

# **Between Perpetrator and Helper**

## **Pathways in Affective Transitions in the Professional Self**



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## Abstract

This thesis is written to analyze the external and internal processes involved in the move from being a individual to the role specified socially as a *professional*. *Becoming* ‘professional’ is an affective as well as a formal transition in the course of one’s life. *Feeling* ‘professional’ is a subjective experience in constant negotiation guided by the affective mind. The title “Between perpetrator and helper” deals with the complex issue of becoming a so-called “professional helper” wherein the term ‘helping’ can be interpreted as insulting or violating personal freedoms if we are looking through the lens of cultural psychology. Authorization is a life transition which entail not only authority but also doubt and fear. Intervening in another human’s life is not without the risk of becoming the violator. Violation and helping are terms that cover interventions with respectively negative and positive outcome. Professionalism is the right and duty to intervene under certain circumstances. *Helping*, however, when viewed from a cultural psychological perspective—is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. In this thesis focus is oriented towards psychology as *a helpers’ science* conducted by human beings, considered both reflexive and affective. The peculiar transformation from an in-experienced student to an experienced psychologist and the unreachable outer infinity of professionalism is here the case. The phenomenon investigated is the dynamic tension between helping/working with people and violating people – helper and perpetrator – which is considered to be present in the profession of psychology, as well as in other social sciences and amongst most social workers. The insecurities uncovered here are well integrated into our cultural systems of education—precisely the reason why I would like to look at psychology as an artistic science. It is suggested that the focus could be shifted from the criteria of providing help, already assuming that the person who is ‘helping’ is at a better and higher position than the individual being ‘helped’, to the process of exploring/standing with/being there for an individual. The innovative notions here are in the thorough investigation of pathways of affective transitions in becoming who you are through a process of constant dialogue with individuals one stands beside.

Chapter 1 set the stage for the investigation of the ambivalent phenomenon of becoming a professional. The idea of this thesis builds upon the general developmental approach and covers the study of unfolding processes while they are unfolding.

Chapter 2 introduces boundaries as the key to understanding the underlying logic of development and introduced in terms of David Herbst's (1976) co-genetic logic. Further, the relation between parts is investigated as a dynamic process (in opposition to a fixed position) and has its starting point in William Stern's (1938) idea of the person-world relation as being inherently tensional.

Chapter 3 introduces the Dialogical Self Theory (DST) in terms of Hubert Hermans (2001; 2003) and suggests an ongoing fluidity of self-regulation positioned by discourse and composed by multiple I-positions recognizing the Self in a self-reflexive dialogue between the Self and the non-Self. The predicates helper, perpetrator and professional is introduced as different I-positions and hence the implications of these has been sought.

Chapter 4 builds further on the co-genetic logic and processes that are on the border, introducing the dialectical directions in psychology. Here, Johan Gottlieb Fichte (1774) (and later Georg Wilhelm Hegel) has brought the dialectical thinking to European philosophy and provided insights into the issue of how novelty emerges while introducing the second negation and furthers the dialectical leap. The aesthetic synthesis is further added to emphasize selective meaning making.

Chapter 5 widens the discussion of the *professional Self* with the overall goal of introducing key implications of the theory presented here. A discussion of humanness is initiated with reflections on a human being as someone capable of being inhumane as well as co-humane in nature. The issue of *trustability* is also addressed and the primary premise of trusting, that a professional will not do, is essential in order to become a professional. This culminates in a discussion about the success of psychology as a *helpers's science* with the current knowledge of the issue of helping and perpetrating.

Chapter 6 presents conclusive remarks and a summary of the central points in this thesis. It is important that the thesis is understood as a stepping stone for further thinking in psychology.

## List of content

Chapter 1 .....	6
Between Perpetrator and Helper: An Introduction.....	6
The Social Role of ‘Helping’ .....	7
The direction of this thesis .....	10
The General Developmental Approach – methodological considerations.....	11
Generalization Through Abduction.....	14
Summary .....	16
Chapter 2 .....	17
Borders – an entry to psychological phenomena .....	17
The importance of borders – the human apprehending the world .....	17
A co-genetic logic .....	18
The process on the border – a constant tension of inner and outer infinities.....	19
Bordering processes – a dynamic perspective elaborated.....	21
Directionality and Resistance in the Border Zone – an introduction to Gegenstandtheorie.....	23
Internalization and externalization – intertwined processes .....	24
Ruptures in trajectory as catalysis of transitions in the self .....	28
Summary .....	29
Chapter 3 .....	30
A Dialogic Perspective.....	30
From Dialogism to Dialogical Self Theory.....	30
The polyphonic metaphor .....	33
Movements in positions <i>and oppositions</i> .....	34
From non-professional to professional .....	35
The role of the body .....	42
Summary .....	46
Chapter 4 .....	47

Dialectic perspectives on development.....	47
A long-lost discipline .....	48
The unity of opposites – a principle.....	49
The second negation as center of dialectic logic.....	49
Aesthetics as the pathway to dynamic dialectic synthesis .....	52
Summary .....	55
Chapter 6 .....	56
Towards Professionalism – a never ending process.....	56
Humaneness .....	56
Trustability .....	59
The art of professionalism.....	62
Summary .....	65
Chapter 7 .....	66
Conclusive remarks: Pathways in Affective Transitions in The professional Self	66
Future-oriented questions and discussions.....	67
References .....	69

# Chapter 1

## Between Perpetrator and Helper: An Introduction

Time flies by and suddenly the 10<sup>th</sup> semester approaches. The reality of yet another *End* strikes which entails thoughts and ideas of what awaits. The Era of being a psychology student seems to end in an arbitrary moment they call an 'Exam' (Eckerdal 2018). Completing education is a peculiar transformation in a life-long learning process where every instant is unique and irreversible in time. The final exam is a singular moment in the present marking the end of being a student simultaneously with marking the beginning of being a professional. In this sense every end is a new beginning and the Era of 'studying' is never-ending in the sense of life-long learning. Ending a formal education in Danish terms is being *udlært* - *skilled*. *Udlært* in direct translation from Danish is *out-learned* meaning 'learned to *master* a certain skill to the *outermost boundary/limit* of it' - in other words 'fully skilled'. Yet being a psychologist cannot be reduced to a title, professional skills or knowledge applied in specific situations, it is more than a role enacted and more than just work. It is an *extension of the Self in the course of time changing the way one relates to oneself and the outer world* (Kullasepp 2014).

Starting from this moment, the official title of being a psychologist counts and the benevolence of its function in society is trusted (Valsiner, 2005). The centrality of *trust* is crucial in any relationship between a person and another, however, is it a *necessary organizational illusion*? A title is amongst other things a label attached to a person. This label gives the person rights and duties to perform in a certain way (Harré 2012) which is interrelated to the acceptance by a community of a certain practice (Foucault 2002) although, a certain action (curing a person or society) conducted by a certain person carrying a certain title (doctor or politician) might have conflicting interests as it has been the case with witch burnings and genocide.

In this sense the Meinongian stance becomes crucial as a starting point. In the early twentieth century he made an effort to explain the *affective* and *subjective* side of the thought processes of judgement namely *assumptions*. To judge, implies that a person believes in something or is convinced of something and that it occupies a certain position within the antithesis of yes and no, affirmation or negation, the psychology of *assumptions* hence is of interest to understand the intentionality and resistance

of human thought and action (Meinong 1983). Alexander Poddiakov shows how the action (help) is interrelated to its counteraction (non-help) in the case of learning anything. What is chosen to be taught by the means of help is the ‘promoted’ while what is not ‘good’ or ‘right’ is inhibited (Poddiakov 2001). It is a paradox but even helping that includes “interpersonal solicitude” and “enlightenment” finds its counterpart in the not so pleasant notions of “perpetrate” and “inhumanity”. When the aim and means is *helping* the results of the help is possibly contradictory and ambivalent. The *intention* to help someone can result in the opposite – which is often the case in missionary, charity, and colonization activities. Further I will make a brief overview of the social role of helping and the ambivalences such heroic efforts might entail.

### **The Social Role of ‘Helping’**

*Help* is in itself a hierarchical and problematic term. ‘Helping’ denotes heroic efforts and the endeavor is praised and rewarded which makes it socially popular, to be a *helper* (Staub 1993). Help is multi-directional and covers ease and comfort as well as guiding, counselling and assisting not to forget aid and rescuing. The issue is, however, is more complex and operates on different levels. What follows is an aim to identify the current state of the process along with highlighting the current precariousness with the purpose of setting the stage of this thesis. Here, main directions of the concept of help within psychological research is presented: 1) helping behavior on different levels (macro, meso, micro) 2) the unequal helper-recipient relation and 3) helping competence.

#### ***“A helping hand” – help on different levels***

Giving ‘a helping hand’ to those in need is a central maxim in most (if not all) human societies. We are taught to be sensitive to others (e.g. classmates, siblings) and that if we fail others may label us as ‘immoral’ (Nadler, 2010). In a very profound review of past research presented by Dovidio, Penner, Piliavin and Schroeder the central place of helping in social life has sought to uncover first, the *psychological mechanisms* that propel helping, second to specify *the situations* under which people are most likely to help and third, the *personal antecedents* of willingness to help others



(Dovidio et al. 2005). The underlying assumption of this research is that helping others is a positive behavior that should be encouraged. The following organization divides the issues in three distinct yet interrelated categories: micro, meso and macro.

*The micro level studies the evolutionary precedents of helping behavior (e.g. reciprocal altruism) and the biological and genetic conditions as well as developmental tendencies and personality traits of helpers (e.g. empathy).*

*The meso level is concerned with when individuals would help (intervene) and why. This includes studies of the decision to help or not help, the self-interest and benefits of helping (including self-image and achievements) socialization experiences, ingroup-outgroup studies, empathetic arousal and affect as motivating prosocial action.*

*The macro level is discussing helping within an institutional and organizational context for volunteering or cooperation.*

What the above shows, is how investigation into pro-social behavior is still growing and expanding in order to enhance our understanding of humans as pro-social beings (or anti-social beings). Instead of the traditional consideration of helping (or perpetuating) as an end point it may be fruitful to conceive a subjective feeling attached to a certain conduct as part of an ongoing process of making sense in a mutual relation with the surroundings and move beyond this to analysis of different levels.

### ***The dark side of helping – consequences for the recipient***

Helping relations are per se unequal relations (Nadler, 2010) and another line of research explores the conditions under which the actions of help was threatening to the recipients' view of themselves as worthwhile and equal social actors and their willingness to seek and receive help. The suggestion is, that because receiving help is associated with lower status and giving help with higher status helping relations can create, maintain, or challenge social hierarchies (Nadler 2002). In the case of assuming another party is in need of help providing this help and assistance with good intentions is often counterproductive on the ground for their independence (Nadler &

Halabi 2010). In addition, Rom Harré provides significant insights on positioning regarding *rights* and *duties*. Within the dynamic relation between persons the underlying assumption of having the right to do something, or a duty to act in a certain way exists. If all parties in a relationship always agree on their rights and duties a conflict of interest would never occur (Davies & Harré 1990; Harré & Gillett 1994). Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

### ***Helping competence***

The role of the professional helper is a liminal role and incorporates the ambivalence of both authority and doubt. Professional help differs in all areas of employment from doctors, car mechanics, nuns to sex workers etc. with each fulfilling expectations of *professional help* of different kinds. With waves of *efficiency* permeating society *helping skills* too are structured in effective models, methods and techniques proved to be *efficient* and hence evidence based (academically justified) in the sense of being *experience*-based with emphasis on the outcome. In this sense help not based on expertise is useless and the result of technical organization and expectations of *helping* is creating the opportunity to fail. Therapeutic skill is an example of a skill expected from a professional psychologist. According to Hill (2014) help is a broad and generic term that “includes the assistance provided by a variety of individuals, such as friends, family, counselors, psychotherapists, and human service providers.” (p. 4). She schematizes psychotherapy as “effective helping” and as skills which must be applied sufficiently in order to be a professional helper. Eric Staub contributes with an additional important insight of helping as a process that changes one’s view of oneself and even endangers one’s own life to save another. In order to help (as in the case of a German helper of Jews during the Second World War) he found that the rescuers had strong beliefs and additionally they had to distance themselves from their own group (Staub 1993). The belief in helping created simultaneously an aversion against the one’s they were helped *from*. What is here important is how the heroic helper risks their own life to help others. The experience of heroism reduced the perceived risk and enhanced the feeling of helping competence.

A cultural psychological understanding shows how the notions of *good* and *bad* performance are psychologically constructed categorizations (Brentano 1902; Meinong

1983) resulting from a process of making sense. The interest is exactly in this process before the state of X is reached.. The evaluation ‘good practice’ and ‘bad practice’ is a negotiation between the self and the other which will be elaborated. The aim of this thesis is to understand the process of learning from failures as a professional in the move between three central positions – professional, helper and perpetrator.

Understanding these processes is essential for any good professional practice—a psychologist “blind” to the possibility of inadvertently harming one’s clients cannot become a good practitioner. In contrast—self-reflexivity into potential dangers of one’s best meant efforts is necessary for life-long learning of the professional.

### **The direction of this thesis**

This thesis does not follow the ordinary separate parts of theory, method, analysis, discussion, etc. instead, this thesis is organized in traditional chapters. This entails paragraphs which are not strictly delimited from each other but intertwined and discussed as an ongoing process and even in other chapters. The analysis and examples will be integrated when it supports the theoretical descriptions and brings a larger understanding. The following chapters will continue further elaboration and discussion of the ideas presented here. These ideas function as a stepping stone for further investigation and is considered a tick in a dynamic **on-going** process. therefore, it hopefully raises more questions even to issues not addressed here.

Contexts change and contexts must always be considered central. Existing as human beings entail mechanisms for rapid transformations – adjusting to new situations incessantly. Some situations are similar and look the same, but all new (in irreversible time). The culture’s influence on the person’s development is both culturally mediated in an infinite sign construction process and results from it at the same time (Valsiner 2014a). Signs are presentations (*Fremstillinger*) where something is made to represent something else for some function yet varies and need to be understood in the life course and concept of irreversible time (as mentioned above). Signs serves the double function of regulating here and now and to send a message to the unknown future. For every new context we as humans attach meaning in a continuous sign-making process called semiosis. The dynamic semiosis “considers the human self to be dialogical in nature and hierarchically regulated through the transient hierarchies of signs” (Valsiner, 2014a, p. 22). Signs are not what we immediately

perceive, but what is instantly interpreted. This leads to the fundamental understanding of the connectedness between the human and the outer world – as two entities being a part of a whole.

The substantive focus in this thesis is on the paradox of *becoming a professional helper* and in this manner the process of *developing a professional Self*. The professional psychologist is regarded as *a helper* but paradoxically at certain moments becomes the opposite – *the perpetrator* (translated from the Danish term *krænker*) – a part of the path between professionalism and non-professionalism. The pathway is hence considered subjective and affective. The continuum from helping to perpetrating entails crossing a border to change the meaning (either way). **This border is not understood as a fixed line but rather as a flexible boundary.** What strikes as interesting for further investigation is the movement on this boundary and its function as *a membrane* and its implications on the professional Self. The idea of the membrane is borrowed from the biological understanding of interrelation between two separated entities in constant dynamic influence on each other.

