbaum and Valsiner 2011). This enables investigations of more complex experiencings, yet at the expense of details that may already be forgotten (Wundt 1896). Experiencings can be reconstructed most accurately if their reconstruction occurs immediately after the experiencings under study have ceased to be and thus before many further experiencings and reconstructions occur that inevitably change the memorised psychical resultants that the individual has retained of the experiencings under study. The essential element of retro-introquestive methods therefore is their application in *closest possible temporal proximity to the experiencings under study*—hence, these methods are inherently *short-term memory-based* (see immediate retrospection; Schwitzgebel 2014). Particularly suited are microgenetic methods, which are aimed at reconstructing the genesis of actualities—their *Aktualgenese*¹⁶ (Diriwächter and Valsiner 2008; Wagoner 2009).

The more time elapses between experiencings and their introquestive reconstruction, the more likely will the corresponding memorised psychical resultants already be changed through subsequent experiencings, reconstructions, abstractions and (re-)integrations into the systemic structure of the psyche. With increasing temporal distance, individuals are therefore more likely to reconstruct past experiencings using abstracted psychical representations (e.g. schemata), thus reviving

¹⁵Experiencings also occur during some episodes of sleep (e.g. dream experiencing).

¹⁶The German term *Aktualgenese*, coined by Gestaltpsychologists for perceptual processes, is derived from the Latin *actualis* for in action, operative. This German term refers more explicitly to the time-bound properties of the phenomena studied than the corresponding English term *microgenesis*, which refers to the smallest, moment-by-moment transformative occurrences of continuous developmental processes (Diriwächter and Valsiner 2008).

what they *believe* they often do experience or should have experienced in the given kind of situation rather than what they have *actually* experienced in a particular moment.

Self-reports in questionnaires and some interview methods, by contrast, rely on *long-term memory-based introquestion*. In such methods, individuals are asked to reconstruct psychological representations (e.g. by enquiring *habitual* experiencings, beliefs), rather than to reconstruct particular experiencings that they have had in particular moments. Abstracted and generalised psychological representations are illuminative about the compositional structures of an individual's psychological system. But these psychological representations are *only the outcomes* of complex multi-layered processes. They *cannot reveal the workings of the psyche* in and of themselves as they occur at any given moment (Rosenbaum and Valsiner 2011; Toomela and Valsiner 2010; Uher 2015b).

Thus, although *long-term memory-based introquestive* self-reports are reconstructed in the individual's experiencings in the moments of enquiry, their contents reflect *outcomes of the processing of past experiencings* in terms of, for example, beliefs, self-concepts or personal narratives (McAdams 2001) but not those past experiencings in and of themselves. This is well considered in many explorations of psychological processes (e.g. intelligence tests; Uher [under review a](#)) but not in psychological assessments (Uher [under review c](#)).

Where to Externalise—Requirements of Retrieval Situations

As psychological phenomena are *functionally integrated within the individual as a whole*, experiencings are dynamically interrelated to and co-determined by all concurrent (internal and external) events. The functionality of experiencings arises from this multi-layered embeddedness (Uher 2015d) and therefore becomes apparent—and can thus be explored—only within the particular circumstances of their emergence. The settings in which individuals are asked to reconstruct past experiencings—the *retrieval situation*—should therefore be representative and ecologically valid for the particular experiencings under exploration (see encoding specificity principle, Tulving and Thomson 1973; also Brunswik 1955).

The complex concurrent internal and external events experienced by individuals are not memorised in unitary holistic ways but rather in complex and interconnected arrays of various memory traces (Tulving 1983). Therefore, retrieval is possible via different memory traces each of which may allow for reviving different arrays of the memorised complexes of concurring experiencings (see multi-trace theory; Bower 1967; Hintzman and Block 1971; Semon 1909).

For promoting comprehensive reconstructions, retrieval settings should therefore provide cues that activate different memory traces. Retro-introquestion meets these requirements if the individual is still in the particular setting in which the experiencings under study have occurred. This setting is representative and ecologically valid but not identical because individuals' internal situation—their perceptions and

conceptions of the given setting—is no longer the same as before. These issues are well researched in fields where accurate retrieval of past experiencings is of utmost importance—in criminal investigations (Fisher and Geiselman 1992), but these issues are often not well considered in other fields of psychological research.

Suitable methods promoting comprehensive and accurate short-term retro-introquestion are, for example, the methods of subjective evidence-based ethnography (SEBE, Lahlou 2011; Lahlou et al. 2015). In these methods, first-person perspective audiovisual recording (see above) is used to capture events¹⁷ that are extroquestively accessible in the individual's own visual and acoustic field (e.g. activities with the own hands, interactions with others) during specific tasks or everyday life situations.

Reviewing the own first-person perspective audiovisual records provides a complex multi-modal retrieval setting, highly representative and ecologically valid, that helps individuals to reactivate various traces of their pertinent episodic memories and to revive and reconstruct the particular experiencings that they have had in the particular moments captured on video, thus based on both *memory and evidence* (Lahlou 2011). Moreover, the video records are extroquestively accessible so that multiple individuals can perceive one and the same event recorded from the individual's unique perspective, which helps to reach intersubjective interpretation and understanding (see below).

Interviews about past experiencings conducted in settings other than those in which the experiencings under study have occurred are necessarily much less representative and ecologically valid. Some interview forms aim to reduce these limitations by asking individuals to *mentally revisit the context* in which the experiencings under study have occurred (e.g. cognitive interviews; Memon and Bull 1991). The multi-modality and vividness of interpersonal communication may stimulate reconstructions of multifaceted past experiencings far more intensely than the impersonal, rather oligo-modal settings of standardised self-report methods (e.g. questionnaire assessments).

Questionnaires and other standardised self-report methods constitute a lexically encoded and thus primarily thought-based retrieval setting that may therefore trigger reconstructions of primarily thought-based memories that can be revived and reconstructed repeatedly and more or less at will (e.g. declarative self-knowledge; personal narratives). But experiencings of other kind (e.g. emotions, visual percepts)—rather than thoughts about such experiencings—can seldom be generated or retrieved on demand; their reconstruction is bound more strongly to the complex internal and external conditions of their emergence (Eich and Metcalfe 1989).

¹⁷Of course, what individuals can extroquestively access and what cameras can technically capture is necessarily not exactly the same. Audiovisual cameras may be less or even more sensitive to audiovisual events, but are generally insensitive to physical events of other kind (e.g. of smells, temperature, humidity, air pressure) that individuals can extroquestively access.

How to Externalise—Risks for Biases Introduced by the Methods Used

Given that psychical phenomena are accessible only introquestively, it is only the individual him or herself who can decide which particular external physical events are most accurate for externalisation. Constraining the externalising events that the individuals under study can use therefore entails serious limitations for the investigations of psychical phenomena. Specifically, if externalising events are predetermined (e.g. item statements and answer categories in standardised questionnaires), individuals may be prompted to reconstruct only those memories that match these predetermined events, to reconstruct memories *such that* they match or to simply indicate answers that do not match at all. Psychical phenomena not envisioned by the scientists cannot be studied. This opens doors to all kinds of ethno- and egocentric biases (Lahlou 2011; Uher 2015a).

Wittgenstein (1922) highlighted the difficulties that are entailed by externalising psychical phenomena in language. Language sets boundaries for externalising thoughts¹⁸—but not for the thoughts in and of themselves as there are also inexpressible ones. The limitations and intricacies entailed in language-based investigations of psychical phenomena must therefore be carefully explored and considered (Uher 2013, Desideratum 1 g; for details, see Uher 2015a, b, c, d).

External physicalisations other than language-based ones (e.g. drawings, music, dance) provide multi-modal and less standardised possibilities for externalising psychical events. Such physicalisations may be particularly suited for externalising experiencings and memories that are subconscious and preverbal and only difficult to verbalise (e.g. emotions; see Freud 1915; Kelly 1955). They are also suited for investigating individuals with (still) limited language abilities (e.g. children’s drawings are studied as “mirrors to their minds”; Cherney et al. 2006). But the lower degrees of standardisation of these externalising events also complicate the interpretation and intersubjective recoding of the meanings that individuals aim to externalise in this way.

Intersubjective Interpretation of Externalisations and Inferences to the Psychical Phenomena Under Study

Introquestive methods inherently rely on the studied individuals’ abilities to memorise and reconstruct their psychical events. As nobody else can perceive the events under study, the accuracy of individuals’ memorisations and reconstructions cannot be validated by methods that are independent of these individuals

¹⁸Original wording “dem Ausdruck der Gedanken eine Grenze ziehen”—literally translated “to draw a limit to the expression of thoughts” (Wittgenstein 1922, Preface).

(see incorrigibility; Schwitzgebel 2014). But vice versa, the individuals under study can validate the researchers' demarcations of the externalising events that they have used and the researchers' interpretations and reconstructions of the psychical events under exploration.

Therefore, the individuals under study should ideally be involved at least in some extent as is done in so-called qualitative methods (see communicative validation; Flick 2008). Some methods (e.g. cognitive interviews in criminal investigation, Memon and Buli (1991); subjective evidence-based ethnography, SEBE, Lahlou 2011; Lahlou et al. 2015) employ *in-depth interviews* in which the validity of the researchers' intersubjectively recoded (e.g. reformulated, verbalised) interpretation of the individual's externalisation is checked with the individuals under study. The studied individuals' interpretations of results need not be accepted by the researchers or be directly reflected in scientific theories, but their involvement will help to become aware of and to minimise potential ethno- and egocentric biases (unintentionally) introduced by the researchers (Lahlou 2011; Uher 2015b).

In *standardised self-report methods*, by contrast, scientists aim to intersubjectively encode individuals' introquestive reconstructions by *determining a priori* the externalising events (e.g. item statements and answer categories). This practice not only constrains the studied individuals' possibilities for externalising their psychical events in appropriate ways. It also opens doors to all kinds of biases, in particular, when scientists, as is commonly the case, do not enquire the meanings that the individuals under study construct for these predetermined encodings—although these meanings are known to vary intra-individually and interindividually (e.g. Rosenbaum and Valsiner 2011; Uher 2015a, under review c).

Summary

The Transdisciplinary Philosophy-of-Science Paradigm for Research on Individuals (TPS-Paradigm) was applied to metatheoretically specify the unique properties of the psyche (i.e. internal, temporally variable yet accessible only momentarily, and “non-physical”) and to differentiate various kinds of psychical phenomena (e.g. experiencings, memorised psychical resultants comprising both compositional and process structures). These metatheoretical foundations were used to derive methodological principles (e.g. Conversion Principles; metatheoretical commensurability; nunc-ipsium methods, introquestion, extroquestion, retro-introquestion) and criteria (e.g. temporal proximity to the experiencings under study, ecologically valid retrieval situations).

