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# Approaches to the **concept** of **Trans-Subjectivity**







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3

Approaches  
to the concept  
of Trans-Subjectivity

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# Approaches to the concept of Trans-Subjectivity

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# INDICE

Trans-Subjectivity and the self.....	11
<i>Dimitri Ginev</i>	
Trans-Subjectivity and care: modelling the Hermeneutics of Being.....	53
<i>Ian Coxon</i>	
Trans-Subjectivation and electronic networks: avatars of the zoon <i>elektronikon</i> .....	97
<i>Vicente Huici Urmeneta, Andrés Davila Legerén</i>	
Multidimensional Sociohermeneutics on Social Studies: a pragmatic and integrative perspective .....	125
<i>Juan R Coca, Susana Gómez-Redondo</i>	



## CHAPTER 1

# TRANS-SUBJECTIVITY AND THE SELF

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11

### ABSTRACT

Agency-operating-in-practices is unavoidably agency that stems from agential behavior. In alienating from agents, it becomes embodied in configurations of practices. The fact that it operates in configured practices does not make it agency produced by practices. In each particular context of agential behavior, it transcends the latter, while desires, intentions, and motivations remain entangled with configured practices. The expression of “existential agency” stands for this ever transcending agency. The paper argues that the Self’s personal authenticity and the lifeforms’ trans-subjective authenticity find their dynamic unity in existential agency. In participating in various cultural lifeforms, the person is ecstatically positioning her Self towards the meaningful articulation of these lifeforms in a manner that leads to a proliferation of the person’s cultural identities taking the form of

narratively organized I-positions that are able to enter into a dialogue with one another. Against this background, the concept of the Self's authenticity is handled.

*Keywords:* authentic Self, configured practices, cultural lifeforms

## THE COOPERATION OF THE SELF WITH EXISTENTIAL AGENCY

**T**his paper introduces the concept of agency that transcends individual and collective behavior, without becoming disentangled from agents' dispositions, beliefs, desires, and intentions. For reasons that will become clear in due course, I call it existential agency. Existential agency works within and through configurations of practices that are capable of constituting and articulating cultural forms of life, each of them distinguished by its own everydayness. These lifeforms are constantly projected upon possibilities. In their sui generis way of being, the configurations of practices simultaneously generate possibilities for the articulation of meaning and contextually actualize these possibilities. Two correlated processes take place when a configuration appropriates and actualizes a certain possibility: (a) a shift in the horizon of possibilities whereby new possibilities become revealed and existing possibilities become precluded, and (b) a re-contextualization of the articulation meaning triggered by small changes in the configuration of practices. I will approach the correlation of these processes in terms of *interplay of practices and possibilities*. Since this interplay articulates meaning, there is a hermeneutic circularity operating in it. It is this circularity that enables the sui generis way of being of configured practices constituting authentic cultural lifeforms.

The existential agency works within the interplay, and is characterized by the hermeneutic circularity of the articulation of meaning. In its *modus operandi*, existential agency transcends any contextual manifestation of individual and collective agency entangled with configured practices. In working within the interplay of practices and possibilities, existential agency is also ontologically predicated on potentiality-for-being that avoids any representation in terms of factual presence. Existential agency is part and parcel of the interplay, and accordingly has an important hermeneutic dimension. Existential agency meaningfully articulates the lifeforms disclosed by the ensembles of configured practices. Since this articulation takes the form of interpretive circularity, the way in which existential agency operates should be addressed in hermeneutic terms.

Agency-operating-in-practices is unavoidably agency that stems from agential behavior. In alienating from agents, it becomes embodied in configurations of practices. The fact that it operates in configured practices does not make it agency produced by practices. However, this statement does not preclude the possibility that there is agency capable of gaining a relative independence from agential behavior. It is agency that is rooted in agential behavior, but nevertheless capable of transcending this behavior. By existing within and through the hermeneutic circularity of articulating meaning, this kind of agency proceeds in accordance with the characteristic hermeneutic situations of the lifeforms' articulation. To put it otherwise, the ecstatic unity releases its own agency within the interplay of practices and possibilities through which actors' agential subjectivity and practices' trans-subjectivity work in concert when articulating lifeforms. Existential agency operates through the entanglement of agential subjectivity with practices' trans-subjectivity.