### **The General Developmental Approach – methodological considerations**

The general developmental approach originates in the 1800's along with thoughts of epigenesis (Gottlieb, Wahlstein, & Lickliter 2007). I will only mention a few, considered, very important insights here. Hans Driesch' theorizing about embryological experiments in the 1890's (how an embryo emerge) is here highlighted as being of great importance. He reached to the conclusion – we also hold today – that individual development is most appropriately viewed as a hierarchically organized system. Driesch had found that a single cell could lead to the creation of a human being so he concluded that each cell must have *the same prospective potency*. This means that every cell has the ability to reach the same endpoints by different routes which he labelled *equifinality* (Gottlieb, Wahlstein & Lickliter 2007). This leads to the axiom that any living organism as an open system has the potential (equipotential) to reach the same endpoint (equifinality) through different developmental pathways. Another very important contributor is Heinz Werner. Werner addresses the importance of differentiation in development to describe the process of establishing a subject's individuality (Werner 1957). In a search for the human regularities he finds that the problem of traditional developmental psychology based on ontogenesis is that of

individual differences and he stresses ‘microgenesis’ as the most promising method to study developmental issues in psychology. Microgenesis is based on the assumption that activity patterns, percepts, and thoughts are not merely products but processes which unfold in terms of a developmental sequence (Werner 1957). James Mark Baldwin is another developmental theorist and he demonstrated thoroughly how human beings are social beings. He used the term of *genetic logic* to designate the psychic processes in which mental development takes place. The core of his idea is the persistent exploration of the environment with the result of creating novelty and hence opens to qualitative transformation of itself in a try and try again experience which in Baldwins terms is *persistent imitation*. Persistent imitation sets the stage for socalled effort, desire and volition (Baldwin 1892; Valsiner 2009). This includes amongst other detailed investigation of adaptation, opposition, and simulation in irreversible time (Baldwin 1915). The last developmental psychologist I will mention here as foundational is Lev Vygotsky. With the zone of proximal development, he pointed to the importance of the future oriented mind – a focus that continues to give us promise today (Valsiner & van der Veer 2014). (Vygotsky 1934). Many other important thinkers could have been emphasized here (amongst others William Stern, Kurt Lewin, John Dewey, Karl Bühler, Jean Piaget) yet this already gives a sense of direction. The general developmental approach is standing on the shoulders of these thinkers and hence not labelled as a new approach though it has returned after decades (Cairns 1986). The general developmental approach is hence the study of unfolding processes rather than prediction or retrospective explanation of an object of investigation.

### ***Starting point***

The starting point is founded in a personal experience of resistance towards transition into the role of a professional psychologist in regard to the doubtful self-evaluation of expertise. This guided a curiosity towards how the feeling of professionalism emerges. The feeling of professionalism is inherently ambivalent and the authoritative role doubtful. Based on the idea that it is impossible and counterproductive to make observations from a strictly objective point the relation between the observer and the observed is embraced. Inspired by George Devereaux the starting point of study is that the observer is in the middle of the process and whatever is observed is

always influenced by the observer's activity of observing (Devereux 1967) in a process similar to what Karl Bühler presented in his Organon Model (for a thorough review see Christensen 2020a).

In Meinongian terms professionalism *subsists* (in contrast to existing objects) and subsisting objects are very important for psychological living (e.g. love, justice, fairness, quality of life) and though they have no physical referents they prove functional (Meinong 1983). These phenomena cannot be measured in ways similar to physical measurement or classical logic. Professionalism as a psychological construct is always contextual and its outcomes are qualitative transformations in the structure as a whole. The core-unit of analysis presented is the movement on the border (direction and its resistance) together with an openness to innovation. With the dialectic orientation the whole is understood as a unity with mutually opposing parts in its structures (Riegel 1975). This all leads to the methodology circle (figure 1.1) in terms of Valsiner (2017).

### ***The methodology circle***

In research it is crucial to stay linked with actual phenomena and real experience (see figure 1.1). Starting from these, meaningful abstractions and theorizing can take place. Methodology is at the center of our knowledge creation and function as a system of generalizing thought to psychology in its unique form. Following the methodology circle, it is not possible to break down the whole into meaningful elements. The parts work only within the methodology circle and cannot be used independently. What is important here is how science (like art) starts from intuition. Hence, I focused on my own experiences, following other published descriptions (Dick, Hausen, Carande, Sawitzki & Tenbrock 2018) regarding transition from student to professional which entail not only fear but also curiosity. The phenomenon is investigated with inspiration of the unique introspection method of the Würzburg School which means an investigation of inner states (self-observation of internal processes) (Christensen, 2020a; Burkart 2018). This method serves to translate the “spontaneous and subjective introspection of everyday life into intersubjective scientifically usable messages” (Burkart 2018 p. 168).

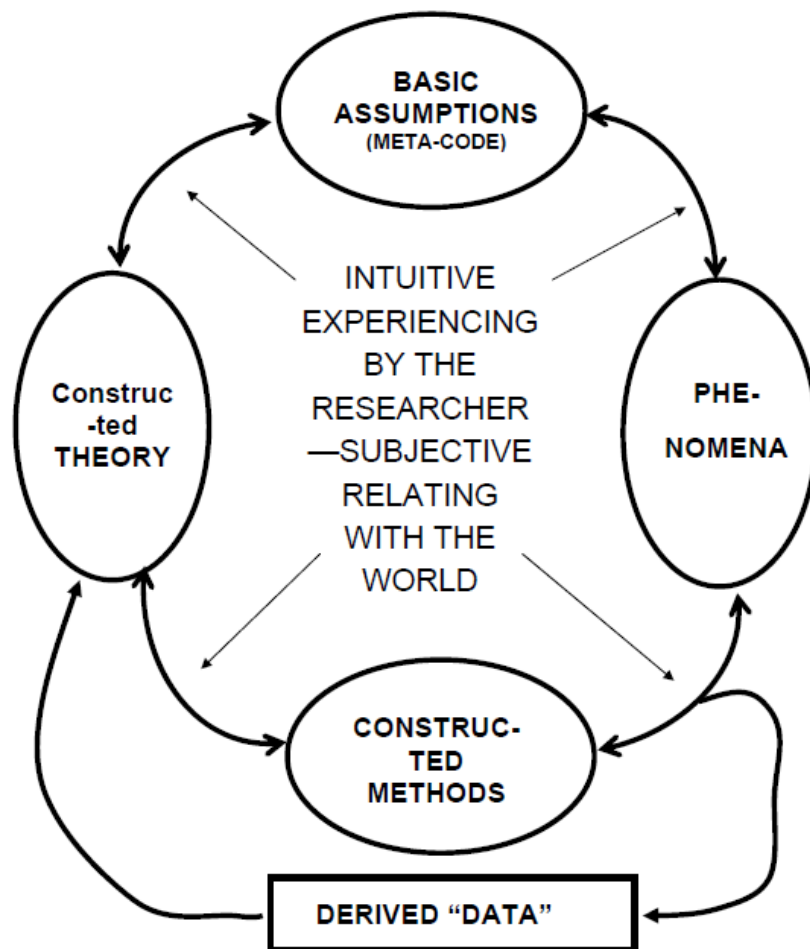


Figure 1.1: Methodology Circle (Valsiner 2017)

### Generalization Through Abduction

One problem with any generalization in social sciences is the situatedness of human action and meaning making. The mind in itself is dynamic, and every phenomenon studied is unique in irreversible time (Toomela & Valsiner 2010) but our general knowledge of it needs to be universal. This seems contradictory and leads further to the understanding, *that we need investigation of the minimum possible unique instance for the maximum generalizability of the knowledge that is available in that instance* (elaborated by Lev Vygotsky who suggested ‘minimal units’ for analysis-- Valsiner & van der Veer 2014). Nevertheless, there is lawfulness expressed in this uniqueness (Salvatore & Valsiner 2010). Time and its irreversibility are hence inevitable and the “recurrence of similar – ‘never the same’ – events can be treated as single instance replication tests for the generalization created previously.” (Valsiner,

2015, p. 240). We should keep in mind here that knowledge, derived through abstraction and generalization is always a construct (Flick 2014). In order to derive at new knowledge, we need what Valsiner (2017) described as abduction:

“the time freed abductive generalization “If it were *Y* then *X* is unsurprising” is made *backward* in irreversible time, while it implies an explanatory relation that becomes applied *forward* in irreversible time – looking for the next similar-to-*X* event to be explained by *Y*. To generalize about generalizations – generalization abstracts a phenomenon in irreversible time into a state where irreversible time vanishes through the abstraction process. This is the mechanism – abstraction – that allows generalizations from single instances to be possible.” (Valsiner, 2017, p. 83, italics in original)

Inevitable abduction happens in irreversible time (unexpected result is explained by some backwards attribution – so A is the explanation to C. Once the  $A \rightarrow C$  abductive link is made it is abstracted out of the irreversible time context of past-present-future. In a generalized statement there is no time left. It becomes a time-free ontological statement. Yet the process of making sense of the sufferings is the abductive move in practical psychology.

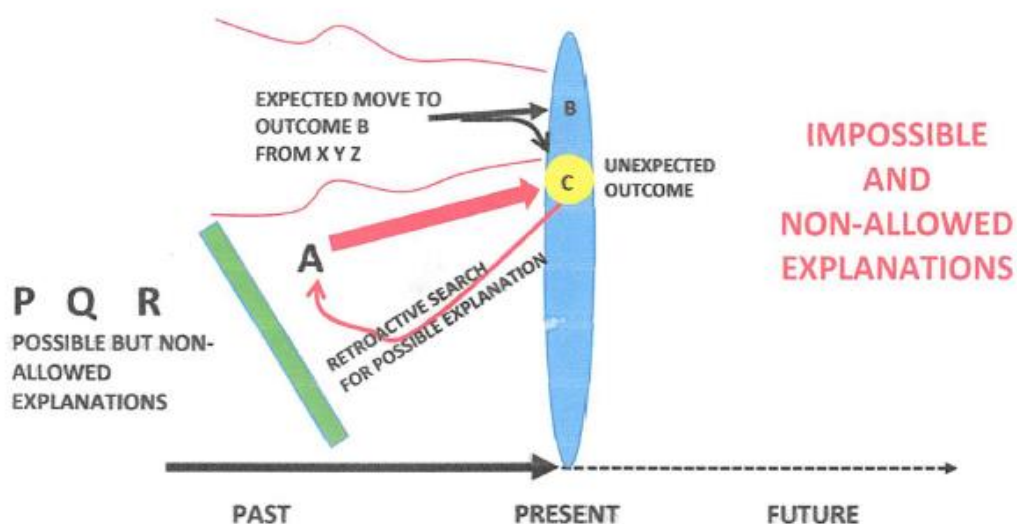


Figure 1.2: Abduction in irreversible time (by Valsiner, unpublished, reproduced by permission)



Real human beings *experience* the pains and pleasures of living and have survived it for centuries before the notions of trauma and therapy were even invented. With the notion of trauma, the obligation to cure the former by the latter occurred and eventually the discourse of preventing the fear, anger, and other unpleasantnesses in human living.

## **Summary**

Transition is an inevitable part of one's life. Formal ending of education is a curtain closing over a story that has no ending yet it is a moment that changes the way one relates to oneself and the outer world. The role of the professional is a liminal role and imply the ambivalence of both authority and doubt. Professionalism in this sense is the right and duty to perform in certain ways as well as a subjective feeling of belonging within a discipline. A professional helper then indicates, that the discipline allows for certain actions to be considered helpful even though they can be experienced as violating. The social role of helping is here expanded to more than heroic efforts and it becomes clear that the mediated meaning of help is something which evolve in the context and any intervention can have either positive or negative outcome. The search here is for the regularities in the developmental process of integrating a new superimposed role of professionalism in a never-ending strive of becoming better which entails recognizing one's own insufficiency. With a general developmental approach the search here is to move closer to the developmental process of internalizing a new self conception and investigating the minimum possible unique instance for the maximum generalizability of the knowledge that is available in the instance.

## Chapter 2

### **Borders – an entry to psychological phenomena**

Borders is here introduced as the key to understanding the underlying logic of development and movement in psychological phenomena (e.g. identity construction) as the borders are around us and inside us. This is used as the underlying logic of this thesis and introduced in terms of David Herbst's co-genetic logic (1976). Further the relation between parts in the whole is investigated as a dynamic permeable process (in opposition to a fixed line) and has its starting point in William Stern's (1938) schematization of person-world relation as inherently tensional. This leads to an elaboration of borders as permeable in the zone of contact between two distinct parts. The two central terms membrane and catalysis is introduced, further, the elaboration of first, Gegenstandstheorie in terms of Meinong (1986) and second the internalization-externalization process in terms of Valsiner (2007; 2014a, 2014b; 2019) is fruitful. The ruptures in trajectory as per Tania Zittoun and Alex Gillespie (2015) are here considered the best foundation for understanding the constraint world an apprehending person engages in. The important point here is the introduction of the underlying logic of developing a professional self through a process of overcoming boundaries set up as constraints.

Borders are a relevant starting point to understand the meaning making of helpers and perpetrators as categories *affectivated* (emphasize the affective side of human experience see Cornejo, Marsico, & Valsiner 2018) in constant negotiation (agreement and non-agreement) on different levels.

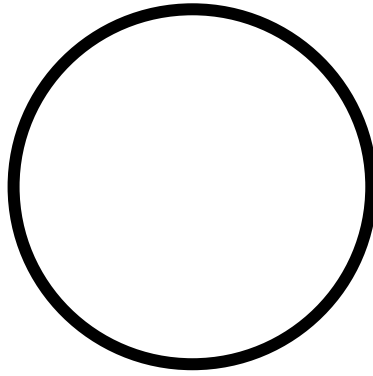
### **The importance of borders – the human apprehending the world**

*Borders* is a concept that belongs naturally in many different sciences (mathematics, geography, sociology, history etc.) but not until lately did it have a place in psychology (Marsico & Tateo 2017). The word 'border' denotes 'the edge of something' or a 'line separating two or more parts'. The word border has a range of meanings in English including 'boundary', 'barrier', 'frontier'. Typically, there is no distinction between the terms border and boundary in everyday language though, 'border' is most commonly used as the line that separates two countries, and functions as a 'limitation', 'restriction' and also a 'demarcation' whereas boundary most commonly refers

to a line that contains something for example, personal boundaries, that can be (but should not be) crossed, and denote a kind of line marking a relationship between two sides that must not be crossed (Simmel 2007). In geographical sense borders have naturally been of interest. They can be natural (eg. mountains) or artificial (eg. a line dividing territorial waters). Often borders are signalized (eg. the end of a street or entering a new country) but borders can also be invisible and exist in a normative sense (eg. don't harm others). Borders are everywhere in and around us and is of theoretical interest in psychology as well. Usually borders are conceived in dichotomic terms (in – out) , however, I will here elaborate on the co-genetic logic as presented by Herbst (1976) as the basis of understanding what happens when producing a distinction in an undistinguished field or flow of events. Here the foundation for the complex phenomenon of *becoming* is seeded. I will bring to focus the relevance of the borders and the “between the parts” to create further knowledge of the developmental process and meaning making process where borders are made interesting to investigate from a cultural psychological perspective.

### **A co-genetic logic**

In opposition to the classical objective logic of ‘*either or*’ the starting point here is the systemic unity within the whole. According to David Herbst’s co-genetic logic (1976) the *distinction* is the foundation of logic. In a world void of all comprehensive characteristics the minimal unit of analysis remaining is the distinction (object >< subject, object >< environment, finite >< infinite, existence >< non-existence). This is exemplified in the drawing of a circle (see figure 1.1 below) where a triplet is created (outside – border – inside) and not a single circle (as commonly labelled). In this triplet, all parts exist at the same time, and if the border is erased all parts disappear simultaneously (Herbst 1976). In this sense the border is what unifies and separates at the same time and is the main feature of the human mind (person >< world). What is important here is the need to formulate the distinction in order to create meaningful apprehended categories in relation to others.



*Figure 2.1: The border triplet (after Herbst's 1976 co-genetic logic)*

This double function (separating and uniting) of the border is crucial in psychology when we try to make sense of dynamic phenomena while they are happening. It is important to direct the *border zone* understood in the sense that the border does not create a complete separation, but a permeable contact (in analogy with cell membranes) where the process of *co-existence* and *co-development* takes place (Tateo 2017; Marsico 2016; Valsiner 2020). Further it is important to address the developmental and dynamic nature of phenomena and the directionality (and counter-directionality) which opens a space for investigating the developing processes. The co-genetic logic allows for further elaborations on what happens in the border area of the triplet. It is hence necessary to continue elaborating on what happens in the border creation process.

### **The process on the border – a constant tension of inner and outer infinities**

William Stern provided (1938) a unique unity of the person and world:

“The person is a living whole, individual, unique, striving towards goals, self-contained and yet open to the world around him; he is capable of having experience.” (p.70).

He suggests human experience is constantly negotiated by the two striving towards the inner infinity (the deep feeling of the person about the self) and the outer infinity (imagination and knowledge of the world out there). Tensions are the dynamic fluid on the border between the two (or more) infinities and very importantly the human is

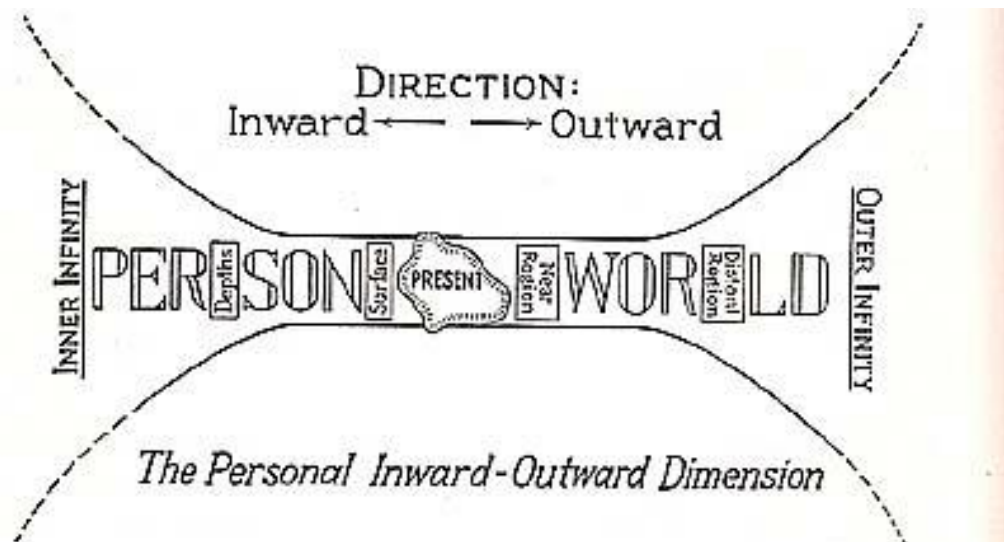


Figure 2.2: The person-world relation (Stern 1938)

open to the world and vice versa. The tension is the place of contact between two infinities, and this place has no fixed line but a flexible boundary (in his model a splodge of present).

The infinity between two entities is known from mathematics where there is an infinite amount of numbers between the numbers 1 and 0 – and there is an infinite amount of numbers between 0 and 1000. The one infinity is simply bigger than the other. The person is a system of infinite totality towards the world as extended in this way and moves toward the world. This means, that the person in relation to surroundings has an *extended self* that moves beyond the skin. The Self is extended eg. in a matter of ownership “mine” and not just towards objects (my clothing, my laptop) but also persons (my baby, my friend), space (my house, my land) and time (my youth). This is the direction from the self towards the world. In the non-personal world, there is nothing analogue to the *personal inward-outward dimension*.

The present comes to have two meanings. Not at all times can a person grasp the totality of the infinite poles of inner and outer, the ‘here not there’ and also ‘past and future’. The polarity between inner and outer involves the assumption that the person and the world is in basic opposition yet with the extensionality the polarity is lacking. Objectifying of the world as something ‘outer’ opposed to the inner is a bordering process. Strangers and unfamiliar things, processes and places may be distinguished as outer and everything within the body is inner yet, the flexibility of bordering is not reduced to a matter of physical neutrality; the affective relation to objects

extends the Self. At the intersection of the inward and outward processes in the present (in Stern's terms) there is a two level oppositional process that buffers the movement and makes it normatively ambivalent. The person (interior) produces (externalization) culture by participation and expression. The world (exterior) contains a multiplicity of signs the person interprets (internalization) (Valsiner 2014a). The person will seek (intent) to overcome the experienced tensions and resistances-- and here different solutions are possible. The person can ignore (purposefully, or by stagnation) or disagree with societal pressures (negation - humbuk) or accept them (affirmation). This is all a part of the minimal structure on the border.

The process of distinction and relation is a matter of the minimal structure of *directionality*. In this sense we understand the human being as a bordering creature in a constant tensional relation to the world. When there is agreement between the direction from the world and the direction from the person the position can be autonomously maintained (moving forward in time). Yet if there is a discrepancy between the experience of the person and the social evaluation the uncomfortable tension occurs in the encounter (I am a professional >< I am not professional to THEM). The resistance from the outer is very important and a part of the minimal structure on the border.

### **Bordering processes – a dynamic perspective elaborated**

To understand the nature of psychological transition through borders it is considered helpful already to investigate biology and chemistry where boundaries and transition through these are already of importance and studied as membranes (Nedergaard 2016). Hence *the border zone* in psychological thinking is a *membrane*. The membrane is what separates (person >< world) and is hence understood as permeable and it is under certain circumstances (place and time) different, where the limits are set up. This membrane structure of borders facilitates the bidirectional transfer of something from inside to outside and vice versa. It is a matter of a minimal structure of direction (→) and counter-direction (←) and the border is moving between them (→ | | ←).

### ***Example of how membrane function: Gore-Tex membrane analogy***

A famous membrane (yes, it is a thing) is Gore-Tex<sup>1</sup> (the name of the brand *and* the membrane) best known from clothing and footwear industry to make materials waterproof yet breathable (and what most people do not know is, that most of their production is membranes for e.g. pacemakers, smart phones and space travelling). Needless to state the importance of a waterproof jacket when living under Danish weather conditions I will here draw on my personal expertise from retail (as a sales assistant in the Danish retail store Friluftsland). Gore-Tex is a good example of how a membrane functions. The characteristic of a membrane is the selective transport of units through a border, which makes the material waterproof yet breathable. This is possible due to billions of microscopic pores in the membrane which are too small for drops of water to penetrate yet big enough for water as steam to pass through. The GoreTexPro is constructed with inspiration from a plant structure to guarantee its efficiency in opposition to other woven garments. If the body overheats it will begin to self-regulate the heat by sweat. The sweat evaporates and the material is considered breathable, until a certain point where the sweat becomes watery pearls and will be held in by the membrane as well. This transitional selectiveness of a membrane can be transferred to psychological thinking as well. This membrane structure of boundaries allows for a fluid dynamic transformation and inclusion to which I will return in chapter 3.

### ***Example of catalysis in cultural psychology***

Valsiner makes the proposal to follow chemistry in its move from thinking in terms of causality to that of catalysts (2019). Catalysts contribute with the focus on the *reproduction* of a system which produces ‘outcomes’ as byproduct of the processes (always moving forward in time). As mentioned above the developing phenomena of social sciences are open systems which as part of developmental process can be maintained, demolished or enhanced as part of developmental transitions. Innovation of a system (the process of emergence) involves catalytic conditions. In this case examination is a catalyst that makes entrance into professionalism possible. The

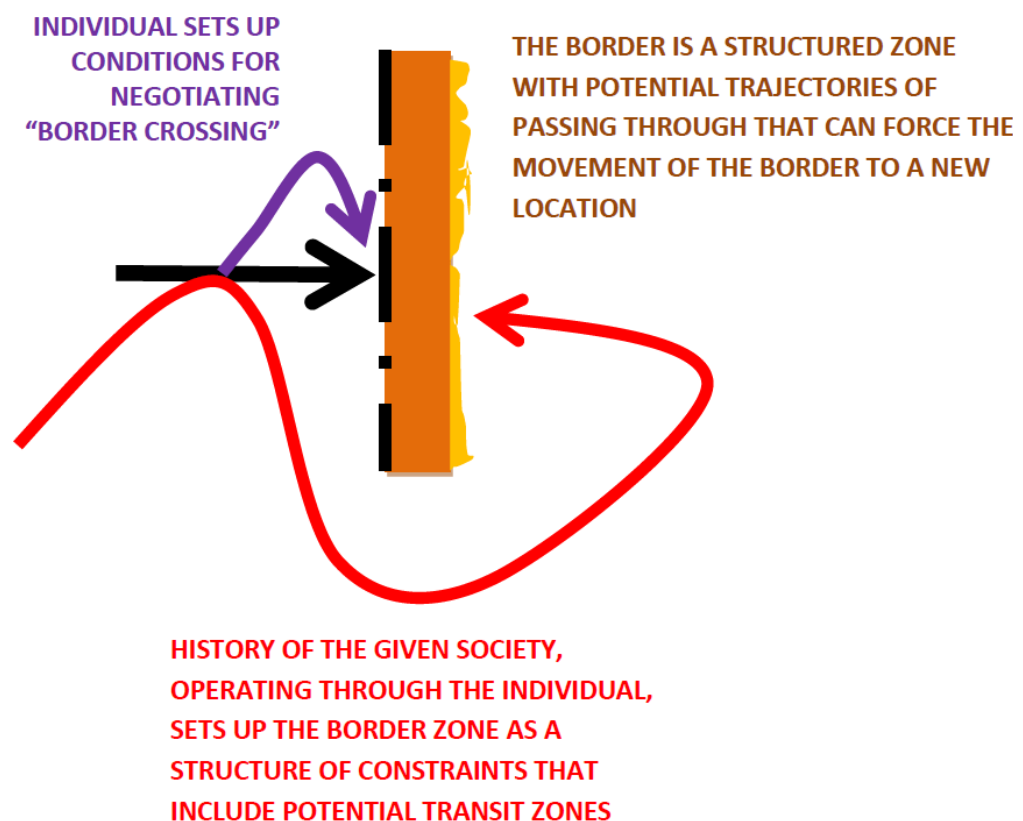
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<sup>1</sup> Accessed 10/3-2020 <https://www.friluftsland.dk/blog/gore-tex/> and <https://www.gore-tex.com/>

emergence of self-regulatory internalized professional sentiments leads to changed normative practices in daily lives (Cabell & Valsiner 2014).

### **Directionality and Resistance in the Border Zone – an introduction to Gegenstandtheorie**

Direction and resistance are fundamental parts of any developmental process, and from an ontological point of view faces the issue of ‘parts of a whole’. Theorizing about these can benefit from a particular tradition of *Gegenstandtheorie* in terms of Alexius Meinong (Albertazzi, Jacquette & Poli 2001; Jorgensen 2004; Meinong 1983; Valsiner 2014b). ‘Gegenstand’ (standing against) is an object that, when acted upon, resist some aspects of the action. Stern also recognizes this structure, yet further elaborations are needed. The border zone is inherently dialogical (direction <math>\leftrightarrow</math> counter-direction), it shares the border and is united in the same system.



*Figure 2.3 Triple Gegenstand (after Valsiner)*



In figure 2.3 what is added to Gegenstandstheorie is the notion of time. The present (where the lines meet) show the border zone as a feed-forward loop into the future infinity where the constraint as well as the possibilities to overcome them is set up. This makes human beings open systems, dialogical in nature and with a future oriented mind (Valsiner 2014a). Sterns structure of a person is here the starting point for investigating subjectivity, yet it overlooks the hierarchical structure of the semiotic meaning making system in the present where inward and outward moving processes meet.

Transition from student to professional – though resisting to be a professional – represent the investigation of an extended causality in the development of a professional self where the causality  $A \rightarrow B$  (“A” Student of Psychology causes  $\rightarrow$  “B” Professional Psychologist) is under the resistance of B ( $\leftarrow$  “B” Resisting to be a Professional Psychologist). This multi-directional stance is crucial in the developmental and processual nature of experience investigated in this thesis.

### **Internalization and externalization – intertwined processes**

Being part of a culture and being affected by it and at the same time actively producing meaning in the culture can be elaborated through internalization and externalization processes. We have built up an understanding, From the beginning of this thesis, that there is a relationship between the person and the world and it is clearer how this cultural-psychological process regulates the human mind through signs and thus creates the foundation for identity creation (Valsiner 2007; Valsiner 2019). Internalization and externalization are mutually interdependent constructive processes. Internalization is the process where the external world is comprehended and taken in whereas externalization is the individual modification and meaning making of external surroundings. Very shortly the process of internalization/externalization in terms of Valsiner (2007) consists of 3 layers (boundaries) that distances the personal infinity *with* the outer world. When a message is internalized it is transformed before reaching the inner layer (if reaching it). The external process is the reverse and when a message is externalized it is *double transformed* (Valsiner, 2014a). Internalizing what is experienced happens within permeable boundaries of experience: Layer 1) superficial chat, layer 2) dialogue with the self and others, and layer 3) deeply felt personal *feelings* about the world e.g. ideologies. The goal here is to further elaborate

the role of affect. Becoming professional is an activity which includes both the achievement of certain skills but more importantly, and in this thesis the deeply felt feeling of, professionalism coupled with the need for others to accept it.

The main feature of internalization as mentioned is the comprehended world. The core of the self (middle) is deeply affective. Here the core values of the person subsist and guides how to interpret the world. When the professional role is superimposed to the individual it reaches through the outer layer of superficial chat (What do you do for a living? I am psychologist), and moves into the inner dialogues (I as a psychologist am here to help you) and further become an autonomous part of the self structure (I am a psychologist and above all I am a patient and compassionate person).

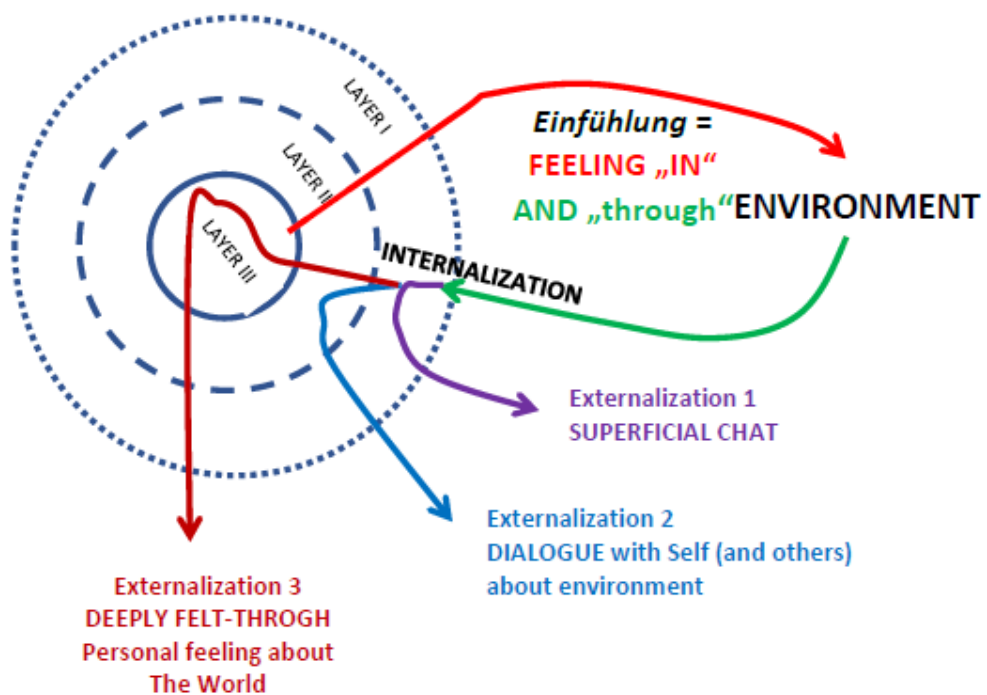


Figure 2.4: Layers in the border zone (after Valsiner 2007)

### *Development of and changes in the personal feeling about the world*

It is very important to emphasize, that this affective core is changeable. The ideological system is very strong yet hierarchically organized. In a single case study a young US scholar who follows his father's ideological white supremacist ideology undergoes a development of initially negating the racial ideology and additionally integrated a new pathway of marriage across the race lines (see Mascolo 2017 for full description). The narrative begins as follows:

All my life I've been taught the importance of white nationalism. To protect and honor the white race, to be proud of our culture, and to denounce The Jews and Liberals that tells us that we cannot have "White Pride". My dad watched and despised what non-Whites were doing to our country – especially Blacks with their high crime rate and barbaric behavior; their animosity toward "The white man" and their unstoppable complaining and charity. With all this talk by my father, I was also shown as we trotted through the hells of Black neighborhoods which my dad loved to snicker as the "inferior lifestyle of the negro". Drugs, prostitutes, thugs, AIDS, and murdering is the negroes worth" he would refresh to me with every God given chance. (Mascolo, 2017, p. XX)

This young boy experiences an unexpected attraction when he encountered Azzi, a fellow student in his class:

Out of all people, I get stuck with the Black. I watched her as she walked up to me. She was not like the only other Black girl in one of my classes who was very dark, thick lips, and glasses, medium built, with curly kinky hair but rather... different. She had medium straight dark hair that she always kept pinned in a ponytail with a few strands out up front. She was rather petite for her age to be 21 and her skin was a light shade of golden brown. I tried desperately to get a partner switch before she walked over to no avail. I was stuck. She walked up to me with that friendly grin on her face which I see as a cover up... But her smile was rather beautiful I thought. Hey! I might have been tough but I knew cute when I see it... doesn't mean I would date one. (Mascolo, 2017, p. XX)

What happens further is a graduation of attraction and acceptance of unexpected qualities.

Several days passed and between conversation. We would talk about a lot of things including race. I was surprised I had even opened up. I learned a lot actually on what I didn't know. We

would have laughs in between and even just chat about anything. I had always had angry emotions when she walked up to me in the past, but they were beginning to change into other emotions I didn't recognize as she walked up to me this time. Yes she did have a beautiful smile and her face ... is rather beautiful. I was interested in what she would tell me about Black life or life in general, things I thought I knew and things I wanted to know. Besides I didn't have anything else to do, and she was a very good talker. After turning in the report I would talk to her still even, a little skeptical what my friends were thinking however. Why was she making me feel this way? It's not natural... is it? She was not at all what I thought. Or what I expected. I never even expected to feel this way... to feel positive about her. [...]My whole perception was starting to change. Not only on Blacks but on life. I thought life was just one big liberal front, but such weights were beginning to be lifted. No! I couldn't do it. I could not betray my people! [...] I started to realize that I had no real reason to hate her whether she was Black or not. That it was only my mind frame and how I viewed the world. I admired her, hell I liked her. No sense in hiding out. (Mascolo, 2017, p. XX)

These changes and processes of ideological change can be understood exactly as the process where an existing meaning system (hierarchically ordered) is overruled by the emergence of a new – in this case the *white supremacist* state is overruled by that of *love*. The young boy relates to nationalism which here exists as the basic system of regulation. What happens here is that the ambivalent value of doing good in school is challenged by group work with a young black scholar. If he resists working with her he would not be a good student. This becomes the catalyst of a new evaluation of the young woman from whom he learns and is not stuck with. The resistance is hence overcome and the blocking towards loving a black person is overcome, the value of love is integrated in the system and overrules the white pride. This is only possible due to 1) the membranic structure and 2) the catalyzing mind. This is under the influence of norms and affection. Similar link of ideology of nationalism to that of professionalism can be made. With this notion of the agent's move towards creating a semiotic catalyst activator that enable's oneself to accept a new route in trajectory or a new way of seeing oneself. This supports the idea that becoming professional is not a fixed position but a developing atmosphere. It is through an endless regulation of this system the possibility for all normatively possible and impossible actions is set – as well as their change (Valsiner 2019).

## **Ruptures in trajectory as catalysis of transitions in the self**

Within the individual trajectory the notion of transitions is introduced as turning points. These turning points are events that create new pathways and directions in the individual's life (Zittoun, 2014) and these transitions are inevitable as time passes. In cultural psychology these changes can be understood as *transitive* changes and *in-transitive* changes (Zittoun 2014; Valsiner 2014). The transitive changes are quasi-circular and build upon hermeneutics. Other changes are not that mild. Instead they lead to ruptures and creates totally new conduct from which there is no return eg. becoming a mother or becoming a psychologist. There is no way to re-do these 'traumatic experiences' (that would be some kind of magical thinking) but they require from the person a re-elaboration of own self, of one's own actions in relation to one self and the environment (I – Me – Other). These changes which have a point of no return are called ruptures (Zittoun 2014). The rupture constitutes a bifurcation point in the life-trajectory and some of these pathways are open to future, and some of them are not (Valsiner, 2014).

The person understands the present informed by the past. In the past some significant experiences have solid ground and to change this solid ground new significant experiences must happen (e.g. examination).

"the presence of bifurcation does not entail a new structural emergence. It merely indicates conditional "flip-flopping" between two existing structural solutions, both of which are based on intransitivity. Both cycles remain closed, while the novelty is the switching between the two. The system can adapt to external demands, but it does not change these demands" (Valsiner, 2014, p. 110).

A structural transformation of developing yet normatively regulated systems can lead to the need for a change into a new system. Borders play a crucial role in all systemic perspectives as well as the maintenance and transformation of social borders.

## Summary

The processes of borders can be pinned down to three contradictory characteristics: 1) the border separates while unifying 2) the border increases ambiguity while decreasing ambiguity and 3) the qualities of the borderland are determined not by the parts but by the borders that make the parts mutually excluded. In other words, by defining the world we make partitions within the whole, and as a consequence new part-whole dynamics emerge with all psychological implications in regulating these new circumstances. Human beings are considered beings who make distinctions and when making distinctions apprehending the world in terms of the distinctions. To further understand the relations between distinctions the person-world relation in terms of Stern was elaborated with emphasis on the point of contact between the two infinities. The zone is here understood as a flexible boundary which serves to function as a membrane in the open system. In addition the notion of catalysis is borrowed from chemistry and is used in psychology to describe the circumstances that lead to certain transitions. Especially three theoretical concepts of borders have been elaborated here namely the notion of Gegenstand, the notion of internalization and externalization and the ruptures in trajectory further, the dialogue on the border is elaborated and opened up to the dialectical leap in the process of developing and integrating a new self position namely the position of professional.

## **Chapter 3**

### **A Dialogic Perspective**

From the perspective of cultural psychology, we understand how a person evolves in a constraints-rich world within a minimal structure of direction and counter-direction encountering resistance on the border. One of the points essential to build further upon is the dialogue emerging when encountering the border. The voices from within are directional and intentional (wanting) while the resistance is normatively set up (should not want) and creates the inner tensions. This dialogue happens as an abductive process exactly in Sterns notion of ‘present’ which in previous chapter is extended with feed-forward loops in irreversible time. This feed forward loop gives space for dialogicality and makes the person open to change. The Dialogical Self Theory (DST) in terms of Hubert Hermans (2001) tries to capture the process of Self innovation (where identity construction is understood as a dynamic process) built on an ongoing dialogue between a repertoire of relatively autonomous I-positions that leads to reorganization and repositioning of these positions. This allows us to move closer to an understanding of the dynamic role of the professional Self. A role which is superimposed onto the person by institutions and integrated as a relatively autonomous I position. Yet the position of professionalism is in constant dynamic change and only through the counter-directional movement of non-professional the professionalism develops. By bringing in the voices on the borders and the constraints of professionalism I will present here a ‘trialogue model’ with inspiration from chemical bindings to show how the different voices are intertwined and along with adding the hierarchical order and blocking of different voices.

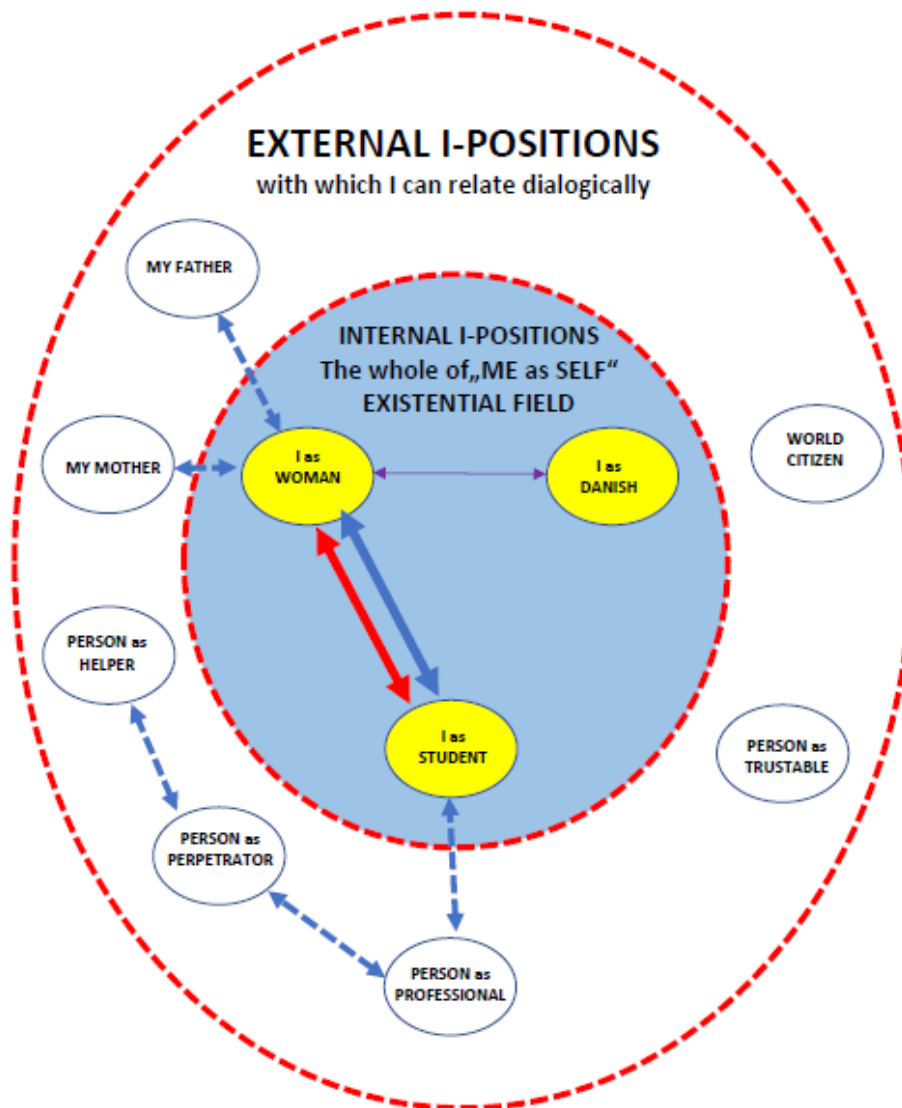
#### **From Dialogism to Dialogical Self Theory**

In ancient Greek dialogue emerged in different forms (political, philosophical and dramatic) and Plato’s dialogues count as the first written dialogical accounts (Dafernos, 2018). Dialogism settles with the notion of knowledge as an entity you infuse into another person as if pouring water into an empty glass. The Russian literary theorist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin is known to rediscover the concept in the twentieth century (Lachmann, Eshelman & Davis 1988; Webb 2005) and elaborates

the notion into a multifaceted paradigm of dialogism based on a set of concepts such as dialogue, monologue, polyphony, heteroglossia, utterance, voice, speech genres and chronotope (Bakhtin 1986) which has inspired many scholars including psychologists (Hermans & Kempen 1993). Central to the dialogical approach in psychology is the view of subjectivity as relational with emphasis on the mind-world relation as holistic and dynamic (Bento, Cunha, Salgado 2012). Moving to the Dialogical Self Theory (DST) in terms of Hubert Hermans the *I-position* is the core of the theory. The ‘I >< me’ relation is inspired by the American pragmatist William James and George Herbert Mead and points to the different layers of self-reflexivity whereas the notion of ‘position’ is inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogical approach and emphasizes the spatial nature of the self (Hermans 2015). Bakhtin suggests identity as a storytelling mode where the author adopts multiple voices (a polyphony of selves) involved in a dialogical plot and lets the voices emerge during social practice (Bakhtin 1986). Davies & Harré (1990) explain how each position represent the manners of a person in a specific situation and context. This implies that participating in a community of practices leads to internalizing of new ways of thinking of one’s Self. DST provides an effective illustration of the dynamic nature of identity, defining it as a variety of positions occupied by the self in the field of identity, involved in endless dialogue (Hermans 2001).

In Hermans’ mapping of the Self configuration the Self moves from one spatial position (I-as-X) to another (context) making space for different positions (including external positions e.g. me, my, mine) and hereby connecting identity to certain features of social and cultural context. The positions are both internal (e.g. I as student, I as Danish, I as woman) and external (e.g. my home, my country, my family) as depicted in figure 3.1.





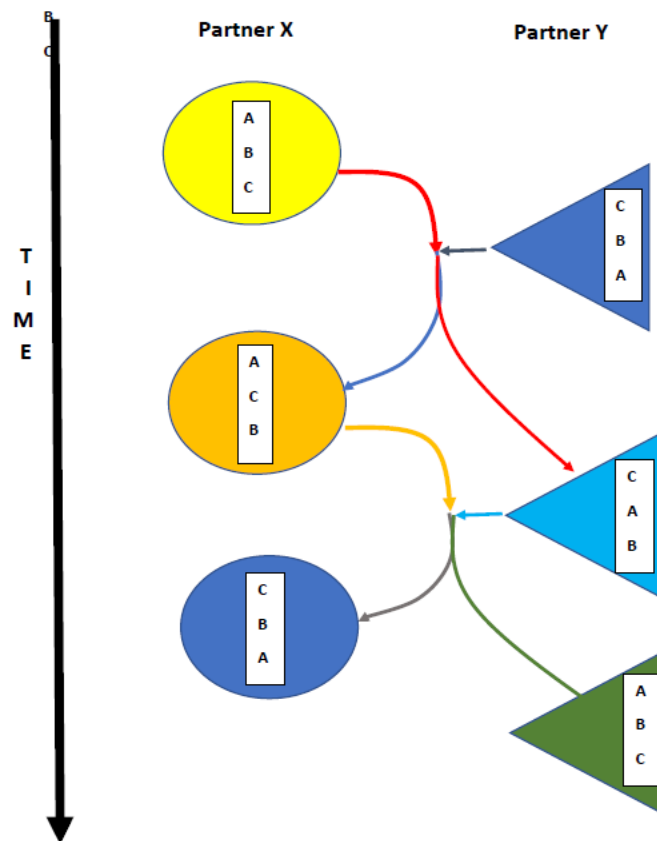
*Figure 3.1: The Dialogical Self structure of the generic student who is moving towards becoming professional (modified after Hermans 2001).*

This model specifies the major focus of Hermans' theory — different I-positions are located on the map of central (personal existential field—currently in function) domain, surrounded by the domain of the others' I-positions ("My father" and "My mother" in relation to the person's existential field, potential future social roles /"professional") in similar relations. Here Hermans treats the internal and external positions as exclusive, not as a membrane where the actual dialogue takes places. I as a woman is a gender I as a person can agree or disagree with and even be in long dispute within the self on that. It can be enhanced in certain situations and be less important and hence not paid attention to in others which is exactly in analogue to membrane crossing.

In extension here this can be related to the internalization and externalization processes from above. When engaging in a certain situation the external world can have certain expectations to the students' role - here three different relations are at play simultaneously 1) I am a student - the feeling I carry with me through time and place, 2) I as a student - the role played out with external demands (listen to teacher, take notes) and 3) my place to be a student (My school, my desk, my office) - identifications beyond skin. In this way "I - STUDENT" is in play in both internal, external and extended selves. The roles can then be superimposed from outside and find their way in or emerge inside (intention, desire) and change be apprehended outside.

### **The polyphonic metaphor**

The polyphonic metaphor is essential as it presents the person as multivoiced and internally contradictory by being habited with multiple voices that defend different perspectives and worldviews in contrast with each other (Bento, Cunha & Salgado 2012). In every educational context there are several kinds of tensions at stake which can be comprehended as a polyphony of different imaginations eg. between the learner, the teacher, the institutional demands, and societal requirements. Yet the tension is a dialogical condition which allows for both dynamic stability and dynamic changes. In this sense the opposing 'voices' of the Self co-exist and all sides can be depicted simultaneously in space. By considering temporarily distributed thoughts and experiences as a polyphony of spatial positions it becomes possible to treat a particular notion in the context as both internal and external processes (Bertau 2012). The positioning and re-positioning that occur during a dialogue is a crucial means of supporting the novice as forming a professional identity (Figure 3.2).



*Figure 3.2: The role of re-positioning of the Self in dialogue*

Figure 3.2. illustrates the generative role of dialogue. Partner X and Partner Y enter into their external dialogue with opposite hierarchical structures of their I-positions structure (A-B-C and C-B-A, respectively). In the course of their external dialogue X and Y go through their internal dialogues, that leaves both X and Y with complete reversal of the previous orders.

### **Movements in positions and oppositions**

What is here important is how the different positions operates. The I-positions feed into the identity by either accepting or rejecting the position. Accepting a position of e.g. being Danish can be linked to societal dynamics (I as a nationalist). Nationalism is an I-position (I as a Danish citizen) being promoted from societal pressure (act Danish) and merge into an identity label (I am nationalist). Danish can be understood as a subsisting psychological phenomenon (non-object, non-measurable). Both Self and Other are potentially multivoiced and occupy multiple positions while present in

a dialogue. Yet any finite positions need an *I-opposition*. The relation a person has to a position then allows for not merely blocking but relating to a range between X and non-X. If being a professional makes gender or nationality subordinated it does not make those positions disappear but the positions move in the background closer to the non-position. A blocking is used only when in one situation rejecting the position and in the next accepting the position. ‘I as a helper’ could be a deeply felt position and personal-ideology (Valsiner 2014a) while under certain circumstance e.g. desire (also deeply felt) can overrule and reject the ‘good girl’ position completely (insert carelessness) while after the incident the return to ‘good girl’ conception while rejecting ever have been perpetrating anyone (others or self) (Nedergaard et al 2015). This movement of rejecting a position and creating distance to certain positions is very important and proves the unity on the border (which I will address further in the next chapter in terms of dialectics).

### **From non-professional to professional**

Mastery of a profession – of any kind – encompasses mistakes, failures and poor performance and yet the greatest growth come from situations where one is not at one’s best, through careful examination of one’s failures rather than success (Kottler & Carlson, 2003). Embracing the role of a professional entails linkage of the personal culture and the social role expectations (Kullasepp 2014). It is here important that how the person understands and creates the meaning of a certain professional role is more central than the competencies, skills and knowledge applied in different settings. Instead the professional role is an *integration of the Self* (in the course of time) resulting in a changed way of relating to oneself and the world. What Kullasepp found in her longitudinal study of psychology students in Estonia was the students integrating a role of ‘being good and understanding towards other’ even if they changed career and were not practicing psychology. All students agreed this foundational feeling was what they learned beyond curriculum. Being psychologist (or any other professional) is hence considered more than a work. Becoming professional is a graduation process where the individual moves from being non-professional (private, student, intuitive) to achieving a combination of justified knowledge and integration of a new I-position that leads the same individual to feel professional and in addition make others *believe* the person is professional. Becoming

professional is an appealing synthesis between Self and Other moving the boundaries forward. The person is striving towards some imagined normative ideal of the unknown future guided by the social expectations.

The pathway towards professionalism (e.g. if professional then non-student, if professional then non-perpetrator, if professional then non-private) is a process of adapting to the role of professional and both narrowing and widening the sphere of action which in the case of psychotherapists entail doing therapy and being social policy maker.

Yet the position of professional is not a finite position. Understanding the process of endless *learning* as a *professional* (which has a contradictive nature in terms of being *fully skilled* as a professional) entail treating professional as a position of life-long learning (which is traditionally the student or private position) and hence only possible when the person subordinate the professional position. The subordination of professionalism is the case when encountering failure as professional. In this encounter the possibility learn as a professional emerge. Yet the implication of recognizing failure as a professional can lead to immediate positioning as a perpetrator – when not feeling one can live up to the demands from oneself and other.

### ***TRIAlogicality – the implications of repositioning***

What evolved from these notions of DST in case of developing a professional self is a model of TRIAlogicality and this minimal structure seem sufficient to understand the implications of continuously developing a professional Self. I am here treating **perpetrator, helper, professional** equally as predicates which can be attached to a self in a hierarchical order. In this open and dynamic system of trialogicality a position can be kept or left in both time and place. The positioning and re-positioning between perpetrator/helper/professional can lead to knowledge of the process by which a person develops a professional self. In this way a certain way of acting can be enhanced and/or inhibited in the evaluation from self and/or other. Insecurities exist when there is a discrepancy and tension between the evaluation of self and other. In this model it is emphasized how there is a dynamic flow between the positions. Yet the different positions can happen to be fixated (I am only professional) or blocked (I am never a perpetrator). Then the possibilities of re-ordering are reduced if the system rejects possibilities to develop.

## The TRIALOGUE MODEL

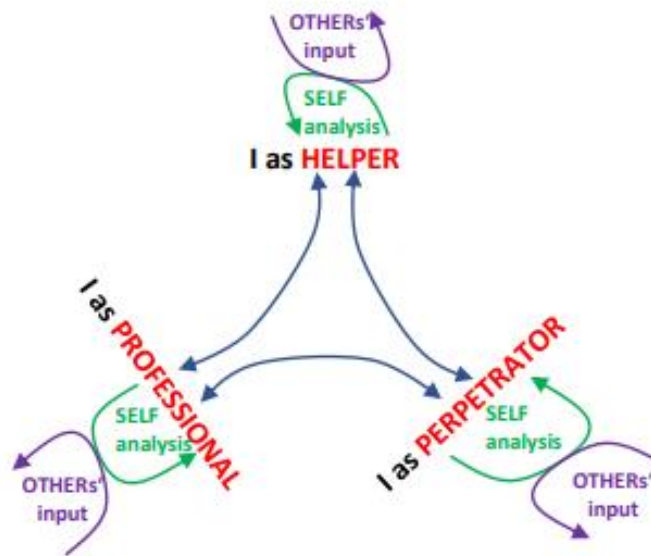


Figure 5.3: The trialogue model in developing a professional self

The system develops through ruptures guided by a self-catalyst and an outer catalyst. It is important to emphasize how this is not environmental influence rather it is environmental coordination of our own orientation within the environment. The rupture happens when there is a discrepancy between past and future experience and between self and other. What is here important is to show the interrelatedness of positions and dynamic flow between them.

In the trialogue model the three different I-positions are separated by membranes psychologically constructed and with mutual attraction between the parts of the Self system. As parts of the whole these positions are all present at all time and enter into various mutual binding relations.

To explain how I will borrow the terminology from chemical binding. A chemical bond is a lasting attraction resulting from the force of attraction between oppositely charged units. In these terms the constant dynamic movement towards stability (the rule of octet) become clear with the implication that the electrons inherently can jump from one orbit to another based on their *intention* (Valsiner 2019). The structure is very sensitive to outer influences and if one entity is left out the entire system changes as it at all time seek toward stability. When there is resonance the mutual attraction keeps a seemingly autonomous position where all feed into

each other. The stronger a connection the less likely to change. This can be exemplified with CO<sub>2</sub> in comparison with H<sub>2</sub>O. CO<sub>2</sub> has a double bond and is more stable than the single bond of H<sub>2</sub>O. Similarly, in the dialogue of the professional Self is seeking towards stability as the situation changes the single structure bond to other structures (in the endless flow of irreversible time).

### ***Implications of hierarchical organization of dialogue:***

Within the minimal system of these three predicates (helper, professional, perpetrator) which can be added to the self you can find hierarchical order. Each position is in constant evaluation of one-self (self-reflexivity) AND by other, informing if the position is successful or failing. This endless evaluation is creating the openness to change the system – in time and place. The self-evaluation happens as a feed forward process (in the imagined future infinity) and creates the possibility to overcome constraints while the evaluation can also create a resistance in exactly the place where the two opposite directions meet. What follows is 6 different fixed test cases of hierarchical organizations within the minimum dialogical structure. The basic idea is, that the domination of position 1, makes the second position 2 inherently ambivalent while blocking or rejecting the third position.

1. Professional

2. Helper

3. Perpetrator

I as professional, I assume I am helping you by intervening, but I am not perpetrating.

1. Professional

2. Perpetrator

3. Helper

I as professional act certainly in that way with academic or legal justification, intervening by perpetrating (e.g. providing labels to you, victimization) but I do not help.

1. Helper

2. Professional

### 3. Perpetrator

I as helper, is a certified professional, and do not perpetrate.

### 1. Helper

### 2. Perpetrator

### 3. Professional

I as a helper is perpetrating and intruding (under perfect cover of being a helper) and I am not professional.

### 1. Perpetrator

### 2. Helper

### 3. Professional

I as a perpetrator doing unwanted interventions, with the intention of helping, but I am not professional.

### 1. Perpetrator

### 2. Professional

### 3. Helper

I am a perpetrator, and I am very good at it doing it professionally, but not helping anyone.

By playing with these different organization of hierarchical order it becomes evident to further look into the implications of the professional role by adding the predicates together. Introductory I addressed the professional helper – while I will further address the position of perpetration. In continuation hereof, it is relevant to ask if the binding is threefold (not reducing the one dimension). Is it possible to be a professional perpetrating helper? Or a professional helping perpetrator?

### ***Professional perpetrators under cover of helping***

A professional perpetrator might not count oneself as a perpetrator, yet here categorized in this fixation. As a few I can here mention the executioner, soldier, and doctor. In a direct way these professions in one way or another provides allowances for inducing pain on a person. What these could have in common is payment to take the



life of another person (execution, war, euthanasia). This is in a very direct way political and well known as e.g. “the war against terror” or “mercy killing”.

*Executioner: Kill efficiently to save community from convicted criminals*

*Soldier: War to maintain peace*

*Doctor: Heal by painful surgery or mercy killing by euthanasia*

### ***Professional perpetrators helping***

This is by far one of the least accepted yet most touching activities to witness. The person who seem a perpetrator might be a helper after all. This can be the case in certain subcultures where togetherness and loyalty towards each other is very present even though not recognized by bystanders who see e.g. the criminal gang or amongst street people. Another very unique example is found in the novel “*Ser du månen, Daniel*” (Translation: Do you see the moon Daniel) by Puk Damsgård about the Danish photographer who was caught and imprisoned by IS (Islamisk Stat) while the government is trying to make a negotiation to get the boys home. Daniel tells his story about the horrors and torture – but also about the so-called terrorists secretly bringing soft underblankets for the prisoners to sleep on.

*Terrorist: Bringing blankets to prisoner*

*Soldier: Sparing the life of opponent*

### ***Professional helpers as needing to perpetrate during their mission***

This issue is addressed continuously yet no solution is found. There are here different yet very important points to make. The feeling of readiness to help might be understood as insulting for one who do not feel help needed. This is often the case when addressing a patient who does not recognize oneself as ill. In this case the psychologist is a perpetrator and intruder in someone’s life if this someone is not interested in help.

*Psychologist: Label a person with a diagnosis to be treated, yet person resist treatment*

*Humanitarian aid: Provide information or materials in places with opposite belief systems*

### ***Intention of helpful intervention can lead to perpetrator position***

When intervening in a person's life it can have a positive outcome and be considered helpful even if unintended. Not all interventions with the positive intention have this result. I will again give an example. I see an elderly in the bus and offer my seat (internalization of a person in need followed by an externalization – you must need my help). The elderly rejects the proposition with the words: 'I am not that old'. In this case the position of helper is taken but changed immediately to perpetrator in the situation. In this way it is very relevant to address the immediate changes that can happen within this system.

In a classic social psychological experiment by Stanley Milgram (1992) he and his students went to an almost empty subway wagon and asked the few unsuspecting passengers if they could have their seat. Despite the records and percentages of how many were willing to give up their seat in an almost empty subway the interesting is the very thorough introspective recordings of the researcher's thoughts.

I approached a seated passenger and was about to utter the magical phrase. But the words seemed lodged in my trachea and would simply not emerge. I stood there frozen, then retreated, the mission unfulfilled. My student observer urged me to try again but I was overwhelmed by paralyzing inhibition. I argued to myself: 'What kind of craven coward are you? You told your class to do it. How can you go back to them without carrying out your own assignment?' Finally, after several unsuccessful tries, I went up to a passenger and choked out the request, 'Excuse me, sir, may I have your seat?' A moment of stark anomic panic overcame me. But the man got right up and gave me the seat. A second blow was yet to come. Taking the man's seat, I was overwhelmed by the need to behave in a way that would justify my request. My head sank between my knees, and I could feel my face blanching. I was not role playing, I actually felt as if I was going to perish. Then the third discovery: as soon as I got off the train, at the next station, all the tension disappeared. (Milgram 1992, p. xxiv)

This very thorough introspection by the researcher (in this case Milgram himself) shows very detailed the affective outcome of the tension between the I-position of being 'a non-perpetrator' to the sudden change and breaking of normatively guided social rules in the subway and suddenly feel like 'a perpetrator'. This feeling is overwhelming yet disappears completely when exiting the situation. In this way the social situation becomes catalyst for the feeling of perpetrating yet completing the experiment which is in conflict with the general self-concept and inherently tensional. This

contain imagination on how to overcome this future rupture which creates both positive and negative feelings. These opposite feelings become the foundation of different I-positions seeking to construct an identity with these imaginations as a part of a narrative (Hermans 2001; Bruner 1990).

### **The role of the body**

If you ask someone, where they experience their ‘selves’ they typically point to their own body and if you ask where they locate ‘space’ they typically point to the outside world. In DST the body is *in* the Self (Hermans 2001). The body has a physical outer boundary (skin) which is in constant development (aging, growing, marking). The body is also the entity from where we perceive the world. Yet, experience is not reduced to bodily experiences and cannot be neglected as an important information source. The body is a very important tool to understand self-regulation mechanisms and the relation between Self and World (as the body is physically moving around) yet the mind and imagination can wander beyond physical situations and give experiences and marking too. In the case of dynamic growing from novice to professional the body indeed plays an important role.

### ***Self flagellation – a religious intervention in the convent context***

In Karen Armstrong’s *through a narrow gate* (2005) a detailed description of how a young novice is treated in the convent is present. What follows is an excerpt about disciplining the body which is an action naturally accepted by the institution. The case is a young aspiring nun with a strong sexual desire who punishes herself for the lust until she realizes how the punishment arouses the lust. The young girl asks for advice and guidance from the ‘Mother’ (direct transferrable to a professional) to help her body out of sin but ending up a perpetrator:

“Yes, I knew what it’s supposed to do. It’s meant to beat the body into subjection. But...” Suddenly I broke off feeling confused and embarrassed. Mother Walter’s calm, pale eyes regarded me curiously. Could she ever have felt anything like what I had just experienced?

“Go on, Sister.”

"I found that it roused my body to life in some way," I said slowly, not wanting to meet her eye. "I seemed to forget all about God, all about everything... I found it... exciting." I stopped short and looked down at my hands.

There was a silence. "Sister?" I looked up. A dark flush had spread across Mother Walter's face, and around her mouth there was an expression of distaste that I could see she was trying to get better of. "I'm glad you've come to talk to me about this. This is a difficulty that some nuns have – some more than others," she said evasively. "But don't discount the discipline; it can help you. You see..." she continued awkwardly. *Why can't she just get it out once and for all*, I thought impatiently, instead of going round in circles like this? Then I checked myself quickly. "You've got strong passions, Sister. We've already seen that. You get very emotional – there's all that disgusting fainting. You tend to react to things too strongly. It's all part of your undisciplined body and mind that's got to be quelled."

I took this in. "But how can I control all this?" I pleaded. The fainting, the surges of feeling, and that heady excitement just now came up unbidden. I never sought them out.

"Bodily mortification will help," Mother replied firmly. "This passion – *excitement* I think was the term you used. It's something that you are going to have to give up and get out of your system. It's something you'll have to fight hard all your life. Because you're going to make a vow of chastity."

"Does it mean that I'm not suited to the vow," I asked anxiously, "because of my passions?" I wanted to talk about these more fully. But Mother Walther didn't want to go into it. I could tell. "No, not at all. It just means that you've got to work hard to subdue these bodily... instincts. The rule says that we have to live like angels. Angels, as you know, have no passions; they are pure spirit, pure intellect and will directed wholly toward God. You have to make yourself into an angel, Sister. Not a cherub on a Christmas card. But a spiritual, not a bodily person."

"But if the discipline rouses these passions, Mother, isn't it just going to make me less spiritual?"

"No, not if you persevere. Beat yourself harder. Make it unpleasant and painful."  
(Armstrong, 2005, pp. 176-177)

In this case the person has an arousal (desire) which must physically be beaten out of her – yet the beating just strengthens the desire. We can here identify the 'I as sexual woman' in conflict with 'I as an aspiring nun'. Here the professional nun impose flagellation to beat out the sin of desire (which is counter-directional to the passion of the nun) and hence this tension occur. This leads to a *new experience* of 'pleasurable pain' in the tension between two opposite directed experiences (which I will elaborate further in next chapter). Self flagellation is an intervention socially accepted with the Church as a part of the ascetic spiritual tradition. Emotional coldness,

obedience, poverty and chastity was all promoted as Christian virtues. Yet the realization Karen presents is that self flagellation could become erotized – and in connection to rules, regulations, and power over the young girls this could affectively be considered perverted. This shows very clearly the difference between 1) the technical level of activity and the affective level and activity is presented in and 2) the professional and institutional role of creating an ideology from which certain actions become accepted, promoted and passed down through generations. This is the very important consideration of professionalism in the cultural historical context.

### ***A process of victimization***

In continuation hereof it is important to reflect upon the role of the professional in relation to the person who seeks help. A professional is looked up to as the person who has the answers and any daemonic actions and positions can be blocked or rejected under cover of professionalism. A professional is (in opposition of the excerpt above) not a God's angel or good community servant. Being professional gives you the right and duties act in certain ways which entail a responsibility to reflection in action. This reflection in action is addressed as 'the educated intuition' which is informing the professional about what is present while the present is unfolding.

It is very important to address the body when discussing how and when a circumstance become *perpetrating*. **If something feels like a perpetration – even though a superior tells you the opposite, it will be a perpetration.** Guiding self-regulation can end up as a perpetrating activity towards oneself superimposed by the professional who is expected to have the know-how and oppositely hence make this (to the person) perpetrating activity helpful.

This is what Svend Brinkmann (2016) calls *moral normativity*. Without moral normativity in psychology we could only discuss experiences from a technical and causal neuroscientific level while humans has a reason, and intention to do what they do. Jensine Nedergaard (2016) elaborates on the connection between psychology, philosophy and biology and addresses the body. She gives a very relevant example of how penetrations into personal sphere is accepted when conducted by professionals.

The ambiguity arise when the intention of help from the professional (in the case the Mother) has the opposite effect. This is a very important ambivalence to address into the awareness of any aspiring professional in order to develop the intuitive

reflection and co-construction together with any future client or *victim of one's interventions*. Here considering different implications of professionals

I AM PROFESSIONAL so you MUST DO AS I SAY (though you feel I am intruding)

YOU ARE NOT PROFESSIONAL if you do not act as I Imagined (helping me)

I AM NOT YET PROFESSIONAL SO I CANNOT DO ANYTHING TO HELP (glorifies the other (PROFESSIONAL) and distances from it. Can be compared to adolescent (can do foolish things, one day may grow up)

This evokes even more curiosity towards the *educated intuition*. Believe systems are very strong and especially with the power from institutional organizations (such as church and convent in the above case).

Educating a reflexive intuition is exactly being aware the bodily systems has a function and it is important also to listen to the body and inner voices and even more important as a professional to be aware how your body inform you. When the polyphony of voices and embodied intuition experience tension and doubt the possibility to change is present, not merely an invitation to self-punishment or self-constraining in any way. Intuition is hence the most useful and most dangerous information giver in this sense.

The body is here understood as a cultural informant and the body both remembers and reacts to experiences. The way we interpret the bodily signals are culturally informed. If we experience a psychological pain or violation it is in relation to cultural past, present and imagined future – in the context of *moral normativity*. In the encounter between a professional and client a negotiation between bodies (humans) is initiated. And this negotiation is constantly in play. I find in this instance three examples of professionals helping the human very interesting.

“I AS DOCTOR MUST INDUCE PAIN in order to IMPROVE HEALTH”.

“I AS PSYCHOLOGIST MUST INTERVENE in order to EASE EMOTIONAL PAIN.”

“I AS SOLDIER MUST KILL in order to CREATE PEACE”

Improvement of health, categorizations of emotional pain and the experience of peace is cultural concepts enhanced and promoted within certain cultural organizations. It is a deeply integrated experience of professionalism as an ideology that inform the moral reference frame of any action committed under this title. As also addressed in the introduction the sex worker has a similar societal function of easing bodily needs as the doctor and psychologist. With this approach it is hence possible to understand why and when the emotional reaction of being *victim* of someone's intervention (whether criminal or professional – or professional criminal).

## Summary

I addressed here dialogical processes in human identity construction as negotiation on the border from a psychological perspective, bringing together previously separate theoretical traditions about the Self and about dialogue within the framework of Dialogical Self Theory (DST). What is important is the negotiation between voices which are hierarchically organized, positioned in time and place, and extended beyond the body. There is one voice dominating the other voices in any situation yet can change and new voices can emerge. I presented the triologue model as a way to understand how professionalism is not an end point but in a constant move between helping and perpetrating in the process of learning from one's failures. This model is giving an expression on how the individual can move from negative to positive self-evaluation through different positions. This is important especially in the process of becoming a reflected professional aware of one's own limitations. The same person can have all three positions in a dialogue between positions, between evaluation good and bad with other and in time. Novelty is catalyzed by self-evaluation or evaluation of other. What is important here is how all is interrelated which lead me to further interest in the idea of wholeness in terms of dialectics. Despite their fundamental differences and status as diametrically opposite positions (Matusov 2011; Cheyne & Tarulli 1999; Wegerif 2008) the dialectics and dialogical approaches can be brought closer together and mutually enrich each other (Sullivan 2010, Nikulin 2010, Dafernos 2018). It is hence important to understand that these approaches are not fixed and stable but change and adapts in the history of human thought.

## Chapter 4

### Dialectic perspectives on development

To build further on the bordering processes, dialogues on the border and tensional relationship I will introduce a dialectical theory of development with emphasis on the second negation and the emergence of novelty in the dialectical ‘leap’. Surprisingly, only few efforts to build up a systematically dialectical perspective in psychology exists (Georgoudi, M. 1984; Greenberg, L. and Pascual-Leone, J. 2001; Riegel 1975) and even more surprisingly an exceedingly hostile stance towards dialectics exists: “Recourse to dialectics is generally associated with grand, totalizing, social theory and a ‘foundationalist’ epistemology” (emphasis in original - Gardiner, 2000, p. 119). In contrast I here propose a way of understanding dialectics as ‘the *process* of *relating* entailed in human activity’ (my emphasis - Georgoudi, M. 1984, p. 78). By looking historically at the term ‘dialectic’ a set of common assumptions is revealed and a coherent dialectic perspective emerges. The explanation why dialectics has suffered various ‘refutations’ can be traced to certain interpretations and misapplications (McGill & Parry 1948). I will here clarify the fruitful application of dialectics in psychology and build further on the development of Self.

A dialectic approach seek to understand the developing person in a changing social world. Here understood as ‘here and now’-situations and its long term affects development in an interdependent relationship (Riegel 1975). Heraclitus in Ancient Greece spontaneously expressed dialectics in the idea that: “Everything is in a state of flux” (Skirbekk & Gilje, 2001, p. 13) and he (even though he did not use the term dialectic) developed a dialectical understanding. In this sense all change and development involves a *unity of opposites* (being and non-being) (McGill & Parry 1948). The dialectic scheme was re-introduced by Salomon Maimon in 1790 and Johan Gottlieb Fichte in 1794 (Mihalitz & Valsiner 2020) who later inspired well-known thinkers Hegel and Marx (Nikulin 2010). Moving dialectics from philosophy to psychological thought the ideas of Johan Fichte is important. He stresses the unity of the Self (Ich) and non-Self (non-Ich) where the positioning of the latter is antithesis to the former (Mihalits & Valsiner 2020). The anti-thesis creates possibilities to reflect upon the thesis from an outer position.



## A long-lost discipline

Dialectics was rebirthed by the German philosophers and although Fichte was the actual inventor of the dialectical perspective (as mentioned above), it is usually Hegel who is associated with such philosophy. Hegel created (inspired by Fichte) a dialectic system inspired by the planetary orbits and the question of how they avoid collapsing into each other. Hegel is directly related to Kant, another important German thinker, and he turned Kants ontological “What is” and “What is not” into a duality of “What is” and “What is not yet” (Skirbekk & Gilje, 2001).

This is crucial in the dialectic notion the thinking of change, this distinction of the static and dynamic aspects of the changing process. The static aspect is the concrete condition of the object and the dynamic aspect is the propensity of the situation which refer to the force and movement. “What is” represents what is already coming into existence while “What is *not yet*” refers to the propensity of the becoming process of beings towards the future (Riegel 1975).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century psychology dialectics is considered a classical paradigm in social theory, but in fact only few applications in psychology. The German ideology is in conflict with the new natural sciences, but it is maintained in the political ideology of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and the communist social movements at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Mihalitz & Valsiner 2020). Through here imported to Russia as an ideology rather than a philosophy. In the process of re-creating a new Russian state dialectics are imported to psychology as a part of a societal re-education effort. Here Lev Vygotsky’s *pedalogy* is the most systematic contributor as mentioned in the introduction as he developed a general systemic study of human development. Interestingly the thoughts of dialectic philosophy was re-introduced in psychology with the post-revolutionary Russia and Lev Vygotsky was the one to elaborate how the use of dialectic should change the basic way which psychology deals with phenomena in terms of minimal Gestalts as units (Mihalits & Valsiner 2020). Vygotsky was a brilliant scholar who took dialectics seriously and his unit for analysis was a wholistic structure with inherent dialectical tensions in the relationship between the opposites ( $A \rightarrow \leftarrow B$ ). This is the place to discover novelty and emergence (in the border). The central question for Vygotsky’s theory was aesthetic synthesis (Valsiner 2015; Valsiner & van der Veer 2014) – the emergence of generalized affect. This has

not yet been solved, but possible ways of solving it require formalization of the notion of *double negation* from the dialectic philosophies (see below).

### **The unity of opposites – a principle**

‘Unity of opposites’ is neither a method nor philosophy but rather a principle and a way of reasoning which lead me to emphasize here in the beginning that this is not an attempt to cover all aspects of dialectics (how desirable this might be). The historical origin will only be covered briefly due to lack of space instead focus will be put intensely on the second negation and the dialectical leap which happen on the border and contribute to the core of understanding developmental issue in psychology. The following interpretation of the principle of unified opposites follows the notions 1) that the existence of a thing involves the existence of an opposite (e.g. a necessary relation e.g. employer-employee), 2) that a process is determined by opposite directed movements and 3) that in any continuum there is a middle ground where something is ‘both and’ or ‘neither nor’ (e.g. from child to adult) McGill and Parry (1948). This is the case in every stage of development and all transitions why dialectics is inevitable when looking into developmental issues such as developing a professional Self.

### **The second negation as center of dialectic logic**

One of the important yet often overlooked dialectic thinkers is the German thinker Johan Gottlieb Fichte. Besides his thorough critiques and corrections of Kant, he re-introduced ideas of Heraclitus in a schematic way (which inspired e.g. Hegel). What is important is the relationship between opposites and Fichte introduced *anti-thesis* as not just opposite of *thesis* but as possibility to reflect upon the thesis (Mihalits & Valsiner 2020). This reflexivity upon a contrast of parts (A and non-A) takes multiple forms – including a tension (contradiction) between the opposing-yet-united parts of the system.

Synthesis comes as the result of the tension between thesis and anti-thesis through abstraction. It is the result of a sequence of negations – the negation of the (first) negation leads to the jump beyond the initial opposition (A versus non-A).

*First negation:*            *A is not non-A (and non-A is not A)*  
*Second negation:*        *It is irrelevant (=we negate) that A is not non-A*

The key to solution of novel ways of using dialectics entail double negation ‘  
 An example in the case of a student-professional relation could be:

*First negation:*            *“After exam I am no longer a student”*  
*Second negation:*        *“Sure, I am not a student at AAU BUT I will never not  
    be a student of psychology”*

The whole here entails never-ending uniqueness inspired by the quote of Heraclitus: “You cannot step twice into the same river, for new waters are ever flowing in upon you” (after McGill & Parry 1948, p. 419). The second negation entails a new way of understanding complex distinctions by working through the initial negation. This new form demands a second negation and it drives upwards—in the “dialectical leap” to a new systemic form. This contradiction is a real aspect of existence which is continuously overcome and continuously renews itself in the process of change. How we understand unification of opposites will naturally depend on the understanding of opposites. Initially in the strict sense opposites is constituted by an entity (A) and non-entity (non-A). These two properties cannot be true at the same time *except* when on the border (which is exactly the interesting place). At the border zone the opposites would be arbitrary, and we would have to say ‘yes and no’ or ‘neither nor’. This understanding of strict opposites entails a middle and involve negation which dissolves the formal logic of opposites (McGill & Parry 1948).

