

Cultural Psychologies and New General Psychology: What has been learned in the past five years?

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ABSTRACT. The “Aalborg Tradition” in cultural psychology that has rapidly developed since 2013 has produced specific theoretical advancements that feed into the development of a new general science of the human *ways of being* (as charted out in the “Yokohama Manifesto” of 2016). A number of theoretical advancements of the past years—linked with the Niels Bohr Lecture series—are important to develop further: imagination processes between past and future deliberations, search for structural form that characterize affective phenomena, and memory processes as acts of constructive confabulation. These constitute the core of creativity in human everyday lives. At the same time advancement of new ideas in cultural psychologies has been slow and uneven—together with glimpses of innovative prospects one can observe stumbling on the same spot with rhetoric calls for innovation (displaced progress). On the positive side, three universal principles—*normativity*, *liminality*, and *resistance*—are proposed as the cornerstones for general human psychology as the main contribution of cultural psychologies to science.

*Babette’s Feast*¹—as I call the societal experiment of internationalizing psychology in Denmark by importing an international network of cultural psychologists to the peaceful and entrepreneurial small town of Aalborg—is over. Or—I hope it turns into a new form in its existence within Danish and general European institutions of higher learning that will practically prove the sustainability and further advancement of the ideas that have been produced in these years.

This task is not easy—the Worldwide system of higher education is currently transforming universities from being the cradle of makers of new knowledge to efficient factories of granting degrees and certificates of having successfully passed prescribed *curriculae* (Valsiner, Lutseko and Antoniouk, 2018). Under the neoliberal rhetoric of “efficiency” and “accountability” it is rather difficult to germinate and cultivate new theoretical perspectives that may change our basic understanding of the World but not necessarily alter the current social and economic practices of the

¹ *Babette’s Feast* (*Babettes gæstebud*) is a 1958 Danish short story by Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen) which is internationally known by the movie version in 1987 by Gabriel Axel. The film won the Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film in 1987.

everyday lives. We aspire to be *makers of new knowledge*—but may end up becoming *fulfillers of pre-set tasks*—albeit at high level of expertise.

In some sense—our mission was to fulfill a “pre-set task” in the past five years. Only the task was that of *opening* the borders of Danish academic traditions to international collaborations—and thus indeed change the local practices. In these recent years Aalborg has become a hub for cultural psychologists from all over the World—proven by the recurrent yearly enthusiasm of gathering at the Niels Bohr Professorship Lectures and participation in its aftermaths (Wagoner, Chaudhary and Hviid, 2014, 2015; Wagoner, Bresco de Luna and Awad, 2017, Wagoner, Bresco de Luna and Glaveanu, 2018, Wagoner, Bresco da Luna and Zadeh, forthcoming). Yet—enthusiasm by itself is not enough—new ideas are needed to transform the ills of the existing psychology as behavioral science into a new human science—universal in its theory while keeping its focus on particulars of everyday life experiences. If the new fascination with “cultural psychologies” that we can observe coming into vogue in the past two decades is to stay productive, theoretical innovation together with methodological advancement is needed. Construction- rather than critique—is the name of the game.

Looking back to look forward. The present paper is meant to sieve through the ideas that I picked up as productive—stemming from our active and creative atmospheres that the Centre in Aalborg has cultivated for sowing the seeds for new ways of thinking, cultivating their emerging elaborations, and—eventually—discovering the obstacles to their full fruition. The latter discovery of borders—some of which we create ourselves—makes it possible to cross these. It is the personally internalized borders for our thinking creatively about complicated theoretical issues that are the most difficult to pass. When the border-crosser is the same as the border-guard one can see proliferation of declarations for innovation without actually accomplishing it. As I show, our various versions of cultural psychology are not different in this conservative move to create a future for the new interdisciplinary synthesis. Yet there are no external “guidelines” for how this could happen—rather it is a creative act of picking up promising lines of thinking once one stumbles into the “mess” of phenomena and approximate general ideas (Tanggaard and Brinkmann, 2018). Science is semi-blind—as it is creating new clarities of visions. In order to see, one needs to imagine—but in order to imagine, one needs to see.

The Mereological opportunity. Back in 2013, in my reply to the commentators (Valsiner, 2014b, pp. 187-189), I resisted the discussion of mereological *fallacies* (failing to see the whole while describing its parts) and suggested investigating mereological *opportunities* instead. This suggestion was made to guide our theoretical discourse towards looking at the processes of transformation of wholes by incorporating (and dis-corporating) new parts into them². This amounts to re-

² More precisely:

“...can such [mereological] fallacies be turned from vice to virtue? Can a dynamic re-alignment of parts within wholes (or between them) make the wholes resilient? Practices of organ transplants and all kinds of technological devices that substitute and expand our psychological characteristics speak of that. The human being of today cannot be considered a whole without

construction of the affordance systems both on the side of the perceiving and acting organism and its *Umwelt*. Such re-construction—ruled out by James Gibson in his theory of affordances—is centrally crucial for cultural psychology in its various forms³. It would be the action-level equivalent to the notion of confabulation in the memory/creativity domain (Glaveanu and Wagoner, 2016). Constant relating with the environment provides both the need and opportunity to build up psychological means for facing the future—be it relatively stable or filled with ruptures at the next moment. Construction is based on the anticipated variation in the present environmental conditions.

Romantic Roots of Cultural Psychologies

Before psychology was moved on to the platform of mechanistic thinking and dominance of the experimental method applied to self-perception in last two decades of the 19th century (Valsiner, 2012) it was a discipline flexibly uniting insights from philosophy, poetry, music, and ethnology. Already five years ago we addressed the issue of the possible links of cultural psychology with *Naturphilosophie* (Wagoner, Chaudhary and Hviid, 2014) but stopped before the reasonable conclusion that it would be the physics of that philosophical background (exemplified by Hans Christian Ørsted) of the beginning of the 19th century than that of Niels Bohr at the beginning of the 20th that could serve as the basis for a new science of human self-reflexive agency.

The issue goes philosophically into greater depth than the simple question—which kind of physics could psychology emulate? The answer to the latter question is—none. The starting point to the philosophical question is pan-human. For two centuries psychology seems to be lost at the intersection of trust and non-trust in human affect. Not surprisingly this opposition is easily phrased in the contrast between the neoclassical and rational world views—those of Johann W. Goethe and Immanuel Kant.