The philosophy-of-science analyses identified various weaknesses in concepts of introspection and first-person perspective methods. The analyses also revealed that psychophysical findings actually rely on extroquestion, not on introquestion, and therefore cannot provide any evidence that psychical phenomena are quantifiable in and of themselves as is widely assumed to justify the application of so-called quantitative methods in psychology.

The chapter highlighted that psychical phenomena can be explored only indirectly through individuals' behavioural and semiotic externalisations. The various methodological challenges that this entails were discussed, specifying what, when, where and how individuals should externalise in introjective explorations. The basic principles and criteria specified by the TPS-Paradigm help researchers to determine which particular kinds of psychical phenomena can be explored by which particular kind of method for establishing an appropriate phenomenon–methodology match in empirical investigations.

The transdisciplinary and philosophy-of-science analyses presented in this research have revealed novel insights that are still not well considered and that can meaningfully complement the existing metatheoretical and methodological knowledge for exploring the fascinating workings of the psyche.

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Part V
Creating Future Horizons

Chapter 19

Psychological and Social Borders: Regulating Relationships

Giuseppina Marsico and Achille C. Varzi

The boundary-line of the mental is certainly vague. It is better not to be pedantic, but to let the science to be as vague as its subject, and include such phenomena as these if by so doing we can throw any light on the main business in hand. It will ere long be seen, I trust, that we can; and that we gain much more by a broad than by a narrow conception of our subject. At a certain stage in the development of every science, a degree of vagueness is what best consists with fertility

(William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 1890, p. 6).

Psychological phenomena take place at the border between person and environment. Indeed, psychology as a whole may be seen as a science of human liminal constructions, a science concerned with the dynamic relationships that exist between people and what surrounds them. The person–context relationship is, therefore, a central topic in a number of different domains of psychological research, taking on special importance when applied to the study of human development (Kindermann and Valsiner 1995).

Lev Vygotsky's early attempt to deal with "the problem of the environment" in child development offers a good illustration of the double-barrelled nature of this perspective. According to Vygotsky (1994), the child's development entails, on the one hand, a progressive widening of the environment, from the circumscribed space related to his or her existence immediately after birth to the wider portions that

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gradually open up as the child starts walking: the house, the street, the neighbourhood, etc. And even further:

his environment changes according to the different kinds of environment each stage of his education provides: during his nursery school age, the nursery school; during his immediate pre-school years, the kindergarten; and during the school age, the school. Every age presents the child with an environment which has been organized in a special way, so that the environment, in the purely external sense of the word, keeps changing as the child passes on from one age to another. (Vygotsky 1994, p. 339)

On the other hand, even when the environment may seem to remain unchanged, the simple fact that the child changes in the process of his personal development introduces significant modifications in his relation with specific external factors:

the same environmental factors which may have one meaning and play a certain role during a given age, two years on begin to have a different meaning and to play a different role because the child has changed. (*Ibid.*)

It thus appears that, along their developmental trajectory, human beings are engaged in an uninterrupted crossing of borders in their life space (Marsico 2013; Marsico et al. 2013). By crossing borders, they automatically create new ones. *How* do humans deal with such qualitative transitions throughout the course of their lives?

Development as a Qualitative Structural Transformation of Borders

The process of moving ahead in life, with its constant border crossing, defines the arena within which all human development takes place. Such a development is, in essence, an unfinished and open-ended process, grounded on the *epistemology of becoming* and bounded by the *irreversibility of time* (Valsiner and van der Veer 2014; Marsico 2015). Emergence of new qualitative levels of organization is thus the core issue in human development, which involves feed-forward processes that guide each living organism to face the uncertainty of future states in its relations with the environment (Valsiner 2008).

This way to conceptualize the development creates a difficulty for scientists who are in search of order and stability, which are antithetical to any developmental process based on discontinuity and ruptures of the previous order. The theoretical challenge is to capture both the certain and the uncertain aspects of the developing system as well as the open-endedness of the future in connection with the uniqueness of the past-to-present trajectory. The timeline of this trajectory in an irreversible time is the axiomatic core of any developmental perspective needed to recognize that an event occurring at time T1 is typically similar, but never identical, to any subsequent event at time T2 (Sovran 1992). The irreversibility of time entails the continuity of change from an infinite past towards an infinite future.

Thus, development deals with the *process of becoming*, not with states of being. It requires that we look at what is possible in the future, beyond what is actually present. As Baldwin pointed out in his “genetic logic”,

that series of events is truly genetic which cannot be constructed before it has happened, and which cannot be exhausted backwards, after it has happened. (Baldwin 1906, p. 21)

It follows that the study of development needs to be grounded on the unfolding of novel processes, rather than on their prediction or on retrospective explanation. The phenomena of emergence, becoming, and transformation are, therefore, the real objects of investigation in developmental science. (Valsiner and van der Veer 2014)

The structural transformation of a person in irreversible time and within contexts is well represented even in the earliest documented occurrence of Vygotsky’s notion of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Investigations led paedologists to the idea that one should determine at least a double level of child development, namely: first, the level of actual development of the child, i.e., that which has already matured to the present day; and, secondly, the zone of his nearest development, i.e., those processes in the further development of these same functions which, as they are not mature today, still are on their way already, are already growing through, and already tomorrow will bear fruit; already tomorrow transfer to the level of actual development. (Vygotsky 1933/1935, p. 120)

Here, the conceptual value of ZPD as a border is evident. The zone of proximal development is focused on the dynamic process of emergence and constitutes a fluid border between the already-developed and the not-yet-developed functions. A growing person constantly moves beyond what is already acquired towards what is not yet achieved (Boesch 1991). The *space in between*, as described in ZPD, provides the feed-forward loop between organism and environment in the process of qualitative transformation of the psychological structures through the myriad of borders that define them (Marsico 2011).

We may say that the zone of proximal development is grounded on the part–whole relation. It has a holistic character that comprehends the unity of the parts in a whole, comprising itself and the neighbouring zones (the Zone of Actual Development and the Zone of Insurmountable Difficulties; Zaretskii 2009). It belongs to the person who has developed up to this moment, but it is oriented towards exploring the *beyond area* (Boesch 1991). It is again the border between what has already emerged and what has not yet happened but *might* happen.

Parts and Wholes

The part–whole relation has been the subject of philosophical inquiry since antiquity, not least because all reality, including ourselves, appears to be hierarchically structured in terms of entities of greater and greater complexity

(Varzi 2015). It has, of course, also been central to psychological inquiry, most notably Gestalt psychology (Smith 1988). As an autonomous field of research, however, the formal study of the part–whole relation is a relatively recent development, leading to a theoretical framework that has come to be known as “mereotopology” (Smith 1996; Varzi 1996). Mereotopology deals both with the relations of part to whole and with the relations of part to part within a whole. As such, the framework embodies two different but interconnected components: a mereological component, which focuses on the relational concept of *parthood*, and a topological component, which is concerned with the relation of *connection* and, derivatively, the monadic property of *wholeness*. (Smith 1997; Casati and Varzi 1999; Smith and Varzi 2000; Varzi 1997, 1998).

There is no general agreement on exactly what principles govern these two components and their mutual interplay (Varzi 1997, 1998, 2007; Cohn and Varzi 2003). For our purposes, suffice it to say that parthood is typically viewed as forming a partial order, i.e., a relation that is reflexive (everything is part of itself), antisymmetric (no two things are part of each other), and transitive (any part of a part of a thing is itself part of that thing), with the additional property that no composite thing can have a single proper part. Similarly, the connection relation is inherently reflexive (everything is connected to itself), symmetric (if a thing is connected to a second thing, the second is connected to the first), and monotonic with respect to parthood (everything is connected to anything to which its parts are connected).

Other principles are more controversial. For instance, there is disagreement on whether parthood is an extensional relation (to the effect that composite things with the same proper parts are identical), or on whether composition is unrestricted (in the sense that any number of things form a whole, regardless of their homogeneity or causal unity). Still, the framework is at least precise enough to allow such questions to be raised and formulated in precise terms. More importantly, it provides the basis for addressing two additional questions that bear directly on our topic: First, how does the part–whole relation behave *vis à vis* such dynamic factors as the relative movement of parts or the dependence of a whole from the parts that compose it? Second, what does mereotopology tell us about the dynamics of border contact, and more generally about the relationship between a border and the thing it bounds?

The first question is especially important if we are interested, not only in the way in which wholes are organized, but in how they evolve through time, including the loss of old parts and the acquisition of new ones. Valsiner’s notion of *inclusive separation* (Valsiner 1987) captures some basic structural and functional relationships between parts and wholes that are sensitive to the idea that mereotopological development is, ultimately, a product of the continuous trade-off between what is already acquired and what is not yet achieved. There remains to be seen how such structural and functional relationships can be modelled in terms of the fundamental conceptual primitives of mereotopology, i.e., parthood and connection, so as to see the effects of inclusive separation on the other principles mentioned above.

As for the second question, mereotopology brings out the seemingly paradoxical nature of borders as the *loci* of contact between the inside and the outside of any given whole, beginning with ourselves (Varzi 1997). A border *separates* the two sides, but the sides are also said to be *continuous* with each other. If they were not continuous, something would lie between them, so the border of one (the inside) would not be the border of the other (the outside). Yet, if they are continuous, the question arises: *which* side owns the border, mereologically speaking? The border cannot be part of both, for otherwise the inside and the outside would overlap, which is impossible. And it cannot be part of neither, for otherwise the inside and the outside would not be truly in contact owing to the density of the continuum. Yet any other choice would seem to amount to a peculiar privileging of one side over the other, a result that already Brentano (1906) stigmatized as “monstrous” and Chisholm as logically incoherent:

If the continuous object is cut in half, then does the one boundary become two boundaries? [...] But how can one thing—even if it is only a boundary—become two things? (Chisholm 1984, p. 88)

It is tempting to think that figure/ground considerations should be invoked here, based on the principle that the border is always part of the whole, hence of the figure inside (Jackendoff 1987, App. B); the outside—the background—is topologically “open”. Yet what is figure and what is ground when it comes to two adjacent halves of a single integral whole? What happens when we take the two halves apart? Indeed, it would be natural to suppose that all entities of the same sort be treated alike, for instance, that all material bodies be construed as figure-like entities, each possessing its own border. But then, how could any two of them ever come into contact, short of penetrability? (Kline and Matheson 1987).

This puzzle is, really, a sign of the deeply ambivalent, highly fluid nature of borders. Ultimately, it bears witness to the intuitive limits of mereotopology as a formal theory of border phenomena, and many philosophers and logicians are led to conclude that borders are not genuine denizens of reality. They are merely mental constructions, mathematical abstractions, and *façons de parler* (Gotts et al. 1996). Yet this is hardly a solution if we are interested in the mechanisms of constant border crossing that are characteristic of human evolution. The struggle between inside and outside that takes place at the border, in the spatial as well as in the temporal dimension, is precisely what affects our psychology most deeply. And the science of psychology is itself constantly striving with ambivalence and indeterminacy, both at the level of individual development and in relation to all sorts of phenomena evolving in the socio-cultural sphere (Abbey 2012). A mereotopological characterization of the puzzle, even without an obvious solution, is part of what it takes to come to terms with such pervasive ambivalence and indeterminacy.

Borders and Causal Explanation: The Catalytic Process

The ambivalent topological nature of borders—which simultaneously “separate” and “connect”—blends naturally with the mereological fluidity of the relations between the different internal parts of a dynamic system. Here, too, we need to augment the abstract mereotopological stance by looking at concrete border conditions in terms of their open-ended plasticity. What counts as a border now may and typically will no longer count as a border at a later stage, just as what counts as a part may vary across time. Things grow, shrink, come apart, merge with other things, constantly acquiring new parts, and losing old ones. Following Neuman (2003), borders may in this sense be construed as involving an “oscillatory process” between the inside and the outside—between the bounded entity and its environment—whose primal features cannot even be defined before the relevant interactions take place.

A way to foster this intuition involves *causal* considerations: What kind of causal explanation would allow us to vindicate the dynamicity of such oscillatory processes? The causal unity of the whole is often invoked in accounting for a thing’s interactions with the environment, and when it comes to such things as living organisms, biological factors may well play a central function in this regard (Wilson 1999). Gestalt theory also emphasizes causal unity as a primary factor in accounting for the integrity of a whole, both synchronically and diachronically (Bozzi 1969). From a cultural psychological perspective, however, it seems more appropriate to speak of *semiotic catalysis* (Valsiner 2000, 2014), where “catalysis” refers to the contextual conditions that need to be present for a particular causal linkage to occur. Semiotic catalysis spotlights the systemic, transformative, developmental nature of the relevant causal processes as well as the heterogeneous variety of outcomes that result (Cabell and Valsiner 2013). It emphasizes the systemic relations between parts and borders, explicating how such relations determine a variety of conditions that appear to be necessary, but not in themselves sufficient, for qualitative transformations that are psychologically salient. And since catalytic causation is nonlinear, reference to this concept may prove decisive in the psychological study of complex systems and of the mutual simultaneous, “oscillatory” causal relationships that obtain between opposite and ambivalent elements.

By activating a phenomenal field, catalysis also makes it possible to account for the dynamic construction, regulation, and negotiation of borders. In particular, contextualizing catalysis plays up a bidirectional mechanism: By enabling the production of new meanings, feelings, and emotions, catalysis contributes to creating new territories—with their specific borders—in human geography. At the same time, as soon as we create them, borders redefine the entire system and the quality of the relations among parts and whole, acting as semiotic catalysers and producing novel patterns of thought and behaviour. This is evident in the geopolitical world, where the drawing of borders typically results in people on the opposite sides speaking different languages, relying on different authorities, and struggling to solve *their* problems and to improve the quality of *their* common life.

Such is the magic of boundary lines: they are thin, yet powerful; they separate, and thereby unite; they are invisible, yet a lot depends on them, including one's sense of belongingness to a country, a people, a place. The same is true of the borders that define our individuality and that constrain our development *qua* human beings: We identify and re-identify ourselves as complex systems separated from, though connected with, whatever else belongs to our environment. The causal history of our borders is the history of our lives.

Concluding Remarks

Developmental psychology calls for a general theory of becoming that fully acknowledges the centrality of liminal constructions in human life and the oscillatory nature of the borders that keep us apart from our environments. This, in turn, calls for an ontogenetic perspective that takes at face value the open-ended plasticity that is characteristic of all dynamic systems, and of human beings in particular, as they evolve irreversibly through time. The epistemological and social dimensions of this task have become of central importance in cultural psychology, where individual and societal borders are seen as semiotic catalysers of the continuous trade-off between what is already acquired and what is not yet achieved. In addition, mereotopology—the formal theory of the relations of part to whole and of part to part within a whole—provides a conceptual framework of enormous potential for appreciating the logical and ontological dimensions of the task at issue. The conceptual interplay between all these dimensions, and between the theoretical tools needed to investigate them, is still relatively unexplored. When better understood and fully developed, it may constitute a powerful contribution to the foundations of psychology as a developmental science of the inherent qualitative transformations that accompany all individual and social becoming.

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Chapter 20

Education: The Process of Becoming

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The various faces of education, in teaching practices and in education outside the classroom, provide a rich terrain of issues and problems for cultural psychology. In a broad sense, we understand education to be the complex and indeterminate cultural process through which individuals of our species stop being simple biological organisms and become human beings, who acquire symbolic language from others and become capable of developing and using this language to create and use meanings about the things, objects, people, and events around them but, principally, about themselves. In this sense, education is not a product of nature but an invention of human civilization.

It is a *complex* process, because it involves societies in which the individual self, traditions, institutions, competition in the empirical world, and other individuals develop. But it is also *indeterminate*, since the result is not an impression stamped on the inside of the mind; in fact, there is *no* result, but a *dynamic self*, which can always change, a being with capacity, power, and the habit of interacting, interpreting, and producing signs in the world. It is, above all, a *process of becoming*, since these powers, skills, capacities, and meanings are not present at the beginning, but are continuously developed through experience.

In fact, all of this is of interest to psychology. It is concerned with what is understood in psychological terminology as higher level mental states/functions, as the creation and negotiation of meanings, the construction of both reality and the self, the acquisition of symbolic skills, etc. Cultural psychology assumes that the typically human mind is not an interior solitary and self-centered sphere, since our mental life can only be understood if we are living with others, communicating our experiences through the regime of a language and symbolic tradition.

Jerome Bruner is among those who consider that education is particularly relevant to cultural psychology. In fact, he asserts that education is “the right ‘test frame’ for building ideas in cultural psychology” (Bruner 1996, p. xi), given that we are the kind of beings whose initial condition is to learn and teach. This clearly “extends beyond school” since education “does not only occur in the classroom,”

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but in situations in which we are called upon to share the world, rules, instructions, tools, and values: “culture shapes mind, [...] it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conceptions of ourselves and our powers” (Bruner 1996, p. x).

In this chapter, we will pursue this idea, firstly, in order to discuss certain concepts central to cultural psychology and relevant to educational themes (such as the semiotic self, agency, narrative) and thus, secondly, suggest, in an exploratory manner, that it is interesting to use the notion of *educational agency*. The notion of *educational agency* will be used here non-technically to refer to a specific type of agency in which the agent-self conducts performances that exercise curiosity, discovery, self-esteem, investigation, and the redefinition of the self, the world, and others. As Valsiner (2015, p. 47) notes, a focus on the notion of agency enables the theoretical innovation of psychology, which can support empirical practices in their efforts for epistemological reconstruction.

This chapter is organized in two parts: On the one hand, we discuss how cultural psychology establishes a recent change of perspective in relation to psychology as a science (Valsiner 2012a, b, 2013); we also address how cultural psychology is based on a notion of a *human being*, involving ideas of “semiotic self” and “agency”, while on the other hand, we address education (in a broad sense) as a cultural institution which enables individuals to develop as human beings. At this point, we discuss the notion of *educational agency*, in an exploratory and essayistic manner.

The notion of *educational agency* is similar to, but different from, the idea of the *educational self*. The notion of the *educational self* (Iannaccone et al. 2012) addresses two points: “the construction of the self during school age in the adults’ discourse and the emergence of the self when an adult interacts within an educational context.” The construction of the *educational self* is a process of dialogue that takes place during childhood and adolescence within a context of the convergence of the several voices of parents, teachers, school, etc. This notion prioritizes a school experience that promotes values, norms, modes of conduct, systematic, and practical knowledge “that are internalized in the form of ‘voices’ that will constitute a legacy and a toolbox of symbolic resources on which the individual will draw and use” (Iannaccone et al. 2012, p. 224).

For its part, *educational agency* is a kind of *performance* or *achievement* whose goal is the promotion of certain virtues or psychological skills, such as curiosity, open-mindedness, attentiveness, intellectual carefulness and rigor, epistemic tolerance, self-esteem, a predisposition for dialogue, and argued disagreement.

Psychology as a Human Science

Psychology, Sign, Self, and Agency

Cultural psychology has signified an important and challenging development in the history of psychology as a science (Valsiner 2012a, b, 2013). It has signified a truly

challenging development, since its claims for scientific status throughout the twentieth century ended up committing psychology to the model of natural sciences and the ideal of an “objective science”—causing psychology to oscillate between procedures for the collection of quantifiable data, investigations involving chemistry and the biology of the brain, and ethological investigations. The huge relevance and success of these psychological studies is undeniable. However, as Valsiner notes (2012b, p. 4), such an epistemological commitment “has refrained from the study of higher (...) psychological functions, while concentrating on the lower, simpler ones” (Toomela and Valsiner 2010). Cultural psychology imposes a radical change on the model of science, since it is centered around cultural elements and reintroduces the complexity of human psychological functions into psychological research practices. Complexity refers to the sense in which the psychological life is constituted of intersubjective interaction between one agent and other agents who share a symbolic system and an overdetermined world of signs. These agents are in a position to mutually interpret each other and to transform themselves through the signs produced by other agents.

In fact, viewed from the perspective of the history of ideas in psychology, it is curious how the significant interest in the higher level psychological processes manifest at the beginning of the twentieth century was gradually abandoned (Valsiner 2013). However, under the influence of authors such as Vygotsky and Luria, and also in its encounters with neighboring disciplines (such as anthropology, history, philosophy, and linguistics), cultural psychology has reclaimed interest in the concept of culture and in subjects that are characteristically higher phenomena of the human psyche, such as the affective processes of feeling, religion, morality, and political sentiments that take the form of values (which occur in the most varied places around the world). Culture (a polysemic concept in itself, and one that may be understood as a system process of symbolic mediation) is present in both the sphere of social configurations and the constitution of personal experiences. The fulcrum is the thesis that we have constructed the world and ourselves by living with other people and using symbolic resources (Valsiner 2007).

If we think thus, then, cultural psychology should, in fact, be conceived as a science, but as a *science of the human* in its complexity and multiplicity, beyond a description of cerebral and behavioral events—in other words, cultural psychology is a human science.¹ We may say that cultural psychology is the “science of the subjective” (Bruner 1996, p. 12): when it speaks of the “self” or “person,” it is not using these terms in an ontological sense, but as properties of the mind and symbolic systems. It does not, therefore, make sense to say “this is a self” or “this is a person” as ostensibly pointing to an object with precise contours and properties. One talks of “self” or “person” when referring to a position that agents assume within a relationship.

¹Valsiner (2013) assesses the history of psychology in the twentieth century and the emergence of Cultural Psychology, while in (2012c) he discusses the challenges and possibilities for the future of Cultural Psychology.

According to a historical and cultural perspective, relations between men are understood as direct and mediated (Vygotsky 1980, 1986). Direct relations are instinctive ones, such as the action of monkeys on looking at and pushing another to hurry them along, or of a child when shouting and looking or pulling at another child's clothes. In mediated relationships, on the other hand, which require higher mental functions, the key feature is the sign, which results from the accomplishment of communication as a transformation mechanism of the other and of oneself. Thus, the use of signs characterizes a relational situation between human beings and one in which language exercises a *central function* in social relations. Relation is, therefore, communication, a process of personal transformation, a "means" to influence others and the genetic "basis" of higher mental functions, where the mental nature is both the product and producer of social relations.

The process of internalization and externalization (Valsiner 2007) creates a constant breaking of isomorphism and breaking of equilibrium between personal and collective cultures, making each individual a unique person, albeit supported on the foundations of their collective culture. This enables the construction of meanings that drive the reconstruction of the objective world; each piece, object, and event begins to have a meaning, to the extent that the individual is a subject who constructs meanings. Although discourse for different individuals may be similar and all these individuals are situated within a horizontal or singular symbolic context, nevertheless, each is affected differently by such signs, constructing a network of personal meanings about a culturally shared given.

The semiotic mediational direction (Boesch 2008; Valsiner 2007; Innis 2012) is primarily concerned with "the construction of *what kind of mediating systems* can be discovered in human everyday activities and in the domains of feeling and thinking" (Valsiner 2012b, p. 9). From the simple organization of color segmentation (the way we learn to "see" and "discriminate" green or blue, for example) to the rules of moral conduct (how we learn to judge what is "good" or "bad," what is "fair" or "unfair"), we relate to objects and people within mediational processes. At the same time, education enables subjects to relate to a schema of signs, constituted within a specific community, and to interact with this tradition, interpreting, creating, or simply resisting this schema.

Signs and Ways of Making Worlds

As a fundamental feature of the relation between individuals and groups, Vygotsky (1980) calls the sign a second-order stimulus, an intermediary link between the stimulus and response of the organism positioned by human beings. The sign indicates that the individual must be actively engaged in establishing this link. How individuals live their lives (how they learn, experience emotions, make decisions, assume identities, carry out activities) necessarily involves an external process of interaction, communication, and transformation of both the social network and the

personal experience itself—a dialectic process in which the individual is constructively involved.

The way that we signify and narrate our experience is also the way in which we “make worlds” (Goodman 1995) and “make ourselves” (Bruner 2001). This process is equally interested in education and psychology and it is through this process that we become human beings.

A Cultural Psychology Perspective on Education

Regarding the proximity between research in cultural psychology and education, Bruner (1996, pp. 13–44) establishes nine *tenets* or principles. We will not address each one here, but will highlight five, more general, aspects of his argument.² From the perspective of cultural psychology: (a) education is an interactive process (involving a number of individuals in a subcommunity of interaction, the school or the family, for example) for the construction of an individual’s concept of self; this self, however, must be conceived as an agent “impelled by self-generated intentions”; (b) education provides skills, modes of thinking, feeling, talking, remembering, and imagining, and is never socially, politically, or economically neutral (in other words, education is necessarily situated); (c) the mode of thinking, feeling, or imagining fostered by education helps individuals, and particularly children, to create a version of the world, a narrative, inside which these individuals are placed as participants (actors) and see a place for themselves (a “personal world”)³; (d) education develops the talent of intersubjectivity, the human ability to understand the mind of others and experience a common world; and (e) it is likely that “the single most universal thing about human experience is the phenomenon of ‘Self’, and we know that education is crucial to its formation. Education should be conducted with that fact in mind” (Bruner 1996, pp. 35).

We will discuss the last point in more detail in the following section. The condition of being human *necessarily* involves the phenomenon of self. The experience of self has a dynamic, interactive, rational, and reflexive nature, and, for this reason, there is a direct relation between self and agency. In its formation, confronted with the demands of culture and education, the individual *qua* agent is permanently evaluating their trajectory and position. This movement consists of a combination of what we believe and expect of ourselves and what society expects of us. Bruner (1996, p. 37) calls this the “mix of agentive efficacy and self-evaluation ‘self-esteem’.”

²According to Bruner (1996, pp. 13–44), these *tenets* or principles are as follows: (1) the perspectival tenet; (2) the constraints tenet; (3) the constructivism tenet; (4) the interactional tenet; (5) the externalization tenet; (6) the instrumentalism tenet; (7) the institutional tenet; (8) the tenet of identity and self-esteem; and (9) the narrative tenet.

³This is another important point, but we will not explore it here. See Bruner (2001, 2002).

Boyhood and Educational Agency

Agency and Psychology

According to Smith (2015, p. 25) "...[the] history of notions of psychosocial agency is inseparable from the history of notions of the self." The history of the relevance of the notion of agency to psychological theories is the history of the self as a being to whom one may attribute actions and moral responsibility.⁴ When psychologists and philosophers attribute *agency* to an individual, they are invariably referring to theoretical entities such as the mind, intention, volition, free will, and, more recently, subjectivity and personality. In psychology specifically, the notion of agency serves one's efforts to understand people (Martin et al. 2010) as opposed to efforts to understand brains and information processing systems. This difference is relevant, since there is an important movement in psychological theory which considers that concepts such as mind, belief, and thought (the higher level mental states/functions) do not have explanatory power and have no utility in explaining what we are and what we do—this may be seen in the theories that defend an "eliminativism of the mental" (Churchland 1981; Stich 1983). For its part, the job of understanding people is of both theoretical and practical interest, since it affects the way that we evaluate and react to people in interactions in our daily lives. Clearly, this also affects the way that people understand their own feelings, decisions, thoughts, beliefs, and so forth (Millar 2004).

We can see that, as opposed to the notion of organism, the notion of the human being involves a sense of *agency*, not only of behavior, adaptation, and action. For its part, such a notion of agency, in its most elemental form, necessitates the idea that we may attribute to the individual the capacity to correctly use the pronoun "I" in phrases that indicate one's own states and events, such as feelings, thoughts, beliefs, or simply *intentional states* which characteristically have content or meaning (Richard 1990). In a broader sense, agency involves the assigning of beliefs, thoughts, desires, and other doxastic intentional states, to a specific subject in continuous relationships with other human beings.

To consider that a person does not believe or think, or may act without the motivation of beliefs and thoughts (and feelings and emotions), almost always means saying that they do not act as a human being. For this reason, in ordinary situations, talking of a *human being* means considering that someone is a *human agent*, since, as well as being naturally inclined to attribute thoughts and beliefs to them and believing that such thoughts and beliefs influence or even explain their actions and behavior, we are also naturally inclined to believe that such an agent can understand, know content, evaluate and reflexively think their own thoughts and beliefs, and guide their actions in light of this understanding.

⁴A wide-ranging debate about the relevance of the notion of agency in psychology may be found in Martin et al. (2010), Gruber et al. (2015).

When someone says “I believe X”, “I think X”, “I desire X”, this belief, thought, desire, belongs to that person; that person is an agent, an author of the propositional attitude and they have a particular responsibility that no one else has. This belief, thought, desire, is not just a succession of representations (of which they are, for some reason, the only witness) (Moran 2001, p. 32).

An agent is that which has the power to cause events and happenings in the world and to achieve things through their intentions, beliefs, free will, etc., having recourse to their own skills and capacities.⁵ A psychological investigation of agency is a study of how people “assign, feel, and act on power in all its forms, from desire to governance, or to constraint on power, in their own lives and in the lives of others” (Smith 2015, p. 24). For this reason, the agent is inseparable from an ethical aspect: Constructing meanings about oneself is not a matter of having access to information about ourselves (information which, for some reason, we may not have). Part of what it is to be a human agent is to be capable of subjecting one’s own attitudes to review, so that this review makes some difference to what one’s attitude is (Moran 2001, p. 64). Someone is an agent in relation to their own attitudes, in that they reflect about what is true, about what they desire, wish, intend, and believe.

Becoming a Human Being

To illustrate what we are talking about and to introduce the notion of *educational agency*, we will look at an example from cinema.

The film *Boyhood* (2014), written and directed by Richard Linklater, was filmed over twelve years and follows the growth and transformation of Mason Evans Jr., from 6 to 18 years of age. Once a year over this period, the director met and filmed the same group of principal actors: Ellar Coltrane (Mason Jr.), Patricia Arquette (Olivia), Lorelei Linklater (Samantha), and Ethan Hawke (Mason Evans, the father). As a result of these opportunities, and while recording the Ellar’s physical changes, the camera constructs the psychological changes taking place in Mason Evans Jr. The film’s plot does not feature mysteries, twists, or tragedies. It merely presents dramas common to thousands of middle-class American families (the film is almost documentary in nature). What is really striking—and almost overwhelming—about the film is the subtle and complex process through which a shy and observant child is “transformed” into a person, a selfhood, with his own desires, expectations, fears, and choices.

Given that we know that we are watching recorded images of the same actor over twelve years, it becomes clear that this is the same organism, the same

⁵One theme, which we are not going to discuss here, is the relation between agency, free will, and moral responsibility. For more on this, see Barnes (1999), Ekstrom (2001), and Martin et al. (2010).

intrigued look, the same features, and the same physiognomy, expressing a certain distance from things and people. In the film's last scene, when we see the face of the actor character directly, it is clear that it *has been the same person* from the beginning. But it is here that the magical art of cinema intervenes. It both is and is not the same person. At each step, until the end, it both is and is not the same Mason Jr./Ellar. It is not only the passing of time, but the things that have happened in-between-around him that produce this silent transformation to take place (which affects not only Mason Jr., but Ellar himself, since he is also becoming a man): The way in which he connects with and separates from things, people, and places, how he develops certain skills (e.g., photography), all this leaves more than a mark on Mason Jr. These experiences begin to create his own way of living and constructing the architecture of his self, as if it were a Gaudi cathedral.

What is noteworthy here is that, in this singular and inalienable process, through the several contexts with which Mason Jr., interacts (his family, the schools he attends, the cities he lives in, the groups he associates with, the American election campaign that elected Obama for the first time, and many others), the character acquires tools and symbols, expresses his feelings, makes choices, and is confronted by the expectations and demands of others and by his own expectations and demands, so that, step-by-step, he creates his autonomy, becoming himself.

And while this is happening, there is a constant tension between the past and the future. This tension is a mark of the very notion of agency, because here the character is transforming not into a finished and ready self, but into a "possible self," who regulates his aspirations, will, confidence, hopes and fears (Bruner 1996, p. 36; Wang and Brockmeier 2002). According to Valsiner (2015, p. 47), agency involves a flow from the past and "the active move toward the unknown future, based on one's needs and desires."

Educational Agency

It is precisely here that it is relevant to talk of *education agency*, since what is being created is not only an individual-self, but an agent-self, the "holder" of certain virtues and special psychological capacities, and normatively *valuable*, consistent with the sense of the human being as a subject to who we many attribute mind, will, action, deliberation, responsibility, and so forth.

The idea of *educational agency* is not a morally neutral idea, nor is it a descriptive concept. *Educational agency* is a normative and, consequently, evaluative concept, since it addresses that which individual *qua* agents ought to do. This subject is not strange to cultural psychology. As Bruner (1996, p. 13) asserts: "We shall (...) constantly be inquiring about the interaction between the *powers of individual minds* and the *means* by which the culture aids or thwarts their realization" [our emphasis]. This also involves some reflection about the resources and institutions that societies create to *educate their individuals*. This interaction between an individual's capacities and performances and their society are of an

preeminently normative and evaluative nature because we, as researchers, are always confronting ourselves with (and trying to understand) those things that particular societies consider to be good, valuable, or useful, and with what individuals do in relation to such demands—what the agents construct.

It is clear that we can easily recognize educational and cultural practices that do not inspire human beings as agents to whom we attribute free will and autonomy. Returning to the American pragmatist and liberal tradition, Dewey (1938) considers fundamental the idea of a *necessary relation* between the processes of our real experience and of education; this does not mean, however, that *experience* and *education* are equivalent terms. The hypothesis that a legitimate education occurs through experience does not imply an assumption that all experiences are legitimate and equally educational. Certain experiences, as Dewey reminds us, are uneducational; these experiences have the effect of interrupting or distorting growth directed at new and later experiences. Here, we remember that *growth* (as the notion of *Bildung* recalls) is the greatest Deweyan ambition. For him, it is not enough to insist on the need for experience without being concerned with the *quality* of the experience through which one passes. The quality of the experience assists its assimilation and supports learning from later experiences.

That is not to say that it is not possible to claim that a successful educational practice based on the highest ideals of civilization and benevolent utopia is an “act of violence—against currently existing sociocultural states of affairs” (Harber 2002, cited in Valsiner 2003, p. 2). In the history of civilization, it is peculiar that educational practices modify subjects’ relationships with their proximal experience of nature and other people and instruct these subjects to start adopting a body of information and values which moves beyond this proximal experience. The “benevolence” of the educator (whether in Catholic Missions or in contemporary schools) is a practice of violence. But perhaps a “necessary benevolent violence,” in the service of humanity (Valsiner 2003, p. 2).

Final Considerations

In a psychocultural approach to education, it is not possible to conceive of human beings without considering their constitution as a dynamic process and their interaction with other human beings in a wide-ranging scenario of symbolic mediations—culture, language, instruction, and tradition. Like Mason Jr., in the film *Boyhood*, individuals of the human species learn to be themselves, to form thoughts, sustain beliefs, express desires, and practice deliberate actions in *continuous semiotic* interactions with the environment, politics, society, and, clearly, other human beings.

A *cultural psychology perspective on education* should be aware of the processes and culture of education, of how people construct narratives and practices that express the meaning of becoming a human being within the educational environment, particularly in schools (Marsico and Iannaccone 2012). From this

point on, many topics may emerge and many others may acquire new frontiers: among those aspects that surely deserve our attention, for example, are the situations in which subjects on the educational scene and within the educational drama conform (consent), confront, and/or resist the preexisting or the current discourse and practices; we should also reflect on the place of the school itself within the several spheres of human life. We must be aware of the kinds of skills, powers, and virtues at play, of the kinds that societies expect and how each individual constructs their own version of things. We should remember that none of Mason Jr's higher level mental states/functions (or those of any other young individual) were originally present in the organism: They are constructed during *the process of becoming human*. Finally, however hesitant, Mason Jr., has *a text about himself*: He is a character, actor, and the author of his own story. But the story does not end here, there is no point of arrival. The process of becoming human takes place across an entire life: like us all, he will get to know other places, he will experience new feelings, he will rewrite his story an infinite number of times, he will tell himself a innumerable amount of things, and he will carry on becoming

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Chapter 21

Narrative Psychology as Science and as Art

Mark Freeman

Introduction: Narrative Psychology and the Meaning of Science

It seems only fitting that I begin this chapter by telling two brief stories that bear upon the larger issues I wish to explore in this chapter. For the first one, the year was 1996, the event was the Psi Chi (National Honor Society for Psychology in the United States) induction ceremony, I was the featured speaker, and I was determined to speak my piece on behalf of narrative psychology and of qualitative inquiry more generally. In fact, what I proposed in the talk, entitled “Narrative Psychology and the Study of Human Lives,” was making qualitative inquiry as integral a part of our department’s curriculum as the standard fare. At the time, there were two large categories from which students had to select courses: “Psychology as a Natural Science” and “Psychology as a Social Science,” the first consisting of courses such as *Physiological Psychology* and *Sensation and Perception*, the second consisting of courses such as *Personality* and *Social Psychology*. Supplementing these two categories, I suggested, might be one called “Psychology as a Human Science,” which, drawing on ideas from phenomenology, hermeneutics, the narrative study of lives and more, would essentially serve to further humanize the curriculum—that is, move it in the direction of what this volume is referring to as a science of human *being*. Many of the students in attendance were excited; the kind of psychology I was describing to them was closer to what they had once imagined the discipline was all about. Some of my colleagues seemed interested too. All things considered, the entire event went wonderfully well: Ten years in (I arrived at Holy Cross in 1986), and I was finally on the verge of transforming the department—and perhaps, in some small way, the discipline—into a more inclusive, pluralistic arena for the

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exchange of ideas. As the evening drew to a close, however, one of my colleagues came up to me and posed a question, which seemed to have acquired some urgency via my talk: “Why do you call yourself a psychologist?”

The other story is even more telling. A few years after this first event, I had put myself up as a candidate for full professor, and it was time for me to receive my departmental report. I had some concerns about the promotional process; it was entirely possible that some of my colleagues would move further in the kind of questioning direction just referred to and voice some qualms about what I had been doing. At the same time, I had put together a tolerably good record and would have been surprised if they were to have decided to hold me back from promotion. Then I received the report, prefaced by a cover letter, which said that, although they had some appreciation for the kind of work I do and found some of it good reading, they had no way at all to gauge its value for psychology and had therefore decided to pass my file on to the Department of English, who would surely be able to evaluate things better than they could. For a moment or two, I was floored. Fortunately, however, the letter’s author was close by and reassured me that they were only kidding; everything was fine after all. At least I had arrived at a place in the department where I could be teased for who and what I was! But of course, the question being posed in this ostensibly lighter, friendlier context was not unlike the one that had been posed several years earlier: Why do you call yourself a psychologist? And what place does your work have in the hallowed pantheon of psychological science?

What I usually tried to do in response to these kinds of challenges was say something to the effect of, “I am doing science too—albeit a different form of it than you.” I might have then gone on to say something about the distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften*, and how, appearances notwithstanding, narrative psychology was not only every bit as much in the service of science as more mainstream work but could actually lead to the very “self-realization” of psychology itself (see Freeman 2007, 2014). Why? Psychology would finally be letting in the door the full range of messy human realities and would thereby be in the process of becoming precisely the kind of inclusive, pluralistic science it ought to have been all along. At this point, my interlocutors could well come back and say something like “All that messy human stuff you’re interested in just is not a primary concern. Nor can it be, not if we’re trying to build a true science.” It is *too* messy, too amorphous, so it is better left to poets and painters and other such get-down-and-dirty explorers of the human condition. I in turn would protest. “No,” I would say “it’s our responsibility as scientists to respect and explore these deeper realities, ambiguous and messy though they may be, and we have to do so,” I might add, “in a way that truly does justice to them, truly allows them to be seen in their full measure and understood in their full complexity.” Is that not what science is all about?

In this chapter, I chart the somewhat tortuous trajectory of my own thinking regarding the question of where to locate the discipline of psychology in regard to its status as a (would-be) science. As shall be clear from the account, I remain ambivalent about how to think about the issue in question. By and large, I have

continued to situate the work I and others of my ilk do under the rubric of science, broadly conceived. This stands to reason. Having been socialized into assuming that psychology is, or at least aspires to be, a science, I undertook my work in narrative psychology armed with the conviction that this work could and should be considered part of the scientific enterprise. Indeed, as I shall document in greater detail shortly, I took pains to defend the scientificity of narrative work in response to those, in psychoanalysis especially, who sought to move beyond Freud's alleged scientism and to aestheticize psychoanalytic theory and practice. This was done mainly for philosophical reasons, but also for political reasons: Eager to establish its own legitimacy within the discipline, it has been important for narrative psychology in particular, and qualitative inquiry more generally, to proclaim its continuity with more traditional, especially quantitative, forms of inquiry. In view of the recent emergence of the Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology (SQIP) and its placement within Division 5 (formerly the Division of Evaluation, Measurement, and Statistics; now the Division of Quantitative and Qualitative Methods) of the American Psychological Association, this issue of legitimacy has come to loom larger still as has rhetoric about the continuity of quantitative and qualitative work, the importance of building bridges between the different "cultures" involved, and the laudable goal of crafting an appropriately inclusive and pluralistic science (see Gergen et al. 2015). For the most part, I continue to adhere to this basic view.

However, I have come to question it too. Indeed, there are times when this commitment, and the kind of language I have employed to support it, seems ... disingenuous. For, whatever virtues there may be in conceptualizing and framing narrative psychology in this way, there are problems as well. First, and most basically, much of narrative psychology, especially that segment of it that focuses on "big stories" such as those drawn from memoirs, autobiographies, interviews, and other such extended accounts of lives (Freeman 2006, 2011a), is, like the telling of history, fundamentally *retrospective* in orientation, a looking backward at the movement of the past from the vantage point of the present. As I shall show shortly, this aspect of narrative knowing poses significant challenges in itself to conceptualizing and framing narrative psychology as science. Closely tied to this issue of narrative *temporality*—or, more simply, "narrative time" (Ricoeur 1981a)—is the issue of narrative *reconstruction*, by which I mean the kind of seeing together and piecing together, in and through memory, that serves to transform the heterogeneous elements of the past into an integrated whole (Ricoeur 1991). Finally, there is issue of narrative *writing*, that is, the literary means by which stories, whether fictional or non-fictional, are told (see especially White 1978, 1987).

As shall become clear in the pages to follow, I have become especially interested in exploring this last issue, which concerns the actual scholarly work being done. In most scientific work, including most narrative work, the primary focus of the research remains "informational," geared toward generating bodies of knowledge that are essentially detachable from the data from which they derive: Stories of this or that group (for instance, adolescents, the elderly) are gathered in order to learn something about this or that phenomenon or process (for instance, identity formation, the life review). The "data" at hand therefore serve essentially as a means to the

end of generating some form or other of scientific knowledge and understanding. In other narrative work, however, there *is* no detachment of the informational content of what is said from the form of its presentation. The narrative dimension is part and parcel of what is being said. Moreover, there is an irreducible particularity to language itself that renders such modes of knowing different in kind and order from the kind of knowing that science, at least as customarily conceived, generally relies upon. In view of this situation, one might move in the direction of what I have referred to in some recent work as “poetic science” (e.g., Freeman 2011b, 2014), and seek to establish a more capacious and inclusive view of what science is and does. But does this scientific “shoe” (now widened poetically) truly fit? Or might it make more sense to abandon the scientific project in certain instances, and more readily avow the idea that some of this sort of work is actually closer to art? We might also ask: What is at stake in making this sort of move? Would it serve to open up the discipline, allowing a greater measure of entry to those uncertain about or uncomfortable with psychology’s identity as science? Or would it serve to close it, by placing dissenters even farther from the margins than they currently are?

The Beginning: Time, Narrative, and the Story of Development

Let me now turn to what I earlier referred to as “the somewhat tortuous trajectory” of my own thinking regarding the issues at hand. My initial foray into narrative emerged out of work I was doing at the intersection of life span psychology, the philosophy of history, and literary theory while I was in graduate school at the University of Chicago. Influenced especially by the seminal work of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, with whom I had the good fortune of studying (in courses including *Phenomenology of Time Consciousness; Historicity, History, and Narrative*; and *Mythical Time*), I had begun to see that some of central issues I was exploring—especially concerning the relationship between the (ostensibly) backward movement of life history and the (ostensibly) forward movement of development—could be well informed by the other areas of inquiry about which I was learning. In the very first essay I wrote, titled “History, Narrative, and Life-Span Developmental Knowledge” (Freeman 1984), I noted that life span developmental psychology had come to find itself “in the throes of turmoil”; for, despite the efforts of many to extend developmental principles to the entire life course, it had proved to be difficult to bring the project to fruition, for reasons ranging from “the terrific complexity of variables entering into anything approaching a comprehensive specification of human change” all the way to the “sheer mechanics of systematization.” Consequently, I wrote, “there is some question as to whether we can, in fact, extract a science out of this morass or not.” As for my answer to this question: “My contention is that we can, but that it will have to be conceptualized somewhat differently than it has” (p. 1). Difficult though it may be to predict life course outcomes, it was still possible to understand them after the fact. “A viable science

of the course,” therefore, “must admit the necessity of adopting a fundamentally retrospective perspective for at least a portion of the questions it addresses” (p. 2); for, “the study of the life course is, of necessity, not only a historical form of inquiry, but one which demands the acknowledgment of its narrative structure. More than a simple mapping of discrete and isolated events ... it is, in a distinct sense, an ongoing story to be told” (p. 3).

At the core of the perspective I was in the midst of formulating was the aforementioned issue of narrative temporality. Contra those such as Hempel (1942), whose “covering law model” of explanation maintained that historical accounts could be conceptualized epistemologically in a manner consistent with other forms of scientific explanation, I sided with those such as Gallie (1964) and Mink (1965), who underscored the “autonomy” of historical understanding and maintained that the very reliance on narrative bespoke a distinct break between historical and scientific knowing, at least as customarily conceived. There was no getting beyond narrative in historical understanding. One could only arrive at some measure of understanding after the fact, after the events in question had transpired. Moreover, such understanding inevitably entailed a synoptic process of seeing these events as *episodes*, integral parts of an evolving story. So it is that Ricoeur (1981a, b) had spoken of both the “episodic” and “configurational” dimensions of narrative, highlighting the way in which temporality entered the picture. In narrative time, we find

an alternative to the representation of time as moving from the past forward into the future, according to the well-known metaphor of the arrow of time. It is as though recollection inverted the so-called natural order of time. By reading the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end, we learn also to read time itself backward, as the recapitulating of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences. (1981a, p. 176)

Bearing this in mind, I went on to speak of “the ineradicable asymmetry between the knowledge that derives from looking forward in time and that which comes from looking back” (Freeman 1984, p. 14), arguing in addition that the developmental process itself might be rethought along the lines of narrative, the *ends* of development being akin to the *endings* found in narrative.

Having offered this perspective, I took pains to note that it need not preclude the kind of explanatory dimension associated with the idea of science. Nor did the idiographic focus found in much narrative work preclude reference to the nomothetic. “The relation between the particular and the general will inevitably be a dialectical one.” Moreover, “groups can be ‘central subjects’ as well as individuals.” Finally, “there will certainly be common structures in the paths traversed owing to both the facticity of cultural practices and individual potentialities as well as the degree of freedom which social relations allow.” “Narration,” therefore, “does not necessarily lead us to a limitless array of life profiles; there will always be socially constituted boundaries of possibility” (p. 15). All of this was by way of saying: Don’t worry; this framework is still locatable under the rubric of science; it just needs to be tweaked a bit in order to make room for narrative.

I continued this line of thinking in a subsequent piece, titled “Paul Ricoeur on Interpretation: The Model of the Text and the Idea of Development” (Freeman

1985a), homing in further on the idea of development and how it might be reconceptualized in hermeneutical and narrative terms. In this piece, however, I focused more on the imaginative dimension of the developmental process, the “productive, creative aspect, the constructive figuration through which we continually represent ourselves to ourselves as individuals, as identities” (p. 309). Of particular importance was Ricoeur’s work on metaphor (Ricoeur 1977, 1981c), not least because it served to highlight what I eventually came to call the “poetic” moment of self-understanding and self-construction. As I acknowledged toward the end of this piece, this creative—even, one might say, fictive—dimension of the process at hand might lead one to assume that narrative is merely imposed upon the putatively formless movement of our lives. Indeed, one might go far as to claim that the imaginative nature of the narrative enterprise all but obviated the possibility of establishing those sorts of truth claims generally associated with science. Could it be that the stories of our lives are like works of art, imaginative, expressive metaphorical constructions, crafted to give form, meaning, and order to our all too saccadic lives? Could it be that *we*, selves, are akin to works of art too?

Compelling though moving in this direction was, I soon found myself working against it. In some of the work, I was encountering, particularly in psychoanalysis, narrative was often framed in purely aesthetic terms: By virtue of factors ranging from inevitable memory distortion to the interpretive nature of the analytic endeavor to the impossibility of ever retrieving the past “as it was,” the best one could hope for, in analysis and beyond, was a *good* story, not a true one. According to Spence (1982), for instance, the psychoanalytic narrative, “in all of its embarrassing elasticity, can embrace almost any piece of information” (p. 187). For this reason, among many others, “we are no longer concerned with historical truth” (p. 272) but instead with “narrative truth,” an aesthetic truth, one that possesses enough coherence and integrity to function better than what one had before. Schafer (1983), in a somewhat subtler rendition of these ideas, also insisted on moving beyond what he saw to be Freud’s outdated epistemology and maintained that the kinds of accounts analysts provide ought to be seen “less as positivistic sets of factual findings about mental development and more as hermeneutically filled-in narrative structures” (p. 239). The Oedipus complex, for instance, “is a superb story line, a brilliant narrative strategy” (p. 275). Indeed, there is no question but that “Freud knew a good story when he saw one” (p. 276).

Schafer and Spence were surely right to take Freud to task for some of his positivistic assumptions, especially regarding the possibility of disclosing a “true history” of the personal past. The very process of interpretation militates against it as does the fact that the histories in question had to be reconstructed, pieced together and synthesized in some meaningful way. But what they ended up doing, in their respective narrative renditions of psychoanalysis is replacing a crudely positive version of history with an untethered, aestheticized version of the same, the latter being essentially parasitic on the former. Despite my own strengthening narrative commitments, I protested against this move, vigorously—not in order to reinstitute the crudely positivistic version of historical truth that had been left behind but to offer a more hermeneutically nuanced view of what historical truth

might be and to retain a place for narrative knowing in scientific inquiry. After offering some spirited philosophical rejoinders to Spence and Schafer, I went to address the political dimension of the problem at hand:

In diluting the significance of the real and the true, ... and by replacing them with ideas more thoroughly bound up with the creative imagination and the like, they have rendered psychoanalysis as something less than the bitter pill it is in its most radical form. They have cushioned the narcissistic blow Freud spoke of, put what is threatening to our frequently false sense of self-coherence aside by making the concern with the actual an unfortunate by-product of his positivism. It is almost as if one could once again take a great sigh of relief and say: thank goodness it's only a dream—or a fiction, or what have you. It is a sigh that can lull us into complacency. But what also happens is that those who have repressed psychoanalysis until this point, for instance most of academic psychology, will not only continue doing so now that they are told it has nothing to do with history or science, but they will stop short of the sort of antipathy that at least led some of them into a confrontation with it. Why bother if it's a completely different discourse than we thought? We can let the humanists worry about it now. And thus the old and stale divisions remain, perhaps in sharper relief than ever. (Freeman 1985b, p. 174)

As is clear from this discussion of my initial musings on narrative, I was firmly convinced at the time that narrative psychology, in psychoanalysis and elsewhere, had to retain its connection to science for it to be viable. Yes, it was a new and different alternative to mainstream academic psychology. The goal, however, was not to jettison any and all connections to the mainstream but to break it open and thereby expand it. “Our aim,” I proclaimed at the end of this piece, “ought not to be the generation of divisions and boundaries, but the progressive dissolution of them. This is what makes communication possible” (p. 181). A laudable thought, that one: Freeman rescues narrative knowing from the clutches of unwanted binaries—history/narrative, science/art, truth/fiction—so as to keep the peace in psychology departments and preserve some semblance of the unity of knowledge in the discipline.