The crucial notion in dialectical perspectives is the possibility of emergence and novelty in the process of becoming. This is here labelled the *dialectical leap*. Where dialectics bring opposites together in a seemingly harmonic balance, it is yet in a constant tensional relationship. This dynamic tension opens the border for change under some conditions – where the ‘whole’ is innovated and the categories of opposites can no longer be grasped as fixed and stable opposites as they are alive and changing in this dynamic system.

[A **or** non-a] →

[A **and** (mutual attraction in tension-filled relation) non-A] → ...

... **HERE IS THE 'Dialectical leap'...**

... → results in B (and non-B as opposite)

This logic overcomes dualism in favor of interrelatedness with dualism. As we already know tension occurs in the matter of direction and it can lead to overcoming a tension and emergence of a new liminality. Professionalism emerges from its counter position non-professionalism (e.g. novice, student, volunteer, private person) through the encounter with a border (e.g. certification of professionalism) and in relation to the other (client).

Professional OR non-professional →

Professional AND non-professional → ...

Integration of lifelong studying emerges

(I might be professional, but it does not matter... I continue as student every day)

The dialectical leap occurs when moving beyond the ontological static limitation of 'being' (I am X) by assuming a state of becoming (I am X while becoming Y) which happens in the social encounter (I am X while becoming Y through encounter with Z). The individual development of each and every person is the living proof of development through the encounter and relation with other. The professional act is hence a social act first otherwise we would not have learned them to be such. In order to 'be myself' I think about 'what others might think of me' and in return communicate to them what I happen to think of them (Valsiner 2010).

Becoming a professional is relative to what was before and what comes next. In addition it is relative to the acceptance as a result of logical affirmation and negation. Student and professional are different parts of a whole, and the change in official title is a matter of development. What is interesting is the acceptance of feeling professional and when it emerges. As a student the negation can be massive, or the affirmation is based on negation of other things.

*“A clinical psychologist must be a trained therapist I hence cannot be employed”*

The key to developing a feeling of being professional is in the dialectical leap where novelty can emerge. Though notice here, the feeling of being professional is not a constant -- it is a dynamic feeling in constant dialogue through life-course. It is not only the narrow transition from university to working life. This leads to the notion of assumptions and predicate adding as a very important human developmental feature. The idea that we “think of things and other” while becoming in the process of relating to and rejecting. This I will show in the case of art and aesthetics inspired by Baldwins notion of aesthetic synthesis.

### **Aesthetics as the pathway to dynamic dialectic synthesis**

Aesthetics has been discussed by classical authors as Baldwin, James & Vygotsky and in contemporary cultural psychology by e.g. Boesch and Valsiner (Nigro & Guimaraes 2016) and is a very a fundamental human activity (art, dramas, music). This is subjective objects produced by humans which influences humans over time. There seem to be a flow of interactions between art and society and most importantly this is a question of human selectiveness.

Baldwins (1911) reflections upon the predicate ‘bad’ in *thoughts and things vol.3* has some very fruitful analysis. He states that ‘rejection’ and ‘avoidance’ is as much an interest as ‘acceptance’ and ‘welcome’ and a matter of selective meaning in similar yet opposite ways. In the selective process the content of dissatisfaction may be labelled ‘bad’ and the satisfying ‘good’. Then the bad becomes the co-ordinate topic for discussion with the good. Further I will show an example of how ‘ugly’ is found to be more than the absence of conditions which constitute beauty.

Beauty is a predicate amongst other which can be established in the aesthetics and a good test case of synthesis. The non-aesthetic is not necessarily ugly when ugly is a relational fact (see figure 4.1). When the predicate of ugly is established it leaves no space for the predicate beauty and hence interferes or blocks the establishment of beauty (Baldwin 1911). The sentence “The drawing is ugly beauty” is very peculiar. Wholeness in this sense when saying “the drawing is ugly” is also “the drawing is not beautiful” (Jorgensen 2004). ‘The drawing is not beautiful’ makes possibility for

the second negation – the drawing is not non-beautiful. By this statement, the category of ugly becomes opened up for beauty in a curvilinear logic, instead of placing phenomena on a range from ugly to beauty. In this sense aesthetics is a representation of values and satisfaction is that of selective subjective interest.



*Figure 4.1: Songes Drolatesques—a 16th century trigger for further contemplation of unity of opposites*

### ***Morality as value making***

If we take the morally ‘bad’ (the actions and intentions rejected by a movement of avoidance in moral life) it is not merely a failure of ethical predicates **but the presence of immoral or morally dissatisfying marks** (Baldwin 1911). There are bad ethical values and good ones, constructive and destructive. Following this line of reasoning the polyphonic metaphor can be further understood. Polyphony is a term borrowed from musical texture consisting of two or more simultaneous lines of independent melody in opposition to a single voice or the one with a dominant voice. The system of ugly and the system beauty is exactly this system of point-against-point where voices are written in an order with each voice fitting the whole so far constructed which was previously assumed. This system pre-exist reality and badness or failure is part of the selective meaning of the experience. In this sense value is attached to the known, the facts and the true.

The process ‘becoming bad’ is the end point of the interest of avoidance. Just as there is an ideal good always to strive towards in never ending development there inherently exist an ‘ideal bad to avoid’ (Baldwin 1911). There is a variety of bads – crimes, faults, sins – and one might say that by avoiding these we are avoiding the ‘greater evil’. If we imagine a case of pure destruction – demons only with intention of harming and hurting – with an ideal of being as bad as possible, they would indeed be guided by a concept of ‘ideally bad’ (which here is the opposite and means help) to which they will avoid and reject. Being ideally good is also a great cover of demonic actions (in imagination and how to avoid and distance oneself) and entail the *fear of not becoming*. Further I will exemplify a tension-filled relation between doing good and doing bad in the test case of Robin Hood.

### ***Robin Hood – a heroic outlaw***

Take the case of Robin Hood (Danish pendent is called Jens Langkniv). Robin Hood is Royal to King Richard but not to the Sheriff of Nottingham. The drama that takes place is a negotiation of loyalty. In most folklore he is a legend because of his interest in rightfulness and world famous for instructing his men to ‘rob from the rich to give to the poor’. He is a heroic outlaw and a professional conman. What is here the case is a positioning of the self (HELPER) that permits the activity (ROBBING).

According to dialogical Self theory the self embraces the different I-positions that are engaged in the dialogue. The relation between positions (I am HELPER >< I am not PERPETRATOR) that need to be regulated to cope with tension that rises from the co-existence of inconsistent subsystems in the self are expected. In this case the intensity/devotion (helping the poor) is in a stronger position than loyalty to the law. The counterpart/Other (in this case the ones robbed) consider Robin Hood a perpetrator and an outlaw. What the above shows, is how a certain situation can easily change the preestablished meaning in an ongoing process. The same action (racism, killing) can be socially acceptable in one context yet not in another – and the same context can maintain different conflicting meanings in unique persons due to their preestablished assumptions.

## Summary

The dialectic principle is considered important in psychological understanding of development and especially understanding exactly the *process of relating* on the psychological border. Dialectics is a systemic approach to the *whole* and approach the dynamic tensions holding the minimal psychological instance (bi-directional forces) together – and makes it generalizable to any psychological phenomenon (abstraction). Adding the dialectic notion to the previous discussion of the relation between professional, perpetrator and helper provides an essential understanding of relating to 1) the position being rejected while relating e.g. I am a helper not a perpetrator, and 2) the fear of *not becoming* and hence not succeed in terms of social and existential demands. This is the process a professional in occupational practice is going through when recognizing one's own insufficiency (non-professionalism); and then evolves.



## Chapter 6

### Towards Professionalism – a never ending process

As outlined this thesis is an attempt to grasp how a *sign* (in this case the title of professional) gets its significant meaning and feeds further into the internalization-externalization processes. What follows is an attempt to widen the implications of the terms professional, helping, and perpetrating with the overall goal of advancing the professional's educated intuition. Mastery of any task in the professional world entails it becoming flexible in use—based on immediate intuition that has become developed in practice. This discussion moves through the issue of 1) humaneness, 2) trustability, and it culminates in a discussion of 2) the art (in opposition to science) of professionalism.

#### Humaneness

A question often overlooked in contemporary psychology is addressing human *beings*. As humans we share some general regularities which we already addressed above. I have argued for a limited number of regularities, 1) a person is influenced by an infinite number of factors, 2) the human retrospectively reasons in the process of abduction and hence, is always changeable 3) the regularities stem from participation in a shared culture (already implicitly familiar to the person) and 4) a person is always a unique individual. These general characteristics of the human species seem to be taken for granted (Smedslund 2009).

What is characteristic of being human is (ironically) being the only species capable of being inhumane. Think about dogs – they can act aggressively or attack humans, but they do not act inhumane. Neither do they act ‘in-dog-ish’ (in Danish: *uhundede*) (Brinkmann 2019). They are –always-- and behave always as dogs. Humans can treat a dog in inhumane ways, and often we prescribe human characteristics to the dog “looking guilty”, though it most likely is just an act of submission which is in the dog's nature. Humans also always act *human* although an act can also be considered *inhuman*.

Being human is paradoxically realizing one can become inhumane. This idea is rather old and can be traced all the way back to Aristotle (to perceive that one

perceives) followed by thorough analysis by Hegel in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century of the human capability to see one-self from the outside and recognize the humane in another human (in his case slaves) (Brinkmann 2005). Descartes addressed this self-consciousness as the ‘sole arbiter of truth’ and by this put an enormous responsibility on the individual to be the primary judge of one’s own actions. Kant followed and reinforced this by arguing that each individual is under obligation to make moral decisions conform to the existing moral law – which would imply the individuals awareness of its own inability to become truly moral (Brinkmann 2005). Yet two hundred years later the notion of Self and psyche has become more precarious (Zagaria, Ando, & Zennaro 2020). It seems that the notion of the self has been watered out and the notion of the innocent indexical ‘I’ has become a word with multiple meanings. This reflection gives us a puzzling result. It is an awareness that we are capable of using our intellect to manipulate others or torture them with newly invented, sophisticated tools (guillotine, gas chambers, electrocution); the Holocaust, Apartheid or the genocide in Rwanda being concrete examples.

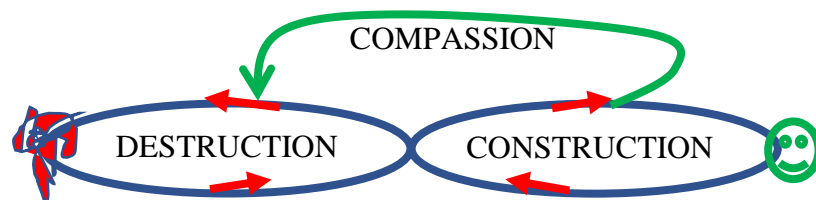
The dual distinction of humane vs inhumane has proven itself insufficient (Staub 1993; Welzer 2004), while the inhumane is exactly human. In the Danish language a third word exists which proves itself to be better suited to describe not only being human or humane but describes the interpersonal solidarity in opposition to inhumane: *med-menneskelig* (translated: co-humane). An inhuman being is considered an ‘embodiment of evil’. Committing inhumane deeds such as participating in destruction or other anti-social conduct is considered part of an inhumane infinite. A co-human being has an affirmative posture of friendliness and respect toward fellow human beings. The interpersonal solidarity means the compassionate relatedness amongst people, based on reciprocal respect for the life and dignity of each other. Being co-humane is loving, caring, forgiving, friendly, kind and altruistic behavior as infinite. Being human contain reflections on being inhuman and co-human – all the time *being human*. Being human is understood as a range of infinite possibilities of in-humane and co-humane conduct:

“In-human”  $\leftarrow \rightarrow$  “human”  $\leftarrow \rightarrow$  “co-human”

Inhuman and co-human are here presented as opposite extremes in a co-genetic logic. Here I will explain how closely related the opposites are and constantly feeding into each other.

### *On the border of destruction and construction*

Human beings are open biological systems, rational, emotional, social, future-oriented and even religious and ideological. We seek meaning – even in the most meaningless – we even accept the meaning ‘meaningless’. Meaning making systems and regulation systems is developed through trajectory – and even cuts cross one’s own trajectory and the value system we operate from can be inherited and stick to us as *ghosts* from the past. It is hence one’s own understanding of the borders, that creates the distinction of social and anti-social, hate and love, inhumane and co-humane. Looking at the specific mechanisms under which these borders can inhibit or enhance the exchange relations between parts within the whole viewing them as parts of a functioning system becomes central. Often, these two are a ‘pair’, opposites related and entangled. Inhumanity is connected to the destructive sides of humanness whereas humanness is the current state (non-affected). In the history of humankind destruction and construction are mutually entangled resulting in a heroic effort as well as enemyzations hence a unity of construction and destruction and **being human contain both compassion and inhumanity**. As Erik Ringmar writes: “The desire for sublime experiences is still strong in modern societies and it still leads Europeans – and North Americans – to commit atrocities in the name of liberal values”. Compassion as an appraised effort in co-humanity is growing out of the constructive sides yet becomes applied to destructive sides.



*Figure: Feed-forward loop of compassion into destruction*

This leads to the insecurities of trustability. If the compassion is applied destructively and self-consciousness is an awareness of our own immorality then the intuition of what we do must be educated and trusted.

## **Trustability**

Jan Smedslund makes a very profound examination of the trustability in the professional relation between client and psychologist based on the definition: “*P trusts O, if, and only if, P thinks that O will avoid doing anything bad to P*” given the axiom “*P thinks that O can do something bad to P*”.

“Establishing a trusting relationship between psychologist and client appears to be a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for successful treatment. It is necessary because if the client does not trust the psychologist, the client will be preoccupied with attempting to avoid being harmed by the psychologist, notably by avoiding difficult matters and by not daring to try out new thoughts and behaviors. However, not to learn anything new also means no change. Therefore the client must trust the psychologist in order to learn. Conversely, if the psychologist does not trust the client, for example by hiding behind his or her professional status, and hereby not being able to pursue the treatment with engagement and concentration. The establishment of mutual, often called “therapeutic alliance,” is a subtle and multifaceted, but necessary process.” Smedslund, 2012, p. 651

Addressing the professional role in psychology implies addressing trust. Trust is the foundation of any successful communication, yet, the risk of failing is a part of being a professional. The client might express dissatisfaction with the effort made by the professional which may provoke a potentially disturbing fear of being rejected as a professional. In this way the professional status is only superficially protecting psychologists (or any other professionals) by high status and by blocking insight to one's private life.