Most of the sciences in the last two centuries have survived under the stern guidance of Kant's critical mindset—undoubtedly fortified by the many eager disciples of his who filled German philosophy of 19th century with their adoration of the ever-critical Königsberger. The result has been alignment of natural sciences and rational philosophy:

Kant generates for philosophy a legitimated and honorific new place in an intellectual world dominated from now on by natural science. This approach forces human sciences to choose between translating the human soul into

a cellphone, breast implants, and dieting pills. All these are inserts into the ordinary lives of human beings, yet ones that have become parts of the whole" (Valsiner, 2014b, p. 188)

³ I here mostly consider three theoretical systems that belong to the general category of cultural psychology: the Dialogical Self Theory (DST --Hubert Hermans), Social Representations Theory (SRT-- Serge Moscovici) and Cultural Psychology of Semiotic Dynamics (CPSD). These three are linked with concrete conceptual "bridges"—between DST and CPSD ("promoter I-position" relating with "promoter sign") and between SRT and CPSD (hyper-generalized sign fields taking the forms of social representations). The relations of DST and SRT are analyzed in depth in Boulanger (2018) and useful for understanding democracy (Markova, 2018, Saint-Laurent and Glaveanu, 2018, Obradovic, 2018).

the “discursive” knowledge used for any other natural phenomenon or analyzing it transcendentally in the frame of a rational metaphysics. The human should be either materialistically or idealistically redefined. (Cornejo, 2017a, p. 37)

The perspective adhering to Goethe was integrative in spirit. It aligned sciences, arts, and natural philosophy into a unity that had no chance of survival in the industrializing societies of the 19th century. Industrialization brought with it a fascination with the natural sciences rather than the wholeness of relating to nature. Goethe started from the unity of arts, philosophy and sciences of the 18th century. He

...strove for integrating science and by starting from anthropological assumptions other than Kant's. He recovered the Renaissance model of soul, as advanced by Nicholas of Cusa, to propose that true knowledge can only be reached by combining intellectual efforts with “exact sensuous fantasy,” that grants vividness and simplicity to the intellectual statement. (Cornejo, 2017a, p. 37)

The themes that have emerged as central in our cultural psychology—imagination, creativity, context dependency—fit well into the Goethean perspective and have no or minimum place in the Kantian world.

Restoring the anthropological integration attempted two centuries back is a complex matter. Indicating the romantic roots in either poetic instances multiplied (Lehmann, 2015) or in general the *aestheticological* (Klempe and Lehmann-Oliveros, 2017, p. 76) world view as a whole would be only a small step. After making affective processes into the core of cultural psychology (Cornejo, et al, 2018) the task of their analysis becomes even more daunting—if the neo-classicist poetic instants are to be taken seriously:

Goethe's way of thinking demands suspending the epistemological attitude that cleaves subject and object. Calmness, longing, intensity, resolution, and hope are not properties of the reality “out there.” Yet neither are they abstract ideas from the interior projected onto an otherwise neutral reality. The most perfect form of knowledge is, for Goethe, the intuitive perception, a moment where I *feel a wholeness conceptually and vividly*. (Cornejo, 2917b, p. 331, added emphasis)

Of course cultural psychologists of today have no ambitions to emulate the literary creativity of Goethe. Poetic sentiments in the internet age are very different, and science is not reducible to poetry. Yet the primary need to *feel into* the phenomena of investigation are shared between science and poetry.

The Romantic Revolt in psychology continues

Any science that is on the doorstep of moving from the “normal” to “revolutionary” state (in Thomas Kuhn's terms) needs to undergo a romantic revolt of a kind—

damning the “mainstream” while believing in the utopias of the “new science” to come. Cultural psychologies are no exception—since 1990s different versions of it have promised new solutions to interdisciplinary syntheses with anthropology and sociology, not to speak of solving ever-complex practical problems resulting from the ghost that goes around the World these days- “globalization”.

This brings into our consideration two potentially highly disputable themes—that of universality of a science and the focus on the science of human ways of being. Each of these two has been disputed in the past. Delegation of the human sciences into a domain in their own has been popular since Wilhelm Dilthey’s late 19th century introduction of the contrast of explanatory and understanding functions of knowledge (Dilthey, 1927), combined with the misrepresentation of the relations of *nomothetic* and *idiographic* sciences that Wilhelm Windelband originally introduced to overcome the gap (Lamiell, 1998, 2003; see also Valsiner, 2012 for the original complementarity of the nomothetic and idiographic ideas). The contemporary dismissal of the universal nature of human sciences comes from the post-modernist axiomatic denial of the possibility of general knowledge and rich empirical focus on “local knowledge” (Geertz, 1983) in the case of specifically human ways of being. Together with the social imperative for empiricism (psychology is supposed to be an “empirical science”) any search of general principles of specifically human psychological processes is effectively eradicated from the “science of psychology” before it has begun.

This is why cultural psychology—to use Michael Cole’s nice expression—is indeed an “up and coming” discipline. Having (re)emerged in the 1990s at the intersection of developmental science (which looks for universal principles of development—Carré, Hampl & Valsiner, 2017) and cross-cultural psychology (which deals comparatively with empirical evidence of psychological differences in persons from different societies)—fertilized further with cultural and social anthropology, sociology, and history—is in the best liminal position in relation to all of these disciplines to make a fresh effort towards general understanding of the human *psyche* in whichever form or location we might find it. It is a project similar to Spencer’s, Darwin’s, Wallace’s and Kropotkin’s creation of the theories of evolution in the 19th century. Of course, in contrast to the biological specimens that Darwin meticulously collected and analyzed over two decades, cultural-psychological phenomena are dynamic, increasingly variable, and even self-reflexive—all of which complicates the project at its empirical end. It is not variation of stable forms but constant production, maintenance, and demolishing of psychological phenomena that makes it very difficult to discover the general principles that underlie the transient nature of the psychological phenomena. But epistemological difficulties are there to be overcome—not lamented.

The universal nature of context interdependency

The focus on the *universal* nature of psychological knowledge is crucial here. With acceptance of the inevitably context-dependent nature of psychological phenomena, together with the occurrence of these phenomena as unique emergents in irreversible time—we seem to set up theoretically impossible conditions for any generalization. A

solution is actually easy: we can include both the context and the time in the conditions under which general principles make a psychological event possible. This is captured well in the Trajectory Equifinality Approach (Sato, Mori and Valsiner, 2016) where the qualitative unit of analysis of the present movement towards the future calls for re-construction of a bifurcation point in the past in contrast with another one in the imagined future. It is also accomplished in the building of memory accounts while accepting the notion of irreversible time (Brown and Reavey, 2018). At the same time, some static aspects of our concepts lead to confusions when situated in this time frame—the notion of *context* is a good example.

Context as an epistemological border. Sometimes a focus on an important feature of the phenomena turns from the enabling function of that focus into an epistemological barrier that is hard to cross. The case of *context* seems to have made such transformation in the cultural psychologies of recent years. When approached from a meta-theoretical purely formal framework, the context is the basis for existence of the phenomenon (in co-genetic logic—Herbst, 1995). Open systems exist only due to their exchange relations with their environments (contexts)—the two are separable from each other inclusively—allowing the focus not on their ontology (of being) but dynamics of maintenance of the steady state and its possible transformations (development).

However, most of our contemporary psychology is empirical in its starting point, and the notion of context becomes used in various ways, often under the influence of the labelled states of the environment that the person inhabits. Thus we encounter talk about “family context” in contrast to “home context” as if these were different ontological entities. The one who lives through the relations with both—the person—goes out of focus when research questions about “context effects” are posed. Contexts become treated as exclusively separated from one another (e.g. “school” is not “home” and “home” is not “school”), and all of such separated entities are presumed to have an “effect” of some kind—cause something—on the person. The axiomatic notion of open systems is replaced by that of segregated causal “factors” projected into the “contexts” and assumed to push or pull the person without any agentive participation in the making, tolerating, and changing the actual ongoing (not separable) real context from one state to the other. A child who moves from home to school (or vice versa) is not moving from the power sphere of one “context” into another, but transforming one’s own relating with the systematically and relatively stably changing context structure to adjust one’s agentive role across time. Context is one—not many—as it continuously provides the opportunity for the person to live forward (Watzlawik, 2017). A “gap” in the context would mean the end of the person.