A special focus in the remainder will be placed on the Self's struggle for authenticity by participating in ensembles of practices articulating authentic cultural lifeforms. Anthony Giddens (1991, 75) defines the Self in terms of a "reflexive project for which the individual is responsible." Yet the individual can only take this responsibility, if she were capable of designing this reflexive project as an authentic personal existence. It is my contention that the individual is able to achieve this goal only by participating in authentic cultural lifeforms. This paper argues that the Self's personal authenticity and the lifeforms' trans-subjective authenticity find their dynamic unity in existential agency. The ecstatic character of the Self is addressed by scrutinizing the Self's way of belonging at once to herself and to existential agency. Because of this character, the existential possibilities upon which the Self projects her personal being and the possibilities which existential agency trans-subjectively opens are united within the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency. It is argued that in participating in various cultural lifeforms, the person is ecstatically positioning her Self towards the meaningful articulation of these lifeforms in a manner that leads to a proliferation of the person's cultural identities taking the form of narratively organized I-positions that are able to enter into a dialogue with one another.

Saying that "the Self participates in a lifeform" does not mean that the lifeform is out there, and the Self is entering into its present-at-hand organization. According to the adequate image of this participation, in appropriating the possibilities of articulating a lifeform as her own possibilities of existence, the Self appropriates this articulation as her way of being. Participation is an ongoing choosing and appropriating whereby the Self projects her existence upon the articulation of the lifeforms she appropriates. Yet in order

to accomplish this “appropriating projection”, the Self co-operates with the mode of operation of existential agency that articulates the lifeform. The insistence on the ecstatic unity of the subjectivity of agential behavior and the configurations of practices contextualizing this behavior – as well as on the entanglement of the Self with configured practices – is directed against an established schematism in the behavioral and social sciences. According to this schematism, the cultural being of the Self is determined by the way in which the processes of learning in personal development integrate the formation of volitional, emotional, and cognitive subjectivity with behavioral norms, patterns, standards, and models. These processes are studied under the Cartesian assumption of an ongoing interiorizing of these norms, patterns, standards, and models as they are handed down by cultural traditions and exteriorizing of personal subjectivity in intersubjective media.

In appropriating various lifeforms, the Self pluralizes the positions with which she identifies herself. In conversing with each other, these positions constitute the Self as a “mini-society” within her personal life. However, the discourse of a “mini-society of positions within the Self” – often employed in dialogical self theory – presupposes the internalization of established “external” positions that the Self encounters in her social life, whereby these positions become (in full agreement with the paradigm of discreteness) “parts of the Self”. In opposing this discourse in several respects, I claim that the formation of a mini-society of I-positions takes place in the ecstatic unity of subjectivity and trans-subjectivity, and cannot be enclosed in the Self’s mental life. Scrutinizing the ecstatic unity of the Self and configured practices suggests an alternative to the controversial schematism of internalizing the voices of significant

Others in one's personal life. Moreover, there is a continuum between the dialogues within the Self and the dialogues with other persons. More often than not, the latter are a continuation of the former. The continuum of dialogues characterizing the dialogical Self is enabled by the cooperation with existential agency.

The ever arising opportunities for achieving authenticity in the Self's existence are projected upon trans-subjective horizons, while the "will for authenticity" is rooted in the Self's subjectivity. What mediates between them is again existential agency. The way of treating the Self in the perspective of existential agency is directed, in the first place, against the mentalist-essentialist doctrine that "mind, consciousness, and self have all named the same thing, whatever it is that makes some individual a person ... and that our minds, our consciousness, our selves are governed by natural laws." (Flanagan 1996, 12) The authors who – with essentially different intents – speak of "the death of the subject" basically refer to the subject as portrayed in this doctrine. But if I would have to single out the genuine antipode of the conception that relates personal authenticity to existential agency I would pick out not classical mentalism, but the so-called view of animalism about the self's identity. Eric Olson (2007, 211) summarizes the essence of this view by claiming that "if there is a human animal located where you are, and it thinks just as you do, it is hard to see how you could be anything other than that animal." Animalism states that (1) the personal identity of the Self over time has nothing to do with psychology as the latter supposedly identifies constitutive mental properties, and (2) facts about interrelated mental states cannot define the numerical identity of a human being.

To put it more succinctly, each human being is numerically identical with a human animal. The main target of animalism are

all views that are centered around the following conditional: If persons and animals are distinct entities, and each particular human being is a person, it follows that humans are not animals. But this conditional is senseless, since the psychological approaches to identity are not equipped with criteria for the numerical identity of anything. A theory of personal identity has nothing to do with the persistence of whatever entity. The metaphysical issue concerning this numerical identity is best tackled by a naturalist approach that starts with the assumption that a “human animal can persist without any psychological continuity whatever.” (Olson 2007, 40) The point is that the person does not persist at all, and no numerical identity can be attributed to the way of being of the Self. Olson and other champions of “animalism” suggest that if there is an entity called a person-capable-of-achieving-identity it should persist over time whereby gaining its numerical identity. Since all features of this entity – as defined in psychological terms – fail to meet this condition, and humans do not persist by virtue of a certain sort of psychological continuity, it is exclusively “our being animals” that provides necessary and sufficient conditions for human organisms to persist. Against “animalism”, I will only point out that (1) a person (personal existence) does not persist over time, and (2) achieving personal identity (which is always contextualized) excludes assigning a numerical identity to a person. A person does not persist over time, since she temporalizes (via existential choices) her existence within the temporality of interplaying practices and possibilities. A numerical identity can only be assigned to a thing that has a pure presence. The personal existence has no facet or aspect that is purely present.

Existential agency comes into being through the way in which both personal subjectivity and communal collectivity (as

distinguished by “collective subjectivity”) are transcended by the possibilities upon which actors (as individual persons and communities) project their being-in-concerted-practices as potentiality-for-being. The choices of possibilities is a dimension of one’s personal being within the world, provided that the world is a transcending horizon of possibilities. Appropriating trans-subjective possibilities and making them possibilities in one’s personal life is a unitary process constitutive for the way in which the personal existence projects its being upon a horizon of possibilities, thereby opening itself to trans-subjective forms of life. Due to the ongoing transformation of possibilities generated by practices into existential possibilities, the Self succeeds in retaining her potentiality-for-being. The Self never morphs into an actual presence-at-hand. One can state that the terrain on which the appropriation of trans-subjective possibilities takes place is the Self-ecstatically-united-with-existential-agency. Since the transcending horizons of possibilities are projected by ensembles of concerted practices, the Self is also entangled with (contextualizing) configurations of practices as they meaningfully articulate lifeforms. The diversification of positions and cultural identities arises from the Self’s entanglement with configured practices.

As a trans-subjective operator, existential agency has some characteristics of a non-personal (and even a non-communal) power. But it is by no means a power through which the Self’s autonomy and authenticity are threatened to get lost. In trying to come to terms with this line of argumentation, one has to admit that the Self is the “absolute source” of agency. But once the latter has been released from this source, it cannot be stopped to become trans-subjectively dispersed by the interplay of practices and possibilities. Since the dispersal entangles the Self with contexts

constituted by configured practices, the release of agency from the Self does not imply alienation in the way in which, for instance, the worker gets alienated from the working process in the Capitalist mode of production. In contrast to the Marxian conceptions of alienation, the Self's alienated agency does not transform itself into a demiurge that determines the Self's actions, activities, and social roles she can play. As I will stress on several occasions in this paper, existential agency never operates independently of the Self's subjectivity and agency. The concept of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency is immune not only to readings in terms of the speculative philosophy of alienation, but to purely psychological interpretations as well.

A proper way of making sense of how the Self exists in cooperating with existential agency consists in reflecting upon events and phenomena that “belong neither to a first-person perspective as subjective acts that we perform, nor to the third-person perspective as an objective process registered or effected from the outside.” (Waldenfels 2011, 46) These events happen neither in the subjective-psychological time of personal experiences, memories, affections, desires, hopes, etc., nor do they take place in objective time. Events like the Self's sensitivity towards trans-subjective opportunities she faces in various contexts, or the Self's positioning towards the meaning of a lifeform, or those which Bernhard Waldenfels – in drawing on Levinas – subsumes under the category of the Self's “asymmetric responsivity” are temporalizing the Self's being within the temporality of existential agency. Waldenfels discusses the non-localizable events (in particular) in connection with attempts to cross the borderline between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. It is my contention that the events and phenomena produced by the Self-cooperating-with-

existential-agency can be achieved by integrating the ontological difference into empirical theories of the Self whereby these theories will undergo significant reformulations. Opening a perspective beyond the first-person and the third-person perspective of conceptualization is not to be based on a “circulative movement” between phenomenological description of subjective experiences and descriptions (in neutral terms) of how the Self constitutes her Self in her personal history.

In developing a concept of self-agency, Elisabeth Pacherie (2011, 442) critically refers to the classical view in the behavioral sciences that postulates the pervasive role of the self’s consciousness in action production. The self plays this role prior to acting, while acting, and after accomplishing the action. In a corollary of this view, the sense of agency and (actual) agency may dissociate, but this does not happen beyond the terrain of the self’s consciousness. Preparing and executing any kind of action occurs only on this terrain. Dissociations of the sense of agency (the awareness of the self that she is the agent of her actions) and agency should only invite more sophisticated conceptions about the link between self-agency and “conscious mental causation”. Pacherie sums up the view – stemming from the folk-psychological picture that action is caused by mental states – in the following way: Self-agency is enclosed in the sphere of *conscious* deliberations, beliefs, and desires supplied by *conscious* decisions to pursue certain *conscious* goals accompanied by *conscious* intentions to realize those goals. The self’s consciousness provides the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* in action production. In criticizing this view, Pacherie draws the attention, in particular, to cases in which the agent has a sense of agency for actions he did not actually perform or did not consciously intend <sup>1</sup>.

It is my contention that the sense of agency is a strongly individual sense. But nevertheless, this sense correlates with the way of being of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency. Depending on how the Self is reflexively aware of her co-operative unity with existential agency, there are different degrees of the Self's awareness of action production. One can speak of indeterminacy of the sense of agency since in certain contexts the Self might be strongly aware that she is the subject of her actions, and in other contexts this sense of agency might get lost without this being caused by pathologies. But the talk of indeterminacy in this formulation is still more psychological than ontological. With regard to the facticity of practices, one can shift the focus to the ontological indeterminacy of the Self. Corresponding to – and in a sense underlying – this indeterminacy is the “nonlocality” of the Self's agency (as integrated with existential agency).

To be sure, the psychologically and psychiatrically normal Self is characterized by “a self-referential, but normally pre-reflexive, proprioceptive awareness” of her own body and her embodied Self. (Gallagher 2005, 73) It is this awareness for which Erving Goffman (1971, 316-318) coined the expression “normal appearances” to denote the link between the sense of agency and the agent's feeling of normalcy in executing routine bodily activities. Empirical psychologists, neuroscientists, and researchers in cognitive science since many years have been engaging in discussions about the turning point between this pre-reflexive

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<sup>1</sup> In citing Pacherie's work, I have to underscore that my position radically differs from her strong naturalism. My point is that even in the empirical studies of action and agency guided by strong objectivist standards of conceptualization there is a prolific trend of jettisoning mentalist determinism.

awareness and the reflexive-judgmental life of the Self <sup>2</sup>. Regardless of how the turning point would be identified and where it will be located, however, the adult Self's reflexive-judgmental life is no longer determined by proprioceptive awareness either in the form of object-perception that reifies one's own body within one's subjective experience or in the form of non-perceptual and non-observational self-awareness which resembles a kind of "embodied version" of Kant's transcendental apperception.

From a psychological point of view, the adult Self has the feeling of "simultaneously participating" in several contexts of social life. The adult Self's feeling of being involved in a diversity of contexts that she is not able to fully master does not displace, but essentially reduces – in the Self's reflexive-judgmental life – the pre-reflexive proprioceptive awareness. The inability to master the contexts of behaving is often tied with unawareness of all contextualized bodily activities. The Self is more or less prepared to rationally accept the feeling of being an (inter)contextualized embodied agent. The adult Self is aware that the contