



# Daseinssemiosis: a New Look at the Phenomenology of Theodor Lipps

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## Abstract

The present article aims at restoring the importance of Theodor Lipps' phenomenology and its concrete implications for the study of human phenomena. Drawing out the major axioms of Lipps ego-logical phenomenology, it is the interrelation of ideal I (*geistiges Ich*), the activity of that I, the making of a *Gegenstand* to be externalized in the outer world that flows in the creation of a practical model that allows researchers and practitioners to work carefully at the border of a particular phenomenon. The Lippsian model is applied to the study of complex meaning making at the border of inner and outer world such as the semicolon tattoo project as well as the human conduct of German authors such as Erich Kästner and Stefan Zweig during WW-II. These egophenomenological examples show how humans are dealing with tension arising at the border of externalized meaning making leading into the creation of semiotic material to circumvent conflicts in life <> death or being <> non-being. Being caught between heavy affective polarities, human beings create signs of various kinds for themselves and others so that they can handle the constant liminality of being. It is that liminal state of "being thrown" into tensions and conflicts of living that allows for the development of a new study arena that could be called *Daseinssemiosis* grounded in Lippsian phenomenology. The daseinssemiotic tools presented in the article mirror the particular *Meinsein* (for-me-ness) of a person feeding into the *Umwelt* for other persons to internalize, co-construct, develop, and externalize again. These semiotic tools vary from tattoos to volumes of poems being a catalyst for the building of culture/community. The power of these deeply affective signs lies in the possibility of creating connection between human beings that goes beyond physical contact.

**Keywords** Phenomenology · Theodor Lipps · Semiotics · Existential psychology

Who was Theodor Lipps? And why is he important in our twenty-first century scholarship? Theodor Lipps (1851–1914) was a German phenomenological psychologist (best known for his *Einfühlung* theory) who has been overshadowed by the grandiose figure of Edmund Husserl and his approach to phenomenology including the eidetic reduction and epoché (Husserl and Held 2010). Husserl focused on bracketing one's own assumptions, theories,

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and judgments, so that the actual phenomenon—that can get lost in the jungle of one’s own assumptions—can come to light with its pure characteristics (e.g., Adams 2019; Van Deurzen and Adams 2016). It is exactly that bracketing that has been applied loosely to psychotherapy, e.g., in Gestalt therapy (Clarkson and Cavicchia 2013; Polster and Polster 1973) and in existential-phenomenological therapy (e.g., Van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker 2019) as well as to leadership interventions (Fircks 2020; Fusco et al. 2015).

However, the phenomenology of Theodor Lipps can become as fruitful and applicable as the one of Husserl. But therefore, it needs to be restored in its meaning as well as in its potential application possibilities in psychology. However, where do Husserl and Lipps differ? And here I hold it with Fabbianelli (2014) that it does concern the reduction and its purpose: For Lipps the ego-logical reality (*Wirklichkeit*) of an individual is the fundament of the reality of the *Gegenstand*, whereas Husserl is more interested in the bracketing of that reality question (*Wirklichkeitsfrage*) allowing the emergence of an eidetic observation (Fabbianelli 2014, p. 131). The recipient of the present paper will realize throughout the paper that Lippsian phenomenology wants to bring back the study of the I that has been lost in contemporary psychology with the exception of cultural psychology and its scholars (e.g. Hermans 1999; Sato and Tanimura 2016; Tateo 2016; Valsiner 2014, 2019). The present paper understands itself as important link between a new/old phenomenology and cultural psychology.

## Approaching Lipps: a Film Analogy

Imagine a bunch of actors on a stage probing their scripts, and the film director sits in front of the scene observing and interpreting what the actors are doing or playing. The first minutes of the script he listens calmly, enjoys the playing of his actors. Suddenly, he jumps off his seat and enters the scene saying that he is not agreeing on the last part of the first act in the film. He wants the actors to do X or Y differently and shows him how he imagines that particular scene he was criticizing a few seconds ago.

It is this film analogy that will help us to understand the phenomenology of Theodor Lipps and its importance. Before setting up the first terms and analyzing what is happening on the stage and off the stage, the film analogy implies much of our everyday human conduct when humans meet humans at work, in family, in sports or having a beer together. This systemic generalization is crucial for the understanding of Lipps phenomenology.

But what is happening in the film analogy? The playing of the actors happens in the outer world, and we can describe it in Lipps terms as *dinglich-real* (Lipps 1903/2010, 1905a). It happens independently from me. Even if I am not sitting there as director, they would play with another one, they would be on the stage and doing their job. The *Gegenstand*,<sup>1</sup> their playing is therefore to be found in this outer world. And it just happens. However, the *Gegenstand* is twin-folded. There is happening something in the outer world, but equally there is something going on in the inner world or in myself. I am the one who is making sense of the actor’s playing, I am ordering it, I am putting it together, I synthesize it, and I interpret it. I create the *Gegenstand* for me, anew. And all of these processes are going on insight me, and no one could look at them as I can look at the play. They are

<sup>1</sup> Valsiner (2014) provides an understandable explanation of the philosophical term when a thing is turned into a *Gegenstand* (object) once we act upon it, project something into it. “An object is not just an object but as such” is related towards me (Valsiner, 2014, p. 154).