This basic line of thinking would continue in a subsequent piece on psychoanalysis, titled “Between the ‘Science’ and the ‘Art’ of Interpretation: Freud’s Method of Interpreting Dreams” (Freeman 1989). As is clear from the title, however, I had (apparently) already begun to loosen the tie to science, making a move in the direction of art, the result being a kind of hybrid approach to the process of interpretation, one that located it “somewhere in between ‘science’ and ‘art’” (p. 308). Was this the way to go? Was it an advance over those perspectives that went one way or the other? Or was it just a compromise, borne out of my own uncertainty and indecision?

The Middle: Rewriting the Story of the Self

The story continues. My next attempt to refine my stance on the issues at hand came in the Epilogue to my (1993) book *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative*, titled “Toward a Poetics of Life History.” As I noted at the time, this title may seem “strange and perhaps even contradictory, given my earlier comments regarding the

pitfalls of aestheticism” (p. 229). Nevertheless, there had emerged another dimension of the project that, by degrees, had pointed me in this direction. In dealing with life histories, I suggested, “we are immediately confronted with the reality of not just one poetic act—that of the person who is pausing to reflect on the movement of his or her life—but two: we ourselves ... are involved in the task of making sense of what gets said, of creating an interpretive context within which the information before us may be placed” (p. 229). We might thus speak of a *double* poetics in this context, one that includes both the persons whose lives we are exploring and our own efforts as *writers*, doing what we can to allow these persons to “live on the page.” Along the lines being drawn, I sought to highlight the “hermeneutically imaginative dimension” of our work as narrative psychologists and went on to suggest that we work toward a “literarily-informed psychological criticism.” This was not the same, I noted, as a psychologically informed literary criticism, which was already well established. Rather, the project would draw upon literary, especially poetic, principles as a means of gaining psychological understanding. It was in this context that I made reference to a favorite passage from Freud from the *Studies on Hysteria* (1955 [1893–1895]), in which he confessed his embarrassment about the nature of his efforts as a writer:

I have not always been a psychotherapist. Like other neuropathologists, I was trained to employ local diagnoses and electro-prognosis, and it still strikes myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. I must console myself with the reflection that that the nature of the subject is evidently responsible for this, rather than any preference of my own. The fact is that local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affection. (pp. 160–161)

This passage does well to spell out the kind of perspective I was in the midst of developing. What Freud had essentially told us was that the usual scientific methods may ultimately have been *less* scientific than they appeared. Meanwhile, paradoxically, the more literary approach he had come to employ, which proved to be extremely valuable by virtue of it being much more faithful to “the nature of the subject,” seemed to be *more* so. He therefore realized that “if he wanted to be *truly* scientific rather than superficially so, if he wanted to abide by the phenomena themselves, he would have to include a measure of the poetic in his work” (Freeman 1993, p. 232). It was perhaps this conviction that came to haunt him through the years and that generated so much criticism. Psychoanalysis was too much of a “hybrid” discipline, “a strange amalgam of science and art, which in certain important respects cast into question the very dividing line between the two.” It was hardly surprising that scientists and humanists alike had taken him to task for this strange creation. “We would nevertheless do well,” I said, “to follow his lead” (p. 232).

What exactly *was* his lead, though? And what would it mean to follow it? Following the line of thinking outlined above, there would be at least two fundamental moments of the project being undertaken, the first dedicated to exploring further the poetic dimension of self-fashioning and the second dedicated to the

poetic moment of our own work as writers and theorists. An example of the first was a piece on “Culture, narrative, and the poetic construction of selfhood” (Freeman 1998), in which I argued that, “even though the ‘tools’ employed in the construction of selfhood are social in nature, the configurational acts through which this construction occurs are better conceived in poetic terms, as imaginative labor seeking to give form and meaning to experience” (p. 99). An example of the second was a piece titled “Life narratives, the poetics of selfhood, and the redefinition of psychological theory” (Freeman 1999), which, among other things, sought “to see in life narratives a vehicle for moving in the direction of a more open and expansive conception of what theory is and how might serve both the discipline of psychology and the people it aspires to understand” (p. 245).

This latter piece was a turning point in some ways. In earlier work, I had been critical of White’s (1978) assertion that “We do not live stories, even if we give our lives meaning by retrospectively casting them in the form of stories” (p. 90). I was also critical of his tendency to aestheticize the writing of history, to emphasize the literary nature of the undertaking to such an extent that the facts in question seemed almost incidental. Eventually, however, I came to see some of White’s work differently. A literary text, he has argued, by virtue of its density, multilayeredness, and use of expressive language, “directs attention as much to the virtuosity involved in its production as to the ‘information’ conveyed in the various codes employed in its composition” (White 1987, p. 42). Indeed, therein lies an important point of distinction between a literary text and a scientific one. Bearing this in mind, I went on to suggest the following: “If life narratives are to be regarded as literary texts, of a sort, issuing from a process of poetic figuration, and if literary texts differ from scientific texts by virtue of their embodying not only informational but expressive meanings, then perhaps a different mode of psychological theorizing than we usually encounter is called for.” Put differently, “insofar as selves are neither ‘things’ nor discrete processes but poetic constructions, theory *about* selves must assume a different form—indeed a different kind of form—than that which is most often assumed in academic psychology” (Freeman 1999, p. 248). Here, then, we return to the issue of *writing* and of what theory is and does. And what I went on to offer in this context is that “writing about life narratives might itself move from a reliance on *argument*, based on clarity and precision, the logic of theoretical postulates, and so on, toward ... *appeal*, based on the poetic resonances and evocative textures of the narratives in question” (p. 249). Moreover, rather than seeking to *convince*, to make claims about “how things are,” it would seek instead to *suggest*, presenting a vision of how things can be.

Not surprisingly, I had to issue some qualifications at the end of this piece. This was not aestheticism. Nor was the aim to move entirely beyond theoretical knowledge and the project of science. Indeed—and recall here the passage from Freud we encountered a short while ago—“to the extent that science, broadly conceived, involves abiding by the phenomena it explores, [this] mode of writing ... will in a certain sense seek to become more rather than less scientific.” In addition, it may “pave the way toward a more open and expansive conception of what ‘theory’ itself may be about” (Freeman 1999, p. 249).

This was precisely the next task, the result being a brief, and rather elliptical, essay called “Theory beyond theory” (Freeman 2000). It proved to be something of a foundational one too. Drawing especially on Stephen Toulmin’s (1990) *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, I noted that much of theoretical psychology remained wedded to “the rationalistic abstractness of the Cartesian worldview,” indeed to a kind of “theoreticism, modeled still (even if unwittingly) on the rationalist agenda” (Freeman 2000, p. 73). The result was that “much of contemporary theoretical psychology remains in a liminal state”; and, “despite the desire on the part of many to humanize their inquiries, indeed to bring them closer to the concerns of the humanities, there remains a kind of gravitational pull backward, toward the rational, the scientific, the *theorizable*” (p. 74). What was to be done? This is where the elliptical part starts. A portion of theoretical psychology ought to move *beyond* theory, as ordinarily conceived, “abandon its commitment to theoretical scientificity,” and “become more closely tied to the humanities.” There were at least two reasons for doing so: Attention to the concrete details of lived experience, I argued, “lends itself far more readily to poetics than to theoretics.” Moreover, this movement beyond theory “may better attune us to the ethical—even ethico-religious—dimension of inquiry into the human realm” (p. 74).

Some of Martha Nussbaum’s work was important in this context too, particularly her emphasis on practical wisdom rather than theoretical understanding. Like Toulmin, her main concern in this work was with “historical particularity.” On her account, stories could better accommodate and depict “the incompleteness and neediness of human life, its relations of dependence and love with uncontrolled people and things” (1990, p. 389). Turning toward the poetic moved still farther in this direction, “the possible consolations of narrative form” giving way to “the ‘free verse’ appropriate to much of human experience” (Freeman 2000, p. 75). Art, Merleau-Ponty (1964) has written, “provides us with symbols whose meaning we never stop developing. Precisely because it dwells and makes us dwell in a world we do not have the key to, the work of art teaches us to see and ultimately gives us something to think about”—and, I added, to *feel*—“as no analytical work can” (p. 77). The challenge, therefore, was that of “opening up dimensions of thought and feeling that theoretical discourse, in its customary forms, cannot readily accommodate” (Freeman 2000, p. 75).

It was at this juncture that the ethical dimension came into play. As Levinas (1996) puts the matter, “Concrete reality is man”—and woman—“always already in relation to the world ... These relations cannot be reduced to theoretical representation. The latter would only confirm the autonomy of the thinking subject, ... the subject closed in on itself” (p. 19). Theoretical representation, therefore, “is correlative with the primacy of the sovereign subject, the Cartesian *cogito*, seeking to represent the world qua object, thing, *It*.” Following Levinas, “the displacement of emphasis from the *cogito* to the Other ... requires the movement beyond theory, toward the poetic, where truth becomes less a matter of adequacy to the object than fidelity—phenomenological and ethical—to others, particularly those in need, who call forth our responsiveness and care. Hence the idea of a ‘poetics of the Other’” (Freeman 2000, p. 76). By Other, I went on to note, I referred not only to the human

Other but to those “non-human regions of ‘otherness’” (p. 76) found, for instance, in aesthetic and religious experience. “These too entail the displacement of the *cogito* and ... require different modes of thinking and writing than those ordinarily associated with theoretical reflection” (p. 76).

On the basis of what has been said thus far, one might be led to assume that, ultimately, the aim of this piece was to move beyond theory altogether or to somehow “theorize the untheorizable.” What can this possibly mean? As Steiner (1989) has suggested, “The word ‘theory’ has lost its birthright.” For the Greeks, it bespoke “concentrated insight, ... an act of contemplation focused patiently on its object.” Eventually, however, it connoted “a subjective speculative impulse” to be “tested and proved by corresponding facts, the mirroring evidence of empirical reality” (p. 70). Following Steiner’s lead, we might wish to (re)turn to some variant of the older idea, not out of nostalgia or some uncritical reverence for the ancients but out of the recognition that the modern version, which “entraps the real and secures it in its objectness” (Heidegger 1977, p. 168), frequently operates with a kind of violence, one that assimilates the Other to our own desires and designs and thereby prevents it from letting it be what is. By turning poetically toward “theory beyond theory,” we might spare those we study from such violence and, as I put it earlier, more readily allow them to “live on the page,” in their difference, their otherness.

The Ending (?): Poetic Science and Beyond

The poetic dimension of both self-construction and theory construction continued to permeate much of my work. In a piece called “The burden of truth: Psychoanalytic *poiesis* and narrative understanding” (Freeman 2002a), I tried to show how the idea of *poiesis* might be more fitting for the task of psychoanalytic narration than either interpretation or construction. Returning to a theme I had explored earlier, “the poet,” I maintained, “is neither in the business of finding meanings already there in the world nor of making them, in the sense of fashioning them wholly anew.” Instead, “the poet is engaged in a process in which meaning is at once found *and* made—or, to be more explicit still, in which *meaning is found through being made*” (p. 24). Linking together the work of the poet and the work of the narrative psychologist: “Only through the creative labor of the poet does there exist the possibility of disclosing what is there, in the world. And only through the creative labor of the narrative imagination does there exist the possibility of disclosing the meaning and significance of epochs past” (p. 24).

In another piece, also crafted at approximately the same time, I sought to put into practice some of the ideas I had been considering. Titled “The presence of what is missing: Memory, poetry, and the ride home” (Freeman 2002b), it was my first foray into (academically relevant) “creative non-fiction” and my first attempt to generate the kind of poetically inspired theory I had been calling for. Drawing on a ride home from college I had taken with my father at the close of my sophomore year, I reflected on how his death, a month or so later, infused the story I wished to

tell. There were, of course, some concrete issues being explored: the nature of memory and the relationship of memory to narrative, among others. But I also wanted this piece to be a *work*, a piece of writing that could stand on its own and that used language not just in the name of information but in the name of art, of artistic expression, of finding words that might be adequate to the reality, and the gravity, of the situation about which I was writing. Whether this was a piece of *good art*, I leave for others to decide. But it was a new venture, and it gave me a clearer sense of what I might have actually meant in some of the more abstract tomes I had crafted earlier. There were a number of other pieces of this sort too, most of them focused on my mother, who had become a victim of dementia (e.g., Freeman 2008). Here too, I was certainly interested in addressing some concrete issues: the nature of memory loss, its impact on identity, and so on. But as was the case with the piece on my father, I also faced the more literary challenge of finding language that was adequate to the realities at hand.

But what exactly *was* this work? I tended to consider them pieces of “poetic science.” But was this really an appropriate designation? Did this sort of work really have anything to *do* with science? Let me try to address these questions by saying a few words about a symposium I participated in last summer at the *Narrative Matters* conference in Paris. The question for the symposium was: “Do Narratives Sum?” Can we somehow pool the “information” derived from the various stories we gather and build an edifice of knowledge? Can narrative work serve the idea, and what many would consider the ideal, of cumulative knowledge? More simply, did all the storied work we were doing add up to anything? Well, I said, in predictably evasive fashion, this question cannot be answered definitively one way or the other. The reason is that it all depends on what kind of narrative work is being done. Moreover, it all depends on what one means by *science*.

Beginning with the first of these issues, having to do with the kind of narrative work being done, it is important to recognize the full continuum of work that gets subsumed under the term “narrative.” On one end of the continuum, there is work that simply “uses” narratives as a way of talking about something else: adolescent identity formation, the process of aging, whatever. Again, insofar as the primary focus of exploring narratives is essentially *informational*—that is, geared toward specific informant populations (e.g., contemporary adolescents) or content areas (e.g., identity formation)—the goal is an important one: The knowledge at hand is essentially detachable from the specific narratives from which they derive. So it is that we can, and do, learn something about “adolescence” or “aging” from the narratives we gather. It should be noted that even here, in this most explicitly scientific context, the accumulated knowledge may be transient, because narratives are works of culture and history that change across place and time. There is also the aforementioned retrospective and reconstructive dimension of narratives, and this too may be seen as working against the aim of summation. There is no reason, however, to question the summative aspect of narratives in cases like the ones just referred to.

Then, however, there is the work I have done on my mother, a 92-year-old woman with dementia, among other maladies. In this form of narrative knowing, there is no detaching of the content of what is said from the form of its presentation.

In this respect, there is what I earlier referred to as an irreducible particularity to language itself that renders narrative knowing, and certain forms of qualitative knowing more generally, different in kind and order from the kind of knowing that the project of accumulation generally relies upon. I am speaking about the fact that the medium—in this case, language—is not to be seen as a mere vehicle, or means, for transmitting this or that bit of information but is significant in its own right: sensuously, tonally, musically. In this mode of narrative work, in other words, the medium *matters* in a different way than it does in more standard forms of social science research (see Parini 2008). This idea of drawing on the sensuous qualities of the medium, of using language in such a way that it not only “conveys” but expresses and evokes, even *moves*, is an important one, that would appear to militate against the summative project.

One might of course argue that once one begins speaking about “moving” research, one has left the terrain of science and entered the terrain of art. This is a familiar formulation: whereas science seeks to *in*-form, art seeks to *trans*-form. But it is a questionable one. The fact is, art (some forms of it at any rate) frequently seeks to transform *and* inform. And so too with science, broadly conceived. We read narrative research to become informed, to understand, this or that phenomenon. But we can also read such research for its meaning and possible beauty. In this sense, much narrative work resists pure conceptualization, carrying forth a kind of poetic resonance that exceeds concept, grasp, understanding (see Gadamer 1986).

This brings us, more directly, to the second issue, concerning the meaning of science. It could be argued, in fact it has been argued, that some narrative research, beautiful though it may be, is in fact pretty much useless vis-a-vis the project of science. [Wilhelm Wundt’s famous critique of William James’s *Principles* comes to mind: “It is literature,” Wundt had said. “It is beautiful. But it is not psychology” (cited in Fancher 1996).] Putting aside Wundt’s parochialism, there is an important issue to be considered here. What exactly is the value of this more literary, artful form of narrative inquiry we have been considering? Among other things, I would suggest, it further humanizes us, and serves to enlarge our sense of who and what we are. As noted earlier, it can also serve to awaken us to what is *other*, and strengthen our powers of empathy, sympathy, and compassion.

Again, if I am writing about my mother, I certainly want to contribute to knowledge in some way. I have to be cautious in how I do so, of course; she is just one “case,” after all. But I also want to write about her in a way that might be moving at times, in just the way literature can be. I want readers to see her, and feel her, in her particularity, her otherness—another human being, living, breathing, suffering, loving. Along these lines, one index of significance in work of this sort has to do with the degree to which readers are brought to encounter and appreciate the difference and otherness of others, whoever they may be, and at the same time, their humanness and proximity, their existence as fellow travelers, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers.

In keeping with the aforementioned idea of “poetic science,” what I would suggest here is that there can be a kind of deep scientificity found in narrative work, by which I mean a level of adequacy, and fidelity, to the phenomena in question, the

(proverbial) “things themselves.” One might even speak of “objectivity” in this context—not the kind that comes from observational detachment, precise measures, and so on but an objectivity that, in a sense, *precedes* such measures, that seeks to be faithful to its object, however, ambiguous, multivocal, and messy it may be. Great literature does this wonderfully well; it gives us a possible world, one that somehow articulates reality, gives it flesh and form. In this respect, paradoxically, it is never far from the kind of deep scientificity and objectivity we are considering. Neither is quality narrative work. In it, there is often a kind of resonant particularity, a form of narrative expression that, even in its particularity, moves beyond itself and thus bears within it a measure of generality or universality.

This brings me to the question whether, in the work on my mother, I am even engaged in a scientific project and whether in turn the goal of summation or accumulation is even relevant. Do I care whether narratives sum? More generally, do I care whether the work I do is considered science? Sometimes. But other times I really do not. Some, like the colleague I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, might protest at this point and want to ask, “Well, then, what distinguishes what you do from storytellers, poets, and other such full-fledged humanists?” This is an intellectual division-of-labor issue, and they have every right to ask it. At this point, however, my answer would be: sometimes, nothing at all—except, perhaps, the context in which we put our work forward. Put a given piece of well-crafted narrative in a literary magazine, and it’s “art.” Put it in an academic journal, where there might be a more explicit empirical or theoretical context within which the piece can be located, and it’s “science.” The point, in any case, is that while some narratives do indeed sum, others do not; and by speaking for themselves, they can be extremely valuable in their own right. Score one for art.

I want to offer a qualification, however, and it has to do with the very idea of general knowledge, of the sort that is implicated in the idea and ideal of narratives summing. Here, I am thinking again about the idea that there is a kind of summative, generalizing, or even universalizing dimension that is essentially built into the work of art. What this in turn implies is that even in those instances of narrative work where nothing at all is being explicitly done to draw out the relevant conclusions—that is, where there is just plain narrative, resonant and beautiful, speaking to our spirit and heart—there can remain, immanent within the text, a dimension of meaning that exceeds its own particularity. Or, put another way, there can remain a dimension of meaning that, within this particularity, exceeds itself. I would like to see more of this sort of work. It often makes for good reading, and brings us closer to the world we happen to inhabit.

Coda

Can there be “a science of human being”? I am not sure. But I am inclined to say that there probably cannot, certainly not in the strict sense of the term. I suppose there could be a poetic science of human being. But at this particular juncture, I am

not quite sure what is gained by framing it in this way. “Being,” in the colloquial sense of the term, is an ontological matter, pertaining to the nature and quality of what is—in this case, that which we call “human.” Because we are referring to being rather than to behavior or experience or some other isolable feature of the human condition, we are within the realm of the uncontainable, of that which cannot be secured in its “objectness,” as Heidegger had put it. And to the extent that this is so, it may be that the very idea of science, even in its more poetic form, is simply impertinent. Perhaps it is therefore time to look toward other modes of apprehending the human world and other modes of speaking to it. Psychology did not have to become scientific, certainly not in the way it has. Following Toulmin and others, it could have emerged in a quite different form, more particular, more historical, more cultural, more artful. The fact that it did not has left many of us who are inclined to seek alternatives to the reigning view still clinging to it in some ways. Yes, we do science too; we belong. Can we think beyond science, including poetic science, when it comes to the question of being? Can we look instead toward modes of inquiry and expression that are more adequate to the uncontainable and untheorizable? This would yield a manifesto in its own right, and it has the potential to be truly transformative, of the discipline and of our own place within it.

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