Language use is a complex issue in psychology. It is here in the context of talking about context where we can observe the fusion of the common language meaning systems (where “contexts” can be exclusively separated) with the research efforts. In everyday language the notion involves relating:

The creation of a context is a process of defining a semiotic function of pertinentization realized through a continuous and recursive process of delimitation and growth of the complexity of relationships. The term

“pertinence” comes from the Latin “pertinentem” (“to relate”, “to belong”, “to concern”) and is formed by the prefix “pre” and the verb “tenere” (“to hold”, “to contain”, “to possess”). (DeLuca Picone and Freda, 2014, p. 153)

The context “belongs to” the phenomenon as its immediate border. For a cell, its membrane is the context for all that is included. For an organism the skin is the context in similar vein (Nedergaard, 2016). The skin is further “wrapped” into clothing, the clothed person—into some normatively defined situated activity setting, and so on. In that relation there is always some inherent context to the ever-widening scope of the phenomena. Context is the key—but not a causal factor—in human psychology.

Cultural Psychology is General Psychology of the Human Psyche

Cultural psychology in its various versions leads to the establishment of general psychology of a new kind-- looking at universal principles of the ways in which human beings feel, think, act, and reflect upon all of these always concrete events in their ongoing process of intentional and goal-oriented living. Science here faces the unenviable task of generalization based not only on single cases (systems) but on *single instances* in the life courses of these systems (Valsiner, 2015). This is the inevitable constraint that follows from accepting the notion of irreversible time that envelopes all biological, psychological, and social phenomena. The events of my birth, or of my giving this lecture here, or that of the French Revolution of 1789 will never occur again as those did. Their analogues— informed by these events having had happened—will. But these analogues themselves are equally unique single events. There is no escape from the uniqueness of events in the case of irreversible time.

However, on the side of science we look for universal principles. How can this fit with the side of empirical evidence where we have unique moments of socially situated subjectivity that are transient in irreversible time? In addition to this complexity, which is not unique for psychology (in astrophysics the empirical observations of gravitational waves or microparticles is of similar transient kind—to be covered in Lecture II), the human psychological moments can exist from their flux and depart on a trajectory of development into new states. Yet this flux is ordered—by constraining systems (Valsiner, 1987) that set up their possible ranges both in space and time. In the case of open systems—which all psychological systems necessarily are—it is the *amplification* of variability (rather than its *constriction* to an average, or prototype) that is the rule of the game (Maruyama, 1963).

We are charmed and feel lost in front of the enormous variety of phenomena we subsume under “culture”. It is easy to lose track of the need to discover universal principles that underlie all this variability. The universal principles of human psychological science can be discovered on the borders of that amplification in the form of constraining and catalyzing conditions. It is here that we find operating the processes that constantly generate novelty in various forms, striving for difference from a previous state. Human *psyche* is the producer of creativity—big or small.

Three universal principles of the human *psyche*:—normativity, liminality, resistance

The collective work carried out since 2013 within the international networks of cultural psychology centered on Aalborg has identified and elaborated three universal principles by which the human psyche works. These follow from the axiomatic base of specifically human psychology that is grounded in internalized unique meaning-making processes (Salvatore, 2016a, 2016b) that always operate beyond their previous state of being (creativity—Tanggaard, 2014; Glaveanu, 2017) and operate by negotiating the direction of the goals-*creating* (teleogenetic- already in Valsiner, 1987, but in recent cases in Valsiner, 2014a, p. 27; 2014b, p. 191-192) ways of being. *Teleogenesis* as a general property of the human *psyche* creates a field for theoretical pursuits very different from the traditional (ontological) basic assumptions of psychology. All psychological phenomena are in principle in movement from some state to another state—our static “capture” (“measurement”) of them is merely a stationary snapshot of an unknown process that is either happening, or potentially going to happen. Breaking the previous state—innovation—is the name of the game, and teleogenesis leads to the necessary centrality of creative acts in the human psyche. This field “in flux” is nevertheless organized by three general principles—which I dare to claim are cultural universals: normativity, liminality, and resistance.

Basic normativity of the human *psyche*: Beyond the complementarity principle

Back in 2013 we started the discussion about the possible usefulness of Niels Bohr Complementarity Principle in psychology (Brinkmann, 2014, Markova, 2014, Valsiner, 2014a, 2014b). As was clear already then, that principle had not moved effectively into adjacent disciplines—first of all into biology. Could its fate be different in psychology? There were promises—to explain seeming inconsistencies of human conduct through it:

Adherence to the principle of complementarity suggests that in cases of moral ambiguity, we choose some of one course of action and some of the other, in such a way that our combined selection is not self-contradictory, though the totality of practices from which each is drawn are incompatible (Harré, 2014, p. 72)

The universality of moral ambiguity is indeed in tune with context specificity of human conduct—but can it explain it? Do we “jump” between contradictory ethical positions given the circumstances, or is there a process—however rapid—of meaningful enablement of assuming a different orientation?

Physics is a poor scientific model for psychology—despite its being presented so over the last century. Electrons may “jump” between orbits—giving us good reasons to accept Niels Bohr’s notion of complementarity as representing systemic dynamics. Yet none of them sets its own goals to make such “jumps”, nor considers the life-course potential consequences of such actions. Neither do they follow the

norms set up by collectivity of other microparticles, nor follow a designated or self-appointed “leader” in the “jump”. Human beings do all of that—and more⁴. They create historical accounts of such “jumps” that begin to feed forward to the future, and re-construct the narratives by continuous confabulations in the process of remembering (Brown and Reavey, 2018, Wagoner, 2017) which can become linked with acts of creativity (Glaveanu and Wagoner, 2016). Each new “jump” in the confabulated story involves re-positioning of the “agentive jumper” who is *self-intentional*⁵—a characteristic that no physical system can possibly attain. The self-intentionality is constrained by normative structures of societal input that are encoded into the meaning fields of signs and ritualized social practices. Normativity is the universal rule and support system for human conduct:

Ethics based on self-others interdependence permeates all daily thinking, communicating, and acting. It means that humans are mutually engaged with one another rather than treating one another neutrally or objectively in the manner they treat physical objects. They act in order to promote what they consider as good, just, and worthwhile, even if what some humans consider as good, just, and worthwhile, others may judge as misery, injustice, worthlessness, and even terror. (Markova, 2018, p. 321)

Roots of normativity. The notion of normativity of human psychological functions has been around already for a while (Brinkmann, 2004a, 2004b, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2017; Harré, 2002, 2017). It sets human systems apart from any other open systems in the biological world, and becomes a part of the normativity in macro-social domains of forms of government (Moghaddam, 2018a, 2018b) and its transitions via revolutions (Wagoner, Moghaddam and Valsiner, 2018). Within the sociogenetic perspective (Valsiner and van der Veer, 2000) the normativity of the *psyche* is the developmental result of the interiorization processes from the materials available in the social environment—but not reducible to the latter. The normative nature of the *psyche* is a derivate from the macro-social normativity, but not isomorphic with it (Bertau and Karsten, 2018).

Human psychology—done from the starting position of higher psychological processes—is necessarily a version of moral science (Brinkmann, 2003a, 2004b). This claim requires elaboration—it is not the science itself that is “moral” (science based on moral principles—in contrast to physical sciences of no such principles), but it is a *morality-inclusive* science—a universal look at the human *psyche*, accepting

⁴ They also invent various sciences—like psychology. Which then starts to “influence its own subject matter, and this way affect the normative doings that it studies” (Brinkmann, 2016, p. 14). This normative meta-vision sets the stage for any version of indigenous psychology—and all psychologies are indigenous, each in its own way.

⁵ From the beginning of our collective inquiry in Aalborg this characteristic was clear:

“Aside from the feature of *self-inclusion* (recognized already in quantum physics in the form of inevitability of the observer-apparatus-phenomena link), it [the psyche] is also characterized by *self-reflexivity*, and—last but not least—*self-intentionality*. While self-reflexivity can be found in biological systems—the capacity of the immune system to ward off viruses qualifies it as its minimal version, it is the self-intentionality that sets humans apart from the rest of the biological world” (Valsiner, 2014a, p. 14)

that the latter in any of its versions (and in any society, contemporary or ancient) operates on the basis of some—implicit or explicit—culturally constructed moral rules. These rules are both socialized and maintained by implied (“*this is not a paper cup!*”) rather than explicit (“this is not the right kind of cup to be used here”) social rhetorics (Schweder and Much, 1987). Most of the communication about norms takes place through the use of the illocutionary means rather than by explicit messages.

This focus on implicit communication about norms has remained out of consideration in the general psychology that begins from elementary processes and moves upwards to investigate some quasi-high mental functions (cognition, memory) in that move. The formative aspects of the moral rule systems have not been covered in a psychology that—over the past century—has kept science away from accepting the primacy of intentionality, will, and sacrifice as the starting conditions for specifically human actions.

Norms and normativity. While the focus on social norms has a venerable tradition in social psychology (Sherif, 1936), the making it into the universal principle of normativity in general psychology has not. While every social group or collective—big or small—can be claimed to be functional only through social norms, the focus on their construction by persons in relating to other persons in shared environmental setting requires a developmental and constructionist perspective upon these norms. Norms are cultural tools—made possible by sign mediation—that mediate the personal and collective movement towards the immediate future. This was well understood by Muzafer Sherif (1936) whose life course entailed constant transformation of the social orders within which he worked (Dost-Gözkan and Sonmez-Keith, 2015). Normativity is the general process of personal striving towards meaning through setting and maintaining constraint systems upon feeling, thinking, and acting—starting from the presentation of one’s body (Nedergaard et al, 2015) and ending with intentional acts of “Occupy Someplace” (Mahoney et al, 2015) or missionary efforts in any area of human living. Creating new norms leads immediately to the dialogue with these norms as borders between what is and what is not to happen.

The normative systems of societies are multi-layered—which makes them highly resistant to change. This becomes explicit in our discussions of *actualized* democracy (Moghaddam, 2018a, 2018b, Wagoner, Bresco de Luna and Glaveanu, 2018) where the intricacies of the mutual links were scrutinized on the materials of various versions of democracy (Carré, 2018; Louis, Chonu, Achia, Chapman and Rhee, 2018; Power, 2018; Sammut, 2018). There are more versions of democracies (Collier and Levitsky, 1997) than there are independent nation states today in the World. And—more importantly—none of these seems to have reached the actualized state as Moghaddam (2018a) has charted it out. Rather, these are all social projects of *movement towards* such actualization. The processes involved in such movement need not be democratic themselves (Mazur and Neset, 2018, p. 82)—similarly to the “non-democracies” within privately owned economic institutions in Western “liberal democratic” countries. Behind a “democracy” there is some form of “non-democracy”.

The axiomatic notion of social scientists—coming from one or another society of democratic governance—is that all societies strive towards actualization of

democracy. This assumption may be a utopian projection into “the other” (Tileaga, 2018)—even when the latter accept it. Paradoxically, however, the road is difficult—radical changes (revolutions-- Wagoner, Moghaddam and Valsiner, 2018) are proven to lead not to the actualization of democracy but most typically to another form of autocracy. The key feature for actualizing any democracy—capacity to agree to disagree and alternate political power—is a very fragile state that can be easily driven to non-trust. And on top of the actualization of any democracy are the pan-societal values of rights and duties.

The whole hierarchy of social values creates a stable but locally flexible framework for human feeling about one’s ethical nature. Constant innovation in normativity leads to the uncertainty of the concrete norms—are they still in function? Are they demolished? Normativity becomes liminal—and psychology of human beings needs to look at the plasticity (Moghaddam, 2018b) of human ways of being under uncertainty.

The principle of liminality

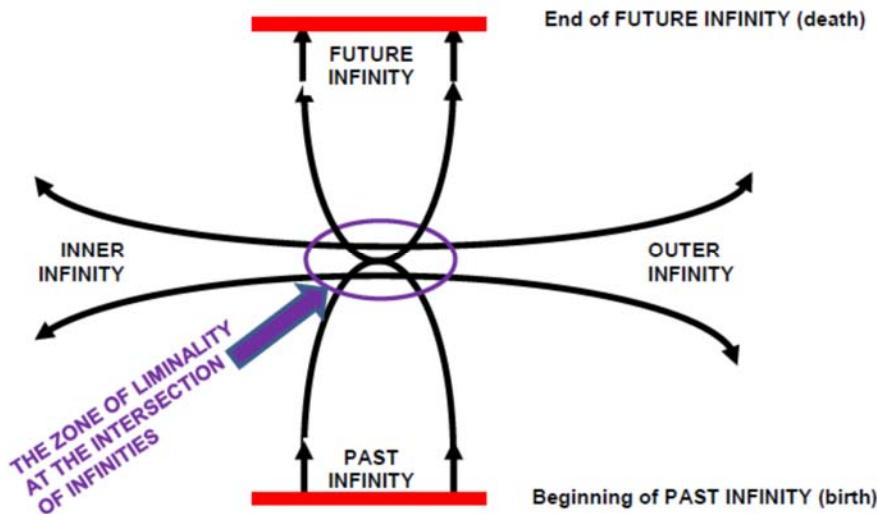
In its classic form, the notion of liminality has been emphasized in anthropology by Victor Turner:

Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions (Turner, 1969, p. 95)

The most important implication from considering human ordinary ways of living as permanently liminal situations leads us to focus on borders (Marsico, 2011, 2016). Borders—like membranes in biological organisms—become the structures “in-between” that unite the separated parts of the whole. Furthermore—the constraints from irreversible time make such liminality unavoidable (Simão, 2015). Core temporality of living sets the stage for such liminality.

We are always and necessarily on the border—between the two infinities (inner<>outer and future<>past)— our movements are in the liminal zone. This general location of the human psyche combines the personological perspective of William Stern (1935) with the axiomatic focus on irreversibility of time (Figure 1). Phenomenologically examples of it occur at every moment in ordinary lives—yet for analysis the use of literary texts may be open to in-depth analysis see Stenner, 2015, p. 130 on re-analysis of Marcel Proust: Moghaddam 2018b on what Jane Austen can tell us about democracy). It is time to consider literary texts as adequate “data sources” for cultural psychology (Brinkmann, 2017; Moghaddam, 2004)

Figure 1. The permanent liminality zone of human *being*



Liminality is thus the normal state of affairs in all open systems, and in human psychological systems it acquires the property of self-reflexivity ("where am I?") together with self-intentionality ("I want to be not here but there").

The current relationship with the *Umwelt* turns into a new form every moment—therefore the certainty of WHAT-IS is constantly confronted with the inevitable uncertainty of WHAT-IF (Hviid and Villadsen, 2018) or in temporal sense WHAT-IS-NOT-YET (but could become to be). This liminality is profound:

...we are not just composed of finite actuality. Human nature always exceeds its (proximal) concrete particularity and weaves it, as it were, with another kind of invisible thread: the infinite possibility of the *not yet* and the *not here*. (Stenner, 2015, p. 138)

We feel we grow older and wish we could stay younger (which we cannot). We feel bored in our work and want to be elsewhere (but we are not). And so on and so forth. Our experience is filled with tension (Marsico and Tateo, 2017) between "being here" and "WANTING to be non-here". The immediacy of experiencing is immediately mingled with mediated escapes from the here-and-now situations—in daily lives or in dreams. Experience is active (Gillespie and Zittoun, 2015, p. 285)—it has different temporalities, trajectories, and is expandable (Zittoun and Gillespie, 2014, p. 40). Experience comes via various inputs—music (Zittoun 2016), theatrical enactments in everyday life (Sampaio and Simão, 2015, Zittoun and Rosenstein, 2018) and under various versions of social guidance (Markova, 2018; Tateo, 2016a).

The general principle of resistance

Resistance is the basic principle of nature—known already in *Naturphilosophie* in late 18th century⁶. Its general structure is simple—instead of unidirectional movement of physical objects that impact upon each other and continue the direction initiated (ball A pushing ball B—Figure 2):

Figure 2. A mechanical account of encounters—one moving object pushes another to move



we have the opposite direction (Figure 3)

Figure 3. An organismic account of encounter—one organism triggers differently oriented reply (counter-action)

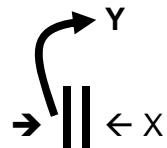


One billiard ball hits another and sets the latter into motion (A stops, B moves on) in contrast to B “rebukes” A and “forces” A to retreat (A “escapes”). The second scenario belongs to the post-physical world of biological organisms starting from the level of viruses. The second scenario entails *borders*, the first—*barriers*. Barriers are obstacles that an active agent can cross and that do not involve resistance. Borders are barriers with inherent counter-active force. A virus can enter the physical body of the organism (crossing a barrier) but be stopped by the border of the immune system rebuking it from damaging the organism.

The concept of resistance is intricately tied to the focus on directionality within the phenomena. It is possible only if a theory focuses on the movement of the phenomena under study (Zittoun and Gillespie, 2015; Gillespie and Zittoun, 2015). Generating new goals leads to some of those assuming the opposite tendency—that of resistance (Chaudhary, Hviid, Marsico and Villadsen, 2016) which is a complementary opposite to that of desire (“They say ‘get X’ and I want X”) as it contrasts with counter-desire: “they say ‘get X’ but I do not want X”. The only difference between desire and resistance is in the direction of the self-intentionality vector attached to the signified object (X).

⁶ Friedrich Schelling (2004/1799) points to the crucial role of resistance of organisms: “A poison acts upon the animal body. To what extent is it a poison, and why is it a poison? Is it a poison in itself? Hardly. For example, smallpox is a poison only once for each person, snake venom is not poisonous for the snake. Poison is not poison at all except to the extent that the body makes it so.” (p.56)

In the human *psyche*, resistance can be seen as giving rise to processes of imagination (Awad, Wagoner, and Glaveanu, 2017). While of course more directly demonstrable in the case of art-under-surveillance where political suppression of different art forms lead to new forms of creativity on behalf of the artists. The idea in general is simple: at the border of movement towards X that is blocked by border (||) that protects X ($\rightarrow || \leftarrow X$), a third direction of movement emerges:



This third direction breaks out of the here-and-now state of the local opposition ($\rightarrow || \leftarrow X$) to the infinite other place—there-and-then. It leads to establishment of new horizons:

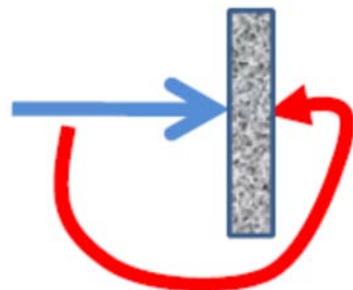
The psychological horizon is the *infinite realm of possibilities ahead of time yet to be semiotized, thus still partially socially unbounded*, that is necessary as a reference point to the person's widening of life space. The horizon/sign is the *specific sign that, once produced, establishes the conditions for the psychological horizon to participate in the production of new psychological phenomena through the co-regulation of psychological processes*. (Tateo, 2014, p. 236)

The co-regulation involved includes two possible trajectories—working out specific conditions for boundary-crossing in the here-and-now tension negotiation, or finding alternate pathways outside of the local world (Schliewe, 2017). We live locally—but are present and free in the global universe of the *psyche*.

The *minimal Gestalt*: *Gegenstand*.

In the human psychological case it takes the form of *Gegenstand*—where the goals-directed human action encounters counter-position that is being set up by the actor oneself. The simple form of such *Gegenstand* structure takes the form depicted in Figure 4 (as it was presented in Valsiner, 2014a, p. 16—Figure 1.4)

Figure 4. The basic structure of *Gegenstand*: direction and counter-direction that sets up the boundary



Gegenstand is the minimal structural unit of the organisms relating with their environments. The basic biological root of it is in the unity of approach and avoidance tendencies as the organism approaches a new object (e.g. potentially edible substance within the environment). In the human case of self-reflexivity and self-intentionality the *Gegenstand* appears in the form of unity of three directed processes ("triple *Gegenstand*")—movement towards a border (1), counter-movement maintaining the border (2) and reflection upon the (1) as relating to (2)— (3) (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Triple *Gegenstand* starting from *teleogenesis* (goal-setting)



Figure 5 is a generalizing extension of the scheme used to analyze the “Case of June”—a young woman’s self-presentation of wartime experiences in a diary (Zittoun and Gillespie, 2015a) in Nedergaard et al (2015). It is a model of the simplest structure of an analytic unit of human signs-mediated and goals-oriented activity. The triple *Gegenstand* entails *teleogenesis*—creating one’s direction of movement towards a newly set goal (“I want X !!!”). The affective starting point (*Gefühlston* as Wilhelm Wundt described it in case of elementary sensations) is transformed into a desire (feeling of the I to want X). In terms of traditional psychology this is the initiating act of “intrinsic motivation”—yet it is situated in the concrete current relationship with the environment (detection of possibility for X).

The *Gegenstand* structures of the human psyche are dynamic—they emerge, function, and become re-organized. Hyper-generalized sign fields—such as *hope* (Winther-Lindqvist, 2017, p. 165) can guide *Gegenstand* re-construction process in the case of uncertainty of dying or living. The existential horizons of teenagers who experience their parents’ demise involves invention of hyper-generalized sign fields to cope with the limited time of “islands of rest” (Winther-Lindqvist, 2016) within the continuous flow of time.

In a more general vein, the notion of irreversible time sets the border of PAST and FUTURE up as a theoretically given, even if experientially unperceivable (Marsico, 2011). As cultural psychology builds on the axiom of irreversible time (Brown and Reavey, 2018; Valsiner, 2014c, 2017), there is inevitably asymmetry between PAST and FUTURE. This asymmetry makes processes of imagination central on the border (PRESENT), and turns the processes of memory into a form of retrospective imagination. The “gap” from the world of certainty to that of non-certainty is overcome by the hyper-generalized notion of *trust*.

For example, a child might be “certain” of his parents’ aid, even if no logical or experiential reason for this conclusion exists. However, when we think more about this relationship, we see that no actual certainty exists, but rather *trust*. The more one examines this relationship, the more evident it is that we are necessarily dealing with individual actors who are free and independent from each other and whose interaction is based on trust, hope, and acting in good faith. The foundation of such hopeful action is the unjustified (and ultimately unjustifiable) state of *belief* that engenders the lived experience of *trust*. (Mazur, 2017, p. 247)

The meaning of trust belongs to the realm of hyper-generalized pleromatic fields that can be labeled (schematized) by one word (“trust”) while it carries a boundless affective relation with it. **Looking outwards—feeling inwards—and acting both ways.** Paul Stenner made what I would consider the most profound comment on the cultural nature of the *psyche*:

We don’t actually know what we are. Lost in the infinite, we volatilize ourselves in imaginary possibilities which never give us the satisfaction of becoming real and making a concrete difference in the here-and-now, and hence we remain unreal. (Stenner, 2015, p. 138)

We move around (Zittoun and Gillespie, 2015, Gillespie and Zittoun, 2015), make sense (Salvatore, 2016b), create our goals, strive towards them, create stories of our efforts after meaning, and arrive at some moments at aesthetic synthesis. We create music (Klempe, 2016, 2018) and its instruments (Boesch 1993), as well as social chaos (Boesch, 2000). We look up at the top contours of the mountain ranges or horizon of the mist of the ocean “out there”. We build walls—leave in these openings—and look out of these (Figure 6⁷)

Figure 6. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe looking out of window of his room in Rome, 1786 (by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein)



The (hyper) generalized property of human ways of creating our own borders, working out ways of crossing them, and building up affectivated (Cornejo, Marsico and Valsiner, 2018) stories about the heroism and danger of such border crossings can be characterized by subjective vitality:

⁷ Of course it is not the back side of Goethe but the presentation of light in this painting that is important in this painting.

Such vitality is felt not from the solitude of my subjective position in front of a distant objective world. At this primordial felt experience, I am holistically feeling the world inside me. As long as I share the same anthropological condition with my fellows, I share with them a common experiencing, a common sense (Cornejo, 2017b, p. 330)

Cornejo calls it *co-phenomenology*. Yet—as Tischbein’s depiction of Goethe indicates—a person can occupy the given position at the given time only at this particular moment in irreversible time. We can feel into Goethe looking out of the window in his Roman apartment, but we cannot “share” his particular view onto via del Corso on that particular day in year 1786. Furthermore—we cannot directly enter into his imagination as it flows ahead during his looking out. If we try—we may end up not co-experiencing but co-poeticizing (Lehmann, 2015) the imaginary beyond the reality of the ordinary street life.

Looking out with Goethe—but from a different position—raises an epistemological question (Watzlawik, 2017): can a researcher study phenomena that one cannot experience directly oneself? That sets strict limits on co-phenomenology—in principle a researcher has to study phenomena one cannot experience oneself since these phenomena are at some distance from the ongoing life trajectory of the researcher. The researcher—differently from Goethe—cannot in principle say that one has studied only what one has directly experienced. That would make autoethnography the only possible method for cultural psychologies—a dangerous call for competition with grand masters of that trade like Feodor Dostoyevsky, James Joyce or Salman Rushdie. It would rule out the study of anybody different from the researcher—and most of our research is based on fascination with phenomena we do not (yet) understand. The researcher is a permanent migrant—an outsider trying to cross the border to the inside, while avoiding it at the same time. Becoming a full insider—“going native”—would eliminate the possibility to see. Seeing needs distance.

Such distancing for understanding of life events happens in the case of any person moving one’s viewpoint to different locations on one’s own life course. Zittoun’s (2018 forthcoming) example of Wilfred Bion’s three accounts of his World War I tank battle at Amiens provides a good example—at different time distances within the personal life trajectory personal experience becomes re-confabulated in three different ways. Similarly, the concerns about cemeteries by displaced persons after Fukushima nuclear plant disaster (Zittoun and Sato, 2018) show the extension of current experience into the symbolic realms. Generalized symbolic extensions beyond the here-and-now settings are a way of coping with the current move towards the future. Re-constructions of the past work as pre-constructions for the future. In other terms—*co-phenomenology is structured by positioning in space and time* (Martin, 2015)—that leads both to the constructive nature of internalization/externalization and of reconstructive memory (see Bartlett—Wagoner, 2017). Co-phenomenology leads to the processes within the Self—as the theoretical advancements of the Dialogical Self Theory have demonstrated over the past two decades (Boulanger, 2017, Hermans, Konopka, Oosterwegel and Zomer, 2017).

Field tensions in the dialogical systems (Marsico and Tateo, 2017) are the engine for development of the Self—both in its weakness and its strength.

Imagination: The creative process on the border

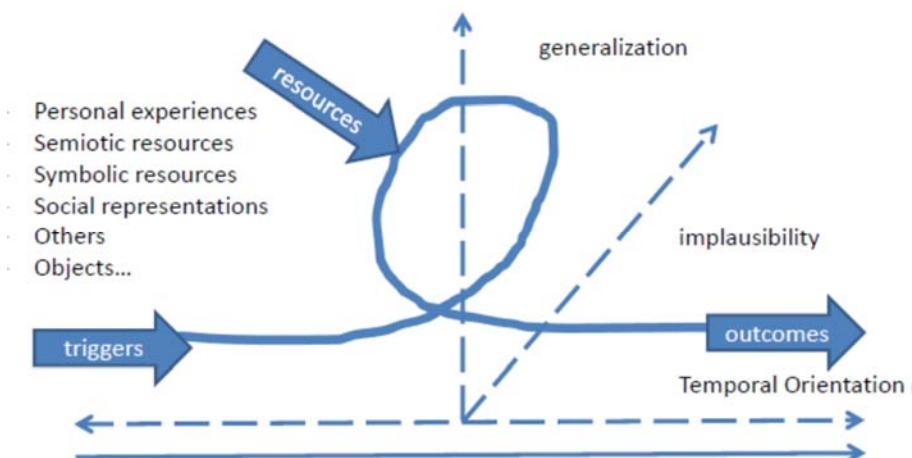
In the new general psychology, imagination occupies the central role in the coordination of thinking processes with the normative value structures of societies.

Imagination for us designates a specific range of semiotic processes, or a specific movement within the stream of consciousness. We have called it the “loop” of imagination (Zittoun, 2017, p. 144)

By focusing on the sign-based (semiotic) process and situating it in the reality of irreversible time, the set of possible models of how imagination works is delimited. It necessarily operates on the border—the tension field between the past and the (not yet known) future (Marsico and Tateo, 2017). It introduces semiotic discontinuity into the flow of experiencing—signs help to punctuate the experience creating “islands of stability” where the experiencer feels the flow of time is suspended. It is—of course—an illusion, but one that the experiencer desires to stabilize one’s life world. We need illusory stability to live with the flow of experience.

The Loop Model (Figure 7) illustrates the process of linking cultural resources with he triggers of imagination. The critical notion is the move to generalization while maintaining the plausibility<> non-plausibility border.

Figure 7. The Loop Model (Zittoun)



The Loop presents constant tension between the immediacy of experience and distancing. Generalized and abstracted knowledge becomes insertable into the new immediacy of unfolding experience. The whole range of sign types are used here—operating in-between the schematizing and pleromatizing kinds. Music (Klempe, 2018; Zittoun, 2016) theatrical performance (Sampaio and Simão, 2015; Zittoun and

Rosenstein, 2018) and even temporarily created souvenirs (“rocks”—Gillespie and Zittoun, 2017) accomplish these functions. Experiencing wholes of scenes—of nature and especially of ruins—accomplishes this task as well:

...ruins both interrupt, at least momentarily, our quest for dominance and transcendence and reveal the fundamental unity between human beings and their environment and nature. *Thus, while buildings may be seen as the culmination of the spirit and will, ruins act to decenter human will and consciousness from their central positions.* In this sense ruins and the passivity involved in their emergence can be contrasted with memorials that serve to retrieve, establish, and create a static representation of the past. (Beckstead, 2017, p. 134, added emphasis)

Since 18th century European landscape painters have started to depict ruins – and art lovers started to appreciate them. The decay becomes experientially meaningful.

Not surprisingly it is the domain of imagination that is also the target of social regulation. Various forms of restrictions on depicting images— mostly human—have led to numerous outbursts of iconoclastic vandalism over the past two millennia. When political forces favor change previous images of social presentation are “doctored” to erase the traces of the “fallen villains” (e.g. Carretero, 2018—the disappearance of the image of Leon Trotsky from Soviet depictions of Lenin’s speaking). On the other side—“training” in the use of prescribed images guide persons towards streamlining one’s imagination:

It is only when free imagination is substituted by *enforced imitation and well-controlled images, and when humans no longer recognize this substitution, that humanity becomes degraded.* Under such circumstances imitation and well-controlled images become celebrated as being scientific or artistic and even portrayed as a revolution. Such images, disconnected from the capacity to imagine, are no more than passive imitations and reproductions. These substitutions may be imposed by dictatorships, or it could be imposed, sometimes slowly without being noticed, by bureaucratization and technization. (Markova, 2018, p. 339, added emphases)

As Markova emphasizes-- humans may accept voluntarily the substitution of the open imagination by the normative use of socially controlled images and *treat those as if these were their own free creations.* This is the birthplace of normativity— the “Janet-Vygotsky Law” that ontogenetically social embeddedness is the root of personal experiences. This explains the care taken by social institutions to manipulate the kinds of images allowed as inputs into the lives of ordinary human beings.

Negotiating imagination happens also in scientific creativity:

Uniquely new understandings, appropriate to the circumstances of their occurrence, are continually created within that flow of intra-activity— understandings which we cannot, as individuals, be said to have caused. They just happen, they emerge, and the tangled nature of the process of

their emergent production cannot easily be untangled. This is because the components or units into which they would need to be analyzed are determined by those within the unfolding process according to the contingencies of the moment (Shotter, 2017, p. 209, added emphasis)

The ones who “determine the contingencies” set the stage for whole fields of research to either be very productive in quantitative terms but without qualitative breakthroughs. Often it is through prescription of “right kinds” of methods that such streamlining of scientific imagination takes place.

Slow transformations in theory: a retrospect on my own strivings

Looking back at what has happened in our academic endeavours over the past five years is actually a sobering experience. Despite the multitude of collective activities—workshops, summer- and winter schools, visits to many places over the World and receiving visitors from even more places—the theoretical advancements in our various versions of cultural psychology have been slow. We produce many nice words, discover many interesting phenomena that have not been in the focus for psychology, but generalized abstract explanatory systems are slow to emerge.

One of the reasons for such slow innovation is ideological—the very need for such abstractions could be axiomatically dismissed. If science is part of everyday life (Chimirri, 2015) and is hailed to stay so for the sake of non-alienation from the phenomena, search for such abstract models would be counterproductive. It is just enough to repeat a particular (even if very true) catch-phrase (e.g., “every human action is creative”) to find a convenient framework for conducting zillions of very interesting empirical investigations into the creativity of everyday life—starting from setting up wake-up calls in the morning to inventions for making oneself asleep after a whole day in busy innovating in the office. The description of the everyday phenomena gains a new halo—but have we learned much from it, beyond the new impetus for trying to look further into the phenomena.

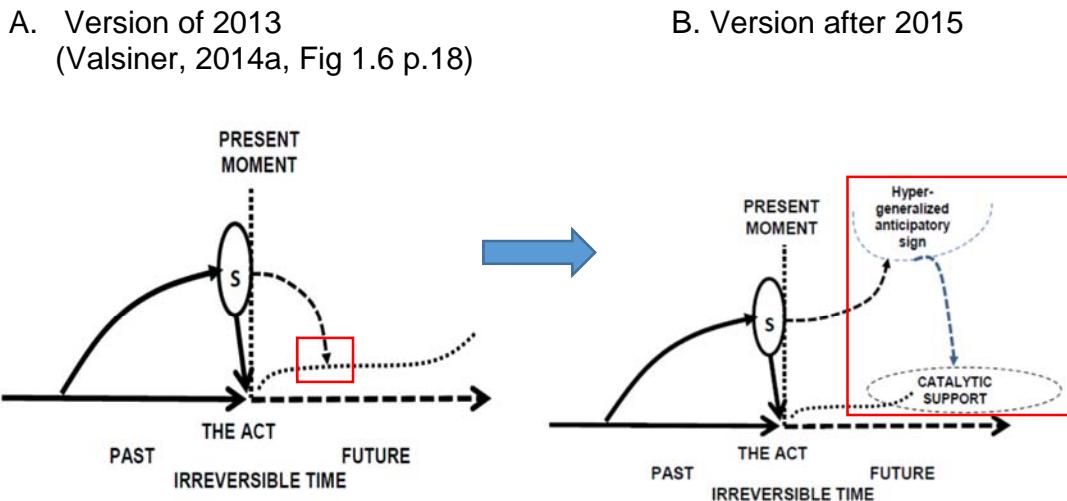
An example of such appealing but limiting catch-phrase is “the Mind is Social!” It came into wide use in the 1980s when the sociogenetic perspectives of Lev Vygotsky, George Herbert Mead, and others came into the attention of the social scientists. It seemed—then—a slogan that would nicely distinguish the emerging foci on cultural psychology from the overwhelming dominance of cognitive science. In our effort to trace the history of the sociogenetic perspective to the pre-World War I era (Valsiner and van der Veer, 2000) we discovered that this slogan was widely used in psychology and sociology at the time. Most of its users never developed elaborate theories of how the mind operates as social. Some did—George Herbert Mead needed another three decades to spell out the intricacies of his theory—and failed to complete it. So while enabling the scholarly activities of many earnestly interested investigators, such slogans can have the effect of blocking the elaboration of exactly that very theoretical direction that they open for empirical inquiries.

Detecting innovation through diagrams

Better than tracing the history of words that are tentatively brought to capture a complex phenomenon it is the investigation into scientific diagrams that more directly indicates steps to new views (Stjernfelt, 2010). Detailed comparisons of emerging diagrammatic representations of theoretical notions may tell us more about both advancements and blockages in our understanding.

One of the abstract innovative claims made in the Cultural Psychology of Semiotic Dynamics is the notion that signs, constructed in the flow of ongoing experience, have double functions—to regulate the here-and-now experience by providing it some form, and to project its emerged meaning to the indefinite future to prepare for encountering similar settings, there-and-then.

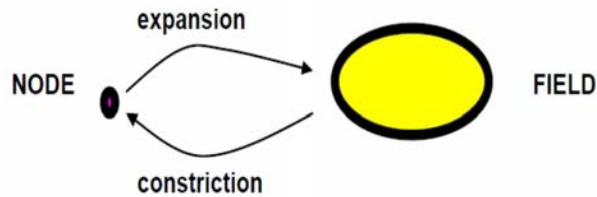
Figure 8. The double function of an emerging sign



The diagrams used to depict that double function undergo a change in the assumptions of what kind of forms (and functions) the future-projected sign would take. In the First Niels Bohr Lecture (2013) it was presented in a point-like form (Figure A), while the depictions after 2015 include recognition that it takes a field-like form as it hyper-generalizes, and operates (when needed) in the function of a catalyst (rather than a direct regulator in the given setting—of the kind depicted as S in Figure 8.A.).

The difference in moving from Figure 8.A. to Figure 8.B. is profound. Both emphasize the double nature (for the PRESENT and for the FUTURE) of the sign (S), but it is only the second diagram that provides elaboration of the assumed nature of such future-focused pre-adaptation. The crucial moment here is the focus on the sign-field (Figure 9). The notion of the dynamics of expansion/constriction relations between points and fields of signs has been in place from early 2000s, of course, but it was not integrated into the model with centrality of irreversible time.

Figure 9. Mutuality of point- and field-like signs (from Valsiner, 2004, p 11)



The use of field-like signs in theoretical presentations allows for abstract referencing of pleromatic generalization processes (Valsiner, 2006).

An epistemologically important feature (beyond the version of 2004 in Figure 9) is the notion of field-like signs with open or unevenly crossable borders⁸. Such signs allow for maintenance of constraints upon the field together with the specified locations of the sign-field structure where transformation of the sign can take place. *Our sign-mediation processes are simultaneously closed and open within the same sign field.* The borders that organize the field determine its potential usability.

Figure 10. The semi-open structure of the borders of a field-like sign (arrows indicate the directions for schematizing and pleromatizing extension directions

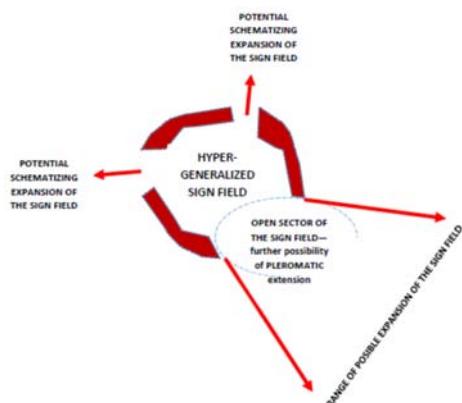


Figure 10 represents the scenario where the same sign-field is differentially open for extensions towards schematization and pleromatizatization in different *directional locations* of the boundary conditions. The boundary is at any moment semi-closed

⁸ Such forward-oriented focus on range of openness was depicted in the notion of Promoter Sign in the context of Dialogical Self Theory (e.g., Valsiner, 2004, Fig 3 p 15), but its depiction included no structure—only the acceptance of a range of possible guiding options.

creating a field that is both circumscribed to cover a particular extent of the meaning and allowing its extensions in multiple—yet specifiable—directions.

General Conclusions: Psychology on the border

Our collective inquiries have set up a possibility to elaborate a new psychology as a universal human science. We can overcome the usual denial of the possibility of such universality—that takes the form “but X is not operating in this way in society Y” by moving from the level of local knowledges to looking at the basic human life conditions that every person in any society encounters. I believe that the combination of the three basic principles—normativity, liminality, and resistance—is sufficient for turning cultural psychology into a new general psychology. That psychology is person-centered but society-linked:

The focus of psychology shall then become the persons involved in the collectively coordinated processes of creating, managing, demolishing and rebuilding themselves and the meaningful world. In this sense, intentionality, agency, and will must come back through the window of the “home of psychology” as they have been overlooked in psychological theorizing. (Tateo, 2017b, p 214)

Psychologists like to think that they are—or at least should be—relevant for “society”. This practical goal calls for careful analysis of which goal orientations within the given society one’s research and practice relates with in the most fitting ways. Jacob Belzen is not shy in warning us of potential complications:

...if psychologists don’t involve in more fundamental questions as what it means to be a human being, they can’t have clue about how to be human, they can’t be—despite the best intentions—of much help in improving the human condition and run the risk of just serving the increasingly dominant market-oriented ideology that cries out from billboards, TVs and computer screens that we should consume as much as possible, that life is fun, that economic growth is necessary, that we can shape our bodies and still live as long as we want. Without realizing it, large parts of psychology are likely to serve contemporary Western hedonistic neoliberalism (Belzen, 2015, p. 95)

Now --as the Niels Bohr Professorship Project ends--we are crossing the threshold to the realities of sustainability of its achievements—and of its failures. Cultural psychology has stepped onto the arena of the study of human *psyche* in full force—but can it create innovation in psychology’s methodology? This is the key question for an “up-and-coming” discipline whose eager participants continue to construct its future. The dangers of its becoming a catchphrase—appealing but empty—are formidable. A discipline can enter the “down and vanishing” direction as many efforts of the past have demonstrated (Valsiner, 2012). Hopefully the utopia of cultural psychology grows into a heterotopia of new general psychology of humans viewing

themselves as humans—rather than over-extended equivalents of rats, pigeons, dogs, or robots. Imagination precedes the making of technology, and of any *Wissenschaft*.

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