*Ich-Erlebnisse* (Lipps 1905a). All of this is the product of the ideal I (*geistiges Ich*) who is somehow having an own world (Fabbianelli 2014). Realizing that I am as a director not agreeing with the play of my actors is the product of the activity of the ideal I. However, because this *Erlebnis* is happening firstly insight myself (internal act), the director externalizes the realization in the moment he jumps off his seat, approaching his actors and discussing with them the play, eventually showing how to do X or Y (external act). The ideal I is bound to a *dinglich-real* I that is the body (Lipps 1903/2010, 1905a), the closest arena which the ideal I can grasp for externalizing the particular *Erkenntnis*/realization (see also Valsiner 2014, p. 66). The real I becomes therefore the sense-making arena for the ideal I to communicate the central *Ich-Erlebnis* (see also Valsiner 2014, pp. 221–230 for concrete examples):

Ich verlege, was ich unmittelbar nur in mir finden kann, in einen sinnlich wahrgenommenen Gegenstand, oder versetze es in einer nicht näher beschreibbaren Weise da hinein, “projiziere” es und objektiviere es damit zugleich. (Lipps 1905a, para. 54)

I transfer what I only find within myself in a sensual experienced Gegenstand or I transfer it in a not clearly described manner into it, project it and thereby objectify it simultaneously. (author’s translation)<sup>2</sup>

The ideal I and the real I are like chalk and a board. No other person can read what I think unless I write it down, unless I externalize it. Without the real I, without transporting the *Ich-Erlebnisse* in the outer world, there would be no communication and thus no interchange or innovation happening afterwards. The body is therefore the first and the most important (because the closest) externalized meaning making center of the human being including language as bodily expression (Valsiner 2014, 2019). The realization of the ideal I in the real I makes then in a second step *Einfühlung* necessary:

Wir wissen von einem fremden Bewußtseinsleben nur auf dem Weg der Einfühlung. In gewissen Vorgängen, die wir Lebensäußerungen eines fremden Körpers nennen, liegt für uns mit ursprünglicher Notwendigkeit ein Bewußtseinsleben, vergleichbar demjenigen, das wir in uns selbst unmittelbar vorfinden. (Lipps, 1905a, para. 53)

We know from another *Bewusstseinsleben* (conscious-life) only through *Einfühlung*. In any process occurring, which we might call life-utterance of a foreign body, lies a conscious-life comparable to that which is occurring in ourselves.

And we are first and foremost bound to that conscious-life (Lipps 1903/2010, 1905a) not to be understood in spatial terms. But we all have that inner world, that conscious-life can only be understood when we do meet other human beings who do have their own, who differ from us (see also Endell 1896), and from which we can learn what we might miss, what we might have forgotten in our own world. It is the differences in experiencing that makes communication necessary and vital:

Daß ich ein solches [Ich] habe, und daß mein Bewußtseinsleben daran gebunden ist, erschließe ich aus der Analogie meiner selbst mit den fremden Individuen. (Lipps 1905a, para. 51).

<sup>2</sup> All of the following Lippsian and other German quotes are translated from the original German source to English by the author of the present paper.

That I do possess such an ideal I and that my conscious-life is bound to it, is only realizable in the analogy of myself with foreign individuals.

Let us come back to the film analogy, and here, we might see the practical implications of Lipps' phenomenology. We sometimes act or externalize something as if it were a law not to doubt, not to question, somehow set in stone (Jacobs 2012; Lichtenberg 2012). But in the end, it is only a perspective (externalized) of our ideal I which is just one among many.<sup>3</sup> The actors in the film analogy have the possibility to try out the criticized aspects of X and Y, and then they do compare it with their synthesis, meaning making of their ideal I. And surely, this might not fit. Their meaning making patterns might not match one with the other which opens up the realm of negotiation comparable with a dance where several meaning making patterns are probed out to the point where both actor and director agree (or dancer) upon it (Clemmens 2012).

### Possibility for a Language

My interpretation of Lipps is that *Einfühlung* makes language possible. If I have a sad friend close to me, I see his tears (externalized sense-making) and I want to grasp this sense-making which makes introspection/asking necessary—to put together the parts that make up for his condition. In the end, I do not feel in his real I but in his ideal one (through the necessary indirect bodily part) which opens up the possibility of contradiction so that I can say: I do see it differently. I interpret in other way. How about you see it that way? My language is then a bodily externalized form of my ideal I. It is only through *Einfühlung* that we realize that we differ, indeed (Lipps 1905a). It is *Einfühlung* towards the foreign I that lets us cultivate our ideal I. It is the foreign that keeps us moving.

Now that we know more about Lipps psychology and how it can be applied to a concrete example, it is necessary to clarify some termini before elaborating on a practical model that practitioners can work with. Let us focus on the I, first. For Lipps the I makes conscious-life possible; there is no conscious life without the I (Lipps 1905a, 1905b). Lipps would call that conscious-I (*Bewusstseins-Ich*) or ideal I. This ideal I as above-mentioned can spread its light in a twin-fold manner (Fabbianelli 2014; Lipps 1903/2010, 1905b), first on an object in the outer world that exists independent from me such a pen or a play we encountered in the introduction. Second, I can say the pen is sticky, but it is me who is experiencing the pen as sticky (inner world). Maybe there might be another person interpreting the feeling of the pen not as sticky but as something else. Therefore, I do experience the pen as being in relation to my ideal I. But in the same breath I cannot say that I am sticky or something else (Lipps 1900, 1903/2010.). However, for Lipps it is possible to turn equally the inner world into an outer to not only thematize the pen but to focus on the feeling of sticky and turning it into a *Gegenstand* that can be acted upon and transformed afterwards (Lipps 1905b): Experiencing the pen as sticky would be an objective conscious-life

<sup>3</sup> Lipps defended himself against the psychologism reproach in his definition of logic and aesthetics. One of his most important contributions to science lies in the fact that he fought for the understanding of natural sciences and others as product of the above-mentioned ideal I (Lipps 1897, 1900; Valsiner 2019) who is creating *Gegenstände* in experience. Lipps speaks of a humanization of nature and therefore also of the sciences when he explains that there are no architectural forms whose meaning we did not encounter without experiencing and interpreting it (Lipps 1899).

pattern, whereas experiencing myself as the one experiencing the pen as sticky a subjective one. The latter is for Lipps (1905a, 1905b) the above-described *Ich-Erlebnis*.

For Lipps Gegenstände are not to be confound with *Inhalte* (contents) because I encounter, confront, or challenge them. However, let us focus on an example because it might seem too abstract. When I am sad, I cannot challenge the sadness per se. In this moment there is a reason why I am sad. However, I can challenge myself as experiencing me sad in that particular situation by moving on, by turning my attention to something different, by taking another perspective, by talking to a friend or going to therapy, and so on. This is finally the whole secret in all of the mindfulness interventions or theory of mind therapies, that I can turn my inner world into an outer one allowing myself to turn the experience of something into a Gegenstand that can be confronted afterwards (see also Zahavi 2010, 2014, for the role of phenomenology in theory of mind). I am always free to come to another conclusion, to another realization of myself being in relation towards the outer world, and to my inner world. The ideal I does not know any limits.

Because the I thinks, orders, sums up, relates, or unifies, we can speak in Lipps terms of an apperceptive *Tätigkeit* (activity). This apperceptive activity can be illuminated by the following statement:

In dieser Tätigkeit entsteht dem Bewußtsein das Einzelne und die Menge, die Ganzen und die Teile, das Identische und Verschiedene, das Gleiche und Ungleiche, die Formen, die Substrate und das ganze Heer der Relationen. Nichts von all dem wird von uns an den Inhalten gefunden oder setzt sich aus Inhalten zusammen, sondern all das entsteht uns erst als etwas vollkommen Neues aus der apperzeptiven Tätigkeit und der von ihr vollbrachten geistigen Verarbeitung des in den Empfindungsinhalten gegebenen Materials. (Lipps 1905a, para. 9)

By this activity emerges for the conscience the singular, the quantity, the whole and the parts, the identical, the different and all the equal and non-equal, the forms, the substrates and all of the relations. None of these are to be found at the border of the *Inhalte* or composites itself from the *Inhalte* but emerges as something new from the apperceptive activity and the ideal processing of the material within the *Empfindungsinhalte*.

Furthermore, there is a second function of the apperceptive *Tätigkeit*: It is the questioning of the Gegenstände which allows the Gegenstände to react, to resist or more in general to set affordances. However, for Fabbianelli (2014)—interpreting Lipps—the way we ask the Gegenstände, the way we think sets already the Gegenstände in their affordances. When I write down the sentence: *liberty is political participation* it is not the word liberty determining the sentence, it is me who chooses the word because I want to write down such a sentence, e.g., with a political connotation. The activity of the I experiencing the world is determining the Gegenstand's affordances which the I creates for itself. The word liberty exists independently from me, but in me writing down the sentence or the word, I am creating it anew, for me. It is like the sunshine Valsiner (2014) talks about: It is not me creating the Gegenstand, here the mere sunshine, but while I am observing it and interpreting it, e.g., not only as a simple sunshine but as a bloody one, I am creating something new, for me. For August Endell<sup>4</sup> (1896) this is the key to art that I give myself to the world

<sup>4</sup> August Endell (1871–1925) was a German architect and student of Lipps whose goal was to draw out the psychological premises of arts and architecture. He was radically rejecting any kind of imitation (Endell 1896) because it does neglect the I experiencing the outer world which is the source of vital creation (creativity).

creating it. Now that we have elaborated the role of the I, the activity and the Gegenstand, we must observe those termini in interrelation. Let us take a closer look at Lipps again:

Alle Tätigkeit ist eine Wechselbeziehung des Ich und der fordernden Gegenstände; sie ist der Widerhall und die Wirkung der Forderungen der Gegenstände im individuellen Ich. (...) Leben ist Tätigkeit. Einzig als tätig ist uns das Ich gegeben. Und umgekehrt, Tätigkeit hat keinen Sinn außerhalb des tätigen Ich. (Lipps 1905b, para. 13)

All activity is an interrelation of the I and the affording Gegenstände; it is the resonant clang and the impact of the Gegenstand's affordances in the individual I. (...) Life is activity. Only as active, can we perceive the I. And inversely, activity is senseless if outside of the active I.

## Towards a Practical Model of Lipps Phenomenology

Lipps (1905a) provides an interesting and practical example when talking about the interrelation. If we look at words such as work, performance and force, they would be empty without human relation towards them. It is only when taking an active stance (inner world) towards these termini (outer world) that we understand them the way we do understand them. Otherwise, they would be empty. Otherwise, there would be no poetry, no arts in life. Lipps (1905a) said that otherwise these words would be like a clang color without a clang. In order to work practically with the phenomenology of Lipps, I created the following figure (see Fig. 1).

Before taking a closer look at the figure, let us repeat the central message of Lipps: I can make something in this outer world a Gegenstand and act upon it. In the same breath, I can turn some elements of my conscious-life into a Gegenstand too, allowing myself to

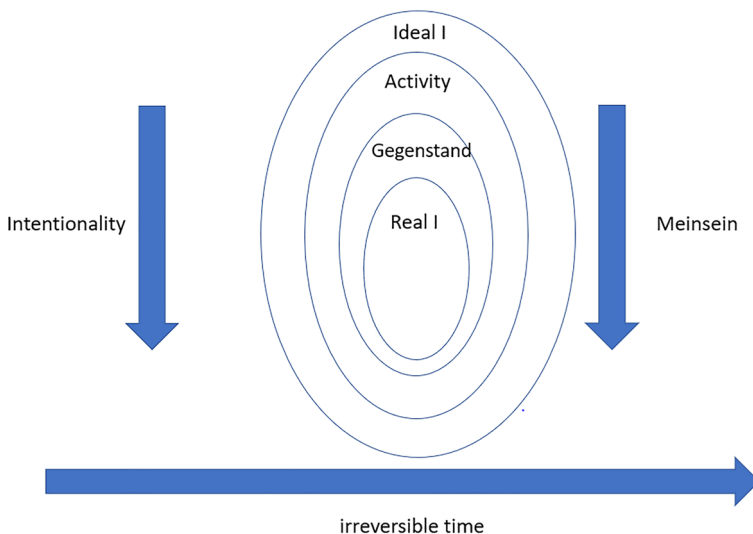


Fig. 1 Understanding Lipps' phenomenology

not only deal with the world outside but also with me transforming that world. These two processes go hand in hand and cannot be separated. Therefore, it can happen that I am reflecting about these actions or the relation I take towards my outer world experiencing it.

## Understanding *Meinsein*: Between Kästner and Tattoos

Let us come to some examples of German authors suffered under the Nazi-time 1933–1945 in order to apply the figure. Erich Kästner—famous poet and novelist before and after the Nazi-time—was the only author present at the *Bücherverbrennung* (book burning) of Goebbels in Berlin 1933 explaining years later that it was just disgusting (Kästner 1989, 2013). Here, the feeling of disgust is an immediate certainty or synthesis of the ideal I (*unmittelbare Bestimmtheit*) in Lippsian terms (Lipps 1905b). We can say that Kästner is acting upon the *Gegenstand* in his outer world by stating out his disgust. Now we can just imagine what is happening further in his inner world because he did not provide many details about it. But it is likely as poet that he was reflecting about his disgust realizing that it is him experiencing the disgust (his ideal I) but that there are many others who do not feel the same but are celebrating the book burning ceremony. This realization opens up the realm to act upon the disgust as *Gegenstand* maybe to hide it, to live it out, to flee with it, to confront the others with it among many other things. Either way we know from testimony (Kästner 1989) that he has been calm, so he did not confront it but rather hid it which could be interpreted as the beginning of an inner emigration. However, the moment he decided to stay quiet and to not confront others transported the activity from the ideal I, the *Gegenstand* in the outer world. Hiding something (bodily) is the expression of the conscience synthesis of his ideal I, interpreting the scene and his relation towards it. And in this moment from the activity of the ideal I to the *Gegenstand* realized or externalized in the outer world (on the surface of the real I) emerges the *Meinsein* (for-me-ness) (see Fig. 1):

Ist der Endpunkt der Linie ein besonderer Inhalt, der durch das Denken zum *Gegenstand* wird, ist der Anfangspunkt das Ich, zu dem die Tätigkeit gehört, ist endlich die Linie zwischen den zwei Punkten, das *Meinsein*, das Bezogensein auf mich oder mein Bewusstsein, das sich in der Zeit ausstreckt. (Fabbianelli 2014, p. 132).

Is the ending point of the line a particular content that becomes a *Gegenstand* through thinking, is the starting point the I, realizing that activity, is finite the line between two points, the *Meinsein* (...) or my consciousness that extends in time.

For Fabbianelli (2014) we understand Lipps concept of intentionality only as being with myself at a specific *Gegenstand* revealing itself in the activity of the I. This converges with the finding or interpretation of later existentialist such as Rollo May (1969/2007) that intentionality only reveals itself in the act. But May goes beyond and explains that it cannot be simply assessed by introspection. And here in relation to Fig. 1 I do agree with May because the intentionality of the act is only visible in the outer world or at the surface of the real I. And here I do see a reaction, I can assess a feeling or something else which allows me to understand the synthesis or the meaning making of the not primarily visible I. The act of the I transferred onto the real I makes introspection only in a second step possible. This converges with the elaboration of Valsiner (2014, 2017) when only at the border



of the Gegenstand by overcoming some sort of tension, we can assess the meaning making by the unity of introspection <> extrospection.

Let us take an example of Valsiner (2014) discussing the intentional externalization of close/personal psychological material of the ideal I. Let us imagine a person having had a mental illness for a long time and now recovered or having faced an important personal challenge wants to get a tattoo to express his/her personal story as it happened for example with the semicolon project (see Fig. 2) where people have overcome depression or an anxiety disorder (Bleuel 2017; BuzzFeed 2015; Meinecke 2015).

The semicolon should express that life has not yet come to a point and that the author of the sentence decides himself/herself how to continue with the sentence. Here, the message of the ideal I becomes visible in the moment when the tattoo is set into the body and the person can decide himself/herself whom to reveal that particular message allowing a glimpse into the deeply personal world of that individual through introspection. The tattoo transferred from a loose thought onto the body is then the whole *Meinsein* of the person which is expressed in space and time becoming a Gegenstand for the person himself/herself (again, the inner world is turned outer world and the person can act upon it as well as others) and being transferred in the *Umwelt* for other people to feel in and thematize afterwards.

If we take a closer look at the BuzzFeed video (2015) dealing with the semicolon project, three people getting the tattoo took that step not only to remember their recovery or positive aspects in life but also to being able to talk more easily about their issues, so to move within collective culture and make themselves in their relation towards themselves more understandable. This shows that the whole *Meinsein* is a complex of different intentional meaning making patterns of the ideal I within the personal and collective arena of human living or we can also say within personal and collective culture—both feeding into each other continuously (Valsiner 2014). The critical empirical moment emerges when the person feels the need to get more tattoos which can be studied in its emergence mechanism



Fig. 2 Semicolon tattoo



(Wagoner 2009 on microgenesis) at the border of inner <> outer world as well as personal and collective culture. Here, we can study the *Meinsein* of a person, a moment where she/he might feel complete or whole (see parallels in Sölle 2006).

In the end of the BuzzFeed video one person explains that they are all in that together and the others immediately agree on it with positive emotions. Therefore, *Einführung*—realizing bodily and then introspectively that there are persons with a similar externalized meaning making—is not only the key to grow alone along one’s own journey called life but that it can be the catalyst for the building up of a community or what I would call it a *Unsersein*. In the same time, the building up of a community, the feeling of *Unsersein* is not emerging unless a specific *Gegenstand* is created/agreed upon, here the semicolon tattoo. Sherif’s (1988) classic robbers cave experiment supports that inherently when different groups were creating externalized meaning making (*Gegenstände*) by flags which became soon the target of outgroup attacks as well as the team cabins—which could also be perceived as a particular *Unsersein* of a group. In the group’s relation towards the cabin, they created the cabin—for them, e.g., with ornaments (decoration)—anew. Lipps phenomenology is highly important here because its premise is the primacy of the ideal I’s legitimacy (*Gesetzmäßigkeit*) by which the rethinking/transformation of the *Gegenstand* is initiated (Fabbianelli 2014, p. 128)

## Phenomenology and Semiotics: the Feeling of Home

The link to cultural semiotics (Valsiner 2014, 2019) becomes transparent in the last paragraph: The tattoo becomes a sign for the person. Here, I do follow Valsiner (2017) on the definition of sign as it r(e)presents something for the sign-maker (and others) and becomes important for the anticipation of the unknown future (Valsiner 2014). Following Peirce triadic notion on signs, the tattoo is a symbol. As a symbol, the tattoo “can represent a number of different generalized meanings (...) as the arbitrary encoding of symbols allows for multiple meanings to be created” (Valsiner 2014, p. 92). This is the beauty of symbols because they make the interpretation of the significant other necessary (Valsiner 2019) which opens up the realm of negotiation of not only the common meaning of the sign but also the meaning making consequences. If we look again on mental diseases, a lot of them imply a self-destructionist component when persons cut themselves for example. In the BuzzFeed video (2015) on the semicolon project, one person explains that in her childhood it was easier to talk in this symbol (cutting) rather than talking normally to her family. The cutting becomes therefore a symbol for the significant other (family, friends, teacher) that something is wrong with the person which opens up the realm of negotiation. The teacher or the friend then might confront the person cutting himself/herself discussing what could happen and the consequences if she/he continues such as “one day you cut yourself to death.”

If we look at the Kästner example, the act of the *Bücherverbrennung* becomes a sign (better symbol) for him and other important authors, too. The socially guided meaning of the Nazis (of their *Gegenstände* or books) was the total exclusion of the authors as well as the consequences if they continue with their *regime-critique*. I agree with Valsiner (2014) that the power of the Nazi propaganda lies in its semiotic mediation. The socially guided meaning and interpretation of symbols were initiated through a lot of semiotic means as we see for example in the *Reichspalastrede* of Hitler. As we know from historians (O’Shaughnessy 2016; Welch 2014) the choice of the hall, the choice of words, the choice

of gestures, the choice of music, and the manner how people line up were never arbitrary but guided by the premise of winning the people's conviction by all means necessary. However, coming back to the Kästner example the sign of the *Bücherverbrennung* becomes then a symbol of life <> death or being <> non-being for Kästner as well as the others threatening these novelists, scientists, and artists if they dare to rebel—and therefore to negotiate or co-construct the meaning making of the sign—against the *Bücherverbrennung* and their exclusion. Complex human phenomena come always with their opposites, and it is the human being in the egophenomenological perspective of Lipps that is thrown into that tension to overcome it or to get stuck in it (Valsiner 2007, 2014, 2019). Rollo May (1981) as psychological existentialist describes that human thrownness into united opposites (as well as Valsiner 2014, 2019) when he refers to the Greek origins of the word *symbol*, *sym* meaning something like joined, together, with and *bollein* meaning to throw. It is the antimonies and its possibilities (consequences) that make the symbol vital as well as the human answer towards it.

But let us take a closer look how some authors dealt with the tension of life <> death, being <> non-being during the Nazi time. How did Kästner deal with that tension? Kästner did not emigrate even if he had the opportunity to go to Switzerland. However, as Reich-Ranicki explains in his interview with Voß (2002), Kästner did not want to choose life in Switzerland because he had a close relation to his mother, to Dresden and Berlin. It is especially these close relations towards an unabandonable *Heimat* (home) that made him stay even in the *Bombengewitter* (storm of bombs) in Berlin. In an act of overcoming that tension and justifying for himself and maybe others his inner emigration honoris causa (Reich-Ranicki and Voß 2002), he wrote the following poem indicating how important a personal and geographical *Heimat* (as a semiotic tool) can be for a person:

Ich bin ein Deutscher aus Dresden in Sachsen.  
 Mich läßt die Heimat nicht fort.  
 Ich bin wie ein Baum, der – in Deutschland gewachsen –  
 wenn's sein muss, in Deutschland verdorrt. (Kästner in Doderer 2004, p. 18)

I am a German, from Dresden in Saxony.  
 My heimat does not let me flee.  
 I am like a tree who – grown in Germany –  
 if it has to, wither here.

Later Kästner did also explain that someone must have been present during that time to observe and to witness which resulted in later published diary entries (Kästner in Hanuschek et al. 2018) of 1941–1945. In both examples Kästner externalized his inner world for himself and for others which resulted in semiotic realizations in this *dinglich-realen* world or we can also say semiosphere<sup>5</sup> allowing other people to feel into or grasp the sign, internalize it, compare it with their interpretation, and lived life, leading into an actualized *Erkenntnis* or synthesis of the ideal I which then they transport again in the semiosphere or in the *dinglich-realen* world (on internalization and externalization see Valsiner 2014, 2019). Again, coming back to Kästner's life, he did also publish poems and books in the Atrium publishing house in Switzerland during the Nazi time. Therefore, let

<sup>5</sup> The concept of semiosphere can be defined as semiotic space following Lotman 1990 which makes language at first possible and which is heterogeneous in its nature because of the "holistic context of human living" (Valsiner 2014, p. 43).

us take a closer look at another poem of Kästner or two verses of his famous *Eisenbahngleichnis/the railway allegory* published 1936 (first and last verses):

1 Wir sitzen alle im gleichen Zug.  
und reisen quer durch die Zeit.  
Wir sehen hinaus. Wir sahen genug.  
Wir fahren alle im gleichen Zug.

7 Wir reisen alle im gleichen Zug.  
zur Gegenwart in spe.  
Wir sehen hinaus. Wir sahen genug.  
Wir sitzen alle im gleichen Zug.  
und viele im falschen Coupé. (Kästner in Reich-Ranicki 2012, pp. 211–212)

Sitting all in the train.  
we travel across the time.  
Looking off the train, we've seen enough.  
All we travel in the same train.  
Travelling all in the train.  
towards the present time to come.  
Looking off the train, we've seen enough.  
All we travel in the same train.  
and many in the wrong coupé.

Reich-Ranicki<sup>6</sup> explains in his interview with Voß (2002) that he met a person in the *Warschauer ghetto* having had the volume of poems with this particular poem included. He wanted to buy it, but the other did not want to sell it. Therefore, his later wife took the volume of poems and wrote it off. This and other poems of Kästner were an important symbol for Reich-Ranicki of another Germany in a time where such poems were actually kept apart from the German citizens, and in hard, depressing times Reich-Ranicki and his wife could rely on it (Reich-Ranicki and Voß 2002). And this is exactly the function and the beauty of semiotics. Human beings flood their periphery with such signs so that they can become central in any given/important moment in the future to better overcome some sort of tension (Valsiner 2019) as we could also see in the semicolon project. The tattoo as a semiotic tool helps the person to feel closer to himself/herself or in other words to feel home. When I do doubt that better times will come, these signs can become helpful to overcome a hopelessness or difficult time. Later on, after WWII Reich-Ranicki met Kästner and showed him his special volume that he read in the ghetto, and Kästner was moved to tears (Reich-Ranicki and Voß 2002). This shows especially the power of signs, how they guide human meaning making in tense, explosive situations, how they can become consolation and hope even in the darkest hour of history, and how it connects human beings psychologically, even if not physically present. Kästner chose to stay in Germany, to endure in the first years an occupational ban, to be with his mother, to be with his *Heimat* such as Dresden and to endure the *Bombengewitter* in Berlin in order to witness the time of 1941–1945. And this choice could have possibly ended in his death, in a concentration camp or other heavy consequences. But it did not. On the contrary the *Bücherverbrennung* was not his death, he

<sup>6</sup> Reich-Ranicki was the most famous literary critic in Germany in the second half of the twentieth century, having survived the *Warschauer ghetto*, whereas his parents were killed in the Treblinka concentration camp. To the question whether he has a particular home, Reich-Ranicki (2011) explains that he made the literature his home including the special affective attachment to it.

fought against it, wrote poems against the Nazis published in Switzerland but having been read in the *Warschauer* ghetto, too. And in his negotiation of life <> death which resulted into several poems, he did not only overcome partially his inner tension with the Nazis and the *Bücherverbrennung* but he also helped others within their tension of life <> death. The example shows that within our ideal I or our inner psyche, we are all free and that we can negotiate the realization of that particular freedom no matter how strong a counter social guidance emerges and wants to limit us. It only depends on the consequences, the responsibility we want to take towards this realization of freedom (May 1969/2007, 1981).

However, in order to get the full range of negotiation within the tension of life <> death, we must consider a second example. It is the example of another author—Stefan Zweig—who dealt with the tension differently. Stefan Zweig took his life 1942 after several years of exile in Brasilia. He wrote the following in his suicide note:

Mit jedem Tage habe ich dies Land [Brasilien] mehr lieben gelernt und nirgends hätte ich mir mein Leben lieber vom Grunde aus neu aufgebaut, nachdem die Welt meiner eigenen Sprache für mich untergegangen ist und meine geistige Heimat Europa sich selber vernichtet. Aber nach dem sechzigsten Jahre bedürfte es besonderer Kräfte um noch einmal völlig neu zu beginnen. Und die meinen sind durch die langen Jahre heimatlosen Wanderns erschöpft. (Stefan Zweig 1942, p. 1)

With every day, I have come to love that country [Brasilia] more and more and I could not have imagined to build up a new life elsewhere after my world of my speech has come to an end and my ideal home as well. After my 60 years, it would require particular forces to start from scratch. And my forces are – after many years of restless wandering around – exhausted.

Zweig in contrast to Thomas Mann with his famous sentence *where I am is Germany* was not able to turn his inner world in a Gegenstand in an outer world in order to take a new stance towards it if we analyze the suicide letter with the phenomenological perspective of Lipps. Modern mindfulness therapists would say that he could not separate himself from his thoughts. Because he was not able to extract the Gegenstand of his inner world and to eventually discuss it with other perspectives to actualize several ideal I realizations, he took his life. He put his whole being into the real world and interpreted it as identical with the real I. The Nazis did only block the *Vergegenständlichung* or externalization of his positions, perspectives, and thoughts. But as discussed in the Kästner example, they could not block his ideal I which allows negotiation to take place between occupational ban <> non-occupational ban or life <> death.<sup>7</sup> The psychic and literary success of authors

<sup>7</sup> One reviewer asked the important question—and I highly appreciated that question—if not finding and creating semiotic material to deal with an unbearable Umwelt is a *personal failure*. This is a complex question and I fear that I cannot answer it, fully. However, we know that Stefan Zweig did publish a book about his view of Brasilia in 1941 which did not meet the expectations of the critiques because it was de-constructing the country in a land of dreams for

Zweig (Rüb 2017). We also know that in the last months before his death, he and his wife have been mostly lonely. The connection to their old world was almost ultimately lost. Thomas Mann was cheerfully welcomed in America, lived in one of the best neighborhoods and worked with intellectuals like Adorno, e.g., on his famous novel *Dr. Faustus* and was keeping up his connection to Europe and Germany through his radio show. I think these are important conditions to understand why authors like Zweig and Mann did chose different life decisions. The acknowledgement of my *Meinsein* or its denial is crucial, here. Eventually, Zweig's decision would have been different if long-standing companions had helped him to establish such an enduring and impacting connection despite the distance.

such as Kästner and Thomas Mann during the Nazi time lies in the egophenomenological stance they could take towards their destiny (see parallels in May 1981) and their semiotic tools they created; meanwhile such as the *Heimat* for Kästner and for Mann a sort of mission to represent a specific German era as Reich-Ranicki and Voß (2002) interpreted it. In short, Thomas Mann<sup>8</sup> and Kästner produced important semiotic material for others and themselves even if their world of speech came to an end. Because they were able to turn their inner world constantly into an outer world—no matter where they have been—they were able to reach others and themselves in the existential negotiation of life and death. By this example I would like to point out that it is possible to develop a sort of *daseinssemiosis*.<sup>9</sup> For sure, liminality/the in-betweenness of the human being in life <> death, freedom <> destiny, contact <> isolation, and love <> hate is hard to endure and tolerate. But it is possible and the source of creativity and vital living (May 1981; Schneider 2019). In my opinion being is not thrownness into nothingness as some existentialist would suggest but thrownness into an in-betweenness where angst, ambivalence, and uncertainty waits for us. And we need to confront those united opposites; we need to deal with them because they constitute our humanness (Schneider 2019; Schneider and Krug 2010; Valsiner 2014). We cannot solve them ad infinitum, but we can deal with them in the best way we can. This requires then the creation of semiotic tools helping us to breathe under the continuously challenging in-betweenness. If we confront the opposites, then we must be creative (May 1981) by throwing ourselves in this united polarity and wonder what happens while being active. Nothing else than that did Kästner and he not only survived but lived and provided important semiotic material for the significant other.