## ***Achieving the status of professional***

One can be a professional employer, employee, parent, student, in the sense of being experienced, having routine, being acknowledged, or asked to give advice to someone less experienced. In terms of Foucault the discourse of *professional* is the first to

address. When a person makes a statement there is a field of information beyond the statement to validate if the statement is trustworthy. The status of the person 'being psychologist' involves criteria of competence and knowledge from institutions, systems, pedagogic norms, legal conditions that give the right – and yet limitations – to practice and to extend one's knowledge. It involves a system of differentiation and relations (the division of attributions, hierarchical subordination, functional complementarity, the request for and the provision of information) with other individuals that possess their own status. It also involves a number of characteristics that define its functioning in relation to society as a whole (the right to intervene and make decisions in different cases, supervising the psychological well-being of a population, getting payment, negotiating a form of contract with the group who entrusts one with the task and requests advice, treatment or cure). The status of being a psychologist is peculiar in all forms of society and civilization – being a doctor is hardly ever an undifferentiated or interchangeable position (Foucault 2002), yet many different ways of practicing (witch doctors) exists. The same goes for psychologists. The *therapeutic powers* cannot be dissociated from the statutorily defined person who has the right to perform as a therapist and claim the power to assist in overcoming suffering. Yet, if the power is claimed (I am able to help) but the performance is poor (but I do not know what I am doing) can the *helper feeling* (experienced by the psychologist) be an actual perpetrator (krænker) position? The important question which remain is how a person becomes who he or she is? Take the following example:

I OFFER YOU HELP ON THE ROADSIDE (BUT KNOW NOTHING  
ABOUT CARS) AND YOU ACCEPT

Yet, if I offer you help, and you accept it as help can it then still be counted as help even though the car did not drive again? This counts as a subjective evaluation of the situation and the outcome is multidirectional:

- 1)YOU ARE USELESS YOU DID NOT HELP ME
- 2)YOU PERPETRATOR I DO NOT NEED HELP
- 3)YOU ARE NICE TO TRY AND HELP ME
- 4)YOUR PRESENCE FEELS HELPFUL AS I AM NOT GOING  
THROUGH THIS ALONE

The same action can hence be understood in different ways depending on the foregoing events. Surely, just as there is a consensus on ‘best practice’ there must also be rough agreement on what is lousy treatment. In the book *Bad Therapy* by Jeffrey A. Kottler and Jon Carlson (2003) they outline how the *bad performance* is a certainty in the profession of psychologists and not just amongst newcomers, but also very experienced therapists feel deficient. In the introduction however, the authors struggle to define and categorize *bad therapy*:

“It’s not easy to define bad therapy. As with everything else in life, it is all in the eye of the beholder. It is a subjective assessment of one or both participants in which relative meaning and value are ascribed to the outcome” (p. 5)

“What is bad therapy to some may be desired outcome to others. One therapist considers his worst work to have occurred when a client stormed out of his office because he wasn’t responding to her stated needs. His supervisor, however, considered it a masterful session in that he didn’t collude with her self-defeating, hidden agenda. The therapist judges the quality of his work based on the assessment of his satisfied customer, whereas his supervisor looks at other criteria that are based on her informed, expert evaluation. About the one clear indication of failure is when both parties agree there has been no apparent change.” (p. 6, emphasis in original)

“If the client ends up worse than before therapy started, and continuous to deteriorate after the sessions and prematurely, that would definitely be poor work. Likewise, if the client appears to improve significantly, we might conclude that the therapy was a success” (p. 6).

The problem in this reasoning is the fact that what *appears* to happen might not be what is happening but rely on a subjective feeling into the situation (*Einführung*—which in its original sense referred to person-into-world relation) guided by subjective past experiences in a process of self-evaluation creating possible outcomes and future scenarios (future – past relation).

### ***Making reality real***

In the process of changing the meaning the question of the ‘real reality’ emerges (Valsiner 2014).

With this knowledge the goal here is not to provide an answer to any “should”-questions, nor judge on certain morality or otherwise attempt to fixate the meaning of a certain system – quite the reverse. This opens up a space for intuition to be educated by awareness of cultural situatedness as a part of a lifelong learning process of negating and negating the negation (second negation).

In an essay Donzé (2018) address the question – “how can we be sure that this judgement is not a kind of illusion of our own mind”? (p. 198). The matter of right and wrong and moral statements in general are constructed within a social field. Thinking, and introspectively assessing our thoughts, is a constructive process and in many ways similar to poetics which again question the epistemology of moral thought. The experience of the *artist* (the creator of thought) has long been ignored in order to establish a universal aesthetic judgement.

This can be linked back to the introductory argumentation for the centrality of imagination and art in psychology and in addition for life in general. Stenner and Zittoun challenges the traditional scientific psychological stance by addressing how art and imagination can be the starting point for objective knowledge and further information of the regularities of human *fancy*. Beyond this so-called *real world* the experiences of the *unreal*, *untrue* and *imaginary* becomes of interest. These experiences, however, tend to be treated within a dominant ontological framework with respect to a pre-given standard of reality (Stenner & Zittoun 2020).

### **The art of professionalism**

In the history of psychology, the social role of psychologists emerged in the wake of societal changes in the end of 19th century. Sigmund Freud being the most famous psychologists in the world initiated a clinical practice thinking psychological issues in terms of health issues inspired by the medical sciences and physics and creating the ‘talking cure’ (1911). Paradoxically, the idea of ‘cure’ creates an arbitrary goal of scientific success in psychology. ‘Health’ and ‘cure’ are affectivated cultural concepts mediated by humans and experienced by humans. Targeting this field of experience as targeting objects or processes measured or investigated keeps psychology in its preestablished categories (Christensen 2020a). Standards of performance leads us to exclude, add or look at averages in the way we look upon things, objects and processes as it is from a distanced and distant position. The goal of success (both

academic and therapeutic) leads in a dialectical thinking to a synthesis with its opposite – failure. Striving towards helping blurs the aim of creating a space of reflection in action (Christensen 2020b).

The best professionals know far more than what they can express by words and when they meet a challenge due to their profession, they work to solve this specific challenge based on some unconscious improvisation. Donald A. Schön (2006, 2013) has developed a position which investigates the *reflection-in-action* by a thorough comparison of the study of architecture and psychotherapy (2006). At first sight these two professions are very different, though interestingly chosen by their way of solving riddles in practice. Both professionals (the architect and psychotherapist) approach a problem as this is a singular case which the professional has no previous knowledge about. When a case is treated as a singular case no standard theory or technique is applicable. Hence the art is to construct an interpretation of the situation as it is, and when it is problematic, redefinition is needed. The experience lies in the reflection upon a unique case – not with the purpose of generalizing to other cases – but also as a contribution to a repertoire of themes one can use to compose new variations (Rojas 2018; Klemp et al 2008). A similar description of the professional can be seen in Smedslund (2012) with the term *a bricoleur*. The bricoleur is a person who uses a priori knowledge which does not deviate much from what clinicians do. The purpose is to clarify why a professional psychologist is justified working in this way. Ultimately, the therapeutic instrument is not found in the counselling techniques but is embodied in the counselor (Ho 2019).

The practitioner of psychology craves for theoretical contributions to enhance and strengthen their clinical practice – something they can “use”. This idea applies when thinking the theoretician is a composer and clinical psychologist is the conductor and the client is the instrument and who needs to play itself. Within the theoretical practice (learning at university) the idea of *knowledge preserved in books* is present. The educational practice of learning a curriculum in order to achieve the status of professional has become more and more (100 years ago a university was a place for new knowledge to emerge now it is a place to teach textbook). In clinical practice (therapy with or counselling a client) the idea is *the client presents a problem and the therapist assist in reflecting together with the client about the origins of the problem, the obstacles for overcoming the problem and what cultivates the problem and makes it continue in a process of joint learning*. This process transferable from textbooks



and when confronted with a client you need to master a new and peculiar way of conversation between unequal conversation partners and uniquely supervised by a more experienced practitioner with his or her idea of what is good practice. When initiating *therapeutic skills training* the idea of getting to play an instrument is present. This is a live long learning and improvement of skills and the supervisor function as the conductor. The problem is, if this result in major focus on how to play right (feeling into the method and theory) instead of playing in harmony with the client (*reflection in practice while practicing*).

What makes psychology unique is reflection in practice and the constant developmental focus. The gap between study and profession is created and dug deeper, every time the practitioner needs something to “use”. This tool-box metaphor - *what does my method or theory say to this and how can I transform this into practice* - disables the idea of dwelling and feeling into the phenomena and in my experience, the more you dwell and reflect, the more complicated dynamics opens up the less use is the theories and methods from textbooks. In reality you develop a new method for each new issue (Christensen 2020b). Yet novelty, inspiration and inputs is necessary from outside to develop.

### ***Helping as the aim of professional success?***

In psychology nothing is random, nothing is common, and nothing is a matter of course. Freeman (2019) has engaged in, for two decades now, a project of poetics of the Other with the purpose of understanding human experience more than human nature.

The idea of re-introducing the dialectic thinking along with dialogical thinking in psychology is fruitful - yet -- if the aim remains unchanged any attempt to re-define psychology will result in yet another approach among the existing ones, rather than radical innovation. In summary, it is all down to the meaning attached to the phenomena. If psychology is the science of humans, we must agree on what makes humans human, and if psychologists must help, we must agree on what is ‘help’. This is utopic. The subject matter of psychology is human mental life/health which battles a conceptual confusion. All of this is cultural and in constant dynamic movement with every instant, unique in irreversible time – therefore I do suggest re-writing psychology in direction of further elaboration of the complicated dynamics of

phenomenon (help) that the human (helper) needs to understand as the (helping) act is unfolding. As a young scholar I have been tortured by the academic machine of producing a myriad of studies and in this process repeatedly been disappointed. The existing perspectives have largely been causal, static, and ontological in their nature while the phenomena confronted is by far more complex and dynamic. To join the choir of psychological criticism what we need is the opposite of a hard science – an artistic science. What if the project of psychology **is being involved and personally attached instead of detached?** And the project of therapy **is to let the clients get to you and affect you?** These notions are important for future psychology while the focus of individual in relations, dialectics, and dialogues enhance the search for dynamics, development, transformation, and emergence and makes theory better fitted to phenomena yet complicated to express and communicate. The artistic stance is not free of rules, but the aesthetics and reflexivity are important. The project here is to understand better the social role of the psychologist and the art of psychology in order to enhance the understanding of developing a professional Self into a psychologist.

## Summary

This discussion has pointed to the notion of the potential of violating as a helper. Being human entail the potential of acting inhumane as well as cohumane – and that the same action under different conditions can be interpreted in both ways. Hence the same action can have seemingly opposite meanings. This leads us to wonder about the trust in the relation. Trust is here presented as the base for a constructive relationship – yet could be an institutional illusion. Trust is necessary as a professional if perpetration should be avoided and entail a negation between bodies. Establishing a trusting relationship is an art of building what is known as a “therapeutic alliance”. This alliance is inherently not ‘evidence-based’ but a process to be investigated while unfolding similar to the process of making music. This has led to questioning what is the goal of success in the science of psychology with the answer of addressing psychology as an art and hence seek to understanding the aesthetics and developing regularities in human being. This implicate an educated intuition in any situation.

## Chapter 7

### **Conclusive remarks: Pathways in Affective Transitions in The professional Self**

Ending a formal education and *becoming professional* is a single moment with an eternity in it. Authorization is a life transition which entail not only authority but also doubt and fear. Intervening in another human's life is not without the risk of becoming the violator. Violation is a term that cover an intervention with a negative outcome in opposition to helping which denotes a positive outcome. Professionalism is the right and duty to intervene under certain circumstances. It is a new beginning in the life-long journey of learning through reflection in practice. Moving forward to this day is a result of a life trajectory. This thesis has pointed to the inherent logic that there can be no 'finally skilled profession' achieved if all through one's professional life there is an ongoing dialogue between Self and The Other(s) that entail endless development. The "finally skilled" profession is entry point to losing skills (newly unskilled professional). The stop in dialogicality of living is extermination of the profession - the certified profession stops innovation and starts policing its borders. This thesis has been a journey through the development of professionalism and has pointed to some very important issues.

From a cultural historical point of view professionals have been affiliated in institutional organizations which have a power position in community. The development of belonging to a certain religion or land which above all must be defended is a natural part of human history and has been the reference frame for many atrocities committed by and towards human beings. Working as a professional is more than a certificate given by another human. It is a deeply integrated experience of professionalism as an ideology and the moral reference frame of any action committed under this title.

The Self uses more than just an intraindividual development. The cultural psychological theories stress a culture's influence on a person's development in a never-ending mediating process between Self and Other. We move away from mere conclusion of 'external factors' and 'causal explanations' of phenomena and reach to a reflection of constructed constraints, dialogues, catalysts, and holism which is deeply intertwined with personal self-development.

Becoming professional is a subjective transformation guided not only by a formal and technical transition but also an affective journey. The morally 'right' is in this way guided by institutional demands and subjective feeling simultaneously. The institutional demands are combined with the current strive toward an imaginary ideal. The past experiences inform the present and the predicates added to explain the affective transitions is what inform the Self-Other-evaluation as the catalysts to inform the experience on the range between helping and perpetrating. Experience moves from the mere technical level to the deeply felt aesthetic experiences and the meaning selective yet informed by normative expectations.

Becoming a professional is additionally a process of recognizing that there is no end to learning and the individual is (and will always be) the primary judge of one's action. Acting morally is recognizing the possibility to act immoral and creating trust is a question of making the other believe you have no bad intentions. Hence the relational process of professionalism becomes central and it is a position in constant negotiation between bodies.

The peculiar discoveries from this thesis point very clearly to the professional as an artist. The artist is the reflected practitioner who uses the information from the here and now – in opposition to merely academically justified judgement. The reflected practitioner is aware of the selective meaning and can engage knowing that each moment is irreversible. Time is new and informed by a constructed past with feed forward loops to evaluate the expected outcome and enhance one's understanding of the here and now in development.

The purpose of this thesis has been to create reflections upon integration of a professional identity informed by the notions of cultural affectivation. It becomes clear that being professional is a role enacted and it can only be trusted if the person acting upon trusts no harm will be done.

## **Future-oriented questions and discussions**

### ***Ethical considerations in the professional role***

This thesis additionally addresses future challenges and questions. One question which remains in the shadows of this piece of work is the question of the knowledge a professional psychologist will attain. With this knowledge the ethical dimensions

of having extraordinary psychological insight and use it with respect towards interpersonal relations in the private sphere. This is a balance between having an interest in psychological phenomena but without becoming a perpetrator—for example in the questions I pursue. This issue is general in the profession of psychology both for students, supervisors, and other professionals regarding each other but also with friends, family and other interpersonal relations, especially when one comes to know of personal issues in direct contact to the professional practice. When this is such a hard balance in real life it deserves further attention in research so as to navigate this in order to teach it to students as a part of professionalism and professional readiness.

### ***The psychologist as an idealized magician***

Another underlying assumption which deserves further attention is the idealized construction of the role of the psychologist. This aspect serves multiple purposes. First, the discourses regarding psychologism of the society moves beyond the diagnosis society (referring to the term by Svend Brinkmann). I find it peculiar how at the end of a formal education severe struggles of answering what is the core construct of psychology and what does a psychologist do creeps into our minds. I might be naïve thinking I was supposed to know after five years or maybe mere stupidity of not understanding the coherence in the field. Neither explanation serves as fruitful. The idea of a psychologist as *a magician with healing superpower* is present in society not just amongst young people wanting to become psychologists, but also is spread among peers. This is often amongst psychology students discussed as ‘the prejudice from strangers’ yet being able to state what we cannot do (e.g. handreadings) but not so much what we actually can besides what the title allows. This fear of *not becoming* makes a cultural existential approach to this phenomena relevant. In addition, there is a lot of criticism of psychology not only from critical psychology but also e.g. in feminist theory that need to be taken into account.

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