## Conclusion

Figure 3 is an actualized version of the Neo-Sternian model of Valsiner (2014, p. 66). The figure should help in summing up the most important material of the present paper:

I With our inner psyche (ideal I) we are turning towards the outer world and are acting upon Gegenstände. We create them anew, for us. We do not create the sunshine, but in experiencing the sunshine, we create for example the searing sun. It is by this act, that we turn our meaning making of our inner world experiencing the outer world towards the outer world (through bodily reactions including language). We externalize something that cannot be seen and does not exist, before.

II In the relation towards the Gegenstand, I can experience myself relating to it (*Ich-Erlebnis*). I can become aware of the stance or perspective (Rommetveit 1992) I take towards it. I can extract that stance from my inner world, externalize it, and make it a Gegenstand, so that I can act upon a part of myself. The significant other is

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Mann did the radio show *Deutsche Hörer!* speaking from his exile (USA) to the German citizens through the BBC channel in London attacking continuously Hitler and his paladins.

<sup>9</sup> Daseinssemiosis can be understood partially in tradition of existential psychology e.g. of Holzhey-Kunz (2019) or Craig and Kastrinidis (2019) following Heidegger (1927/2001) with the definition of the human being as onto-ontological. This means that in our everyday human conduct conflicts, suffering, daydreaming, and so on must be understood in relation to the studied human being and his relation to life between his unfolding past and the anticipation of his unknown but unfolding future. Daseinssemiosis enlarges this perspective by stating out that humans produce important semiotic material to deal with these conflicts or suffering in order to breathe or cope with the tensions of life.

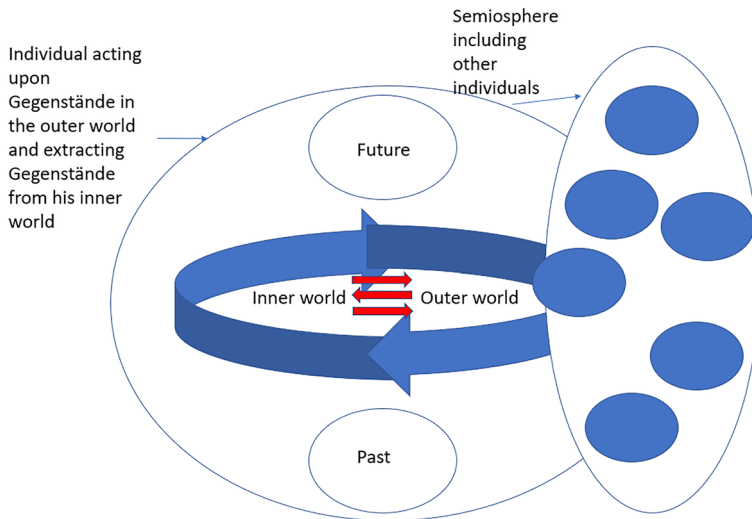


Fig. 3 Lipps phenomenological Gegenstand's cycle

indispensable for that. In me experiencing the disgust towards an event such as the book burning while others cherish it, I become aware of that I.

III Through *Einfühlung*, others can realize through my bodily reactions or language that I have come to a particular meaning making pattern which makes me feel the way I turn myself to the outer world. This makes language or introspection necessary, in order—for me or for them—to contradict, to rebel against the meaning making, to suggest an alternative one and to externalize it in the *dinglich-realen* world, e.g., often through some sort of language. By that I can develop, grow, cultivate my ideal I, and help others to grow by their own means. By that we move forwards. It is like chalk and a board. However, I must be able to understand what is written down by the chalk of the other in order to take my chalk and to cross something out of the other or write something different down. Understanding the significant other first by *Einfühlung* and then by introspection is key for that.

IV Because we must externalize our meaning making to move forwards and to feel home, cultural semiotics becomes the ultimate link to Lipps phenomenology. Semiotics brings people psychologically together even if they have not seen each other physically. The glimpse into the psyche of the other through semiotic mediation is necessary to cause the deepest human emotions. Revealing a total stranger your semicolon tattoo or an important poem volume (*Meinsein*) even if we have never met the person face-to-face shows how we surround ourselves with externalized affective meaning making that helps us to anticipate tension in the unknown future. These signs help us to deal with the in-betweenness of ourselves in life <> death, freedom <> destiny, and contact <> isolation, among many others where signs are necessary means to feel closer to ourselves and closer to other people which we can stimulate to approach us by these signs, too.

V This is exactly the function of *daseinssemiosis* which we need to develop: We cannot solve the great mystery of Being. We can only accept it, confront it, challenge it, and look for our stance towards it. Temporarily we are able to breathe under the in-betweenness by throwing ourselves in these united polarities rather than hiding and by being active through the creation of semiotic material rather than apathetic. Even in the darkest hour of being

determined by historical or personal constraints, we can negotiate our answer toward this liminality by signs (symbols) not only to survive but to live with the significant other and to move with him/her forwards finding moments of realizing ourselves into the other, into ourselves and into life in general. The paper as semiotic tool is nothing else than the try to tell a personal/subjective experienced truth and—here I hold it with the famous German novelist Alfred Andersch (2006, p. 54)—that this personal truth, if true and strong enough, is always contributing something for other people who look for their genuine truth and who stumble in this world trying to make sense of it and their lives. Daseinssemiosis as a new study arena can spread light upon the dynamic of these personal truths turning into semiotic material and back to the people. In the end, life is always realized *Dasein*.

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**Conflict of Interest** The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval** The article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by the author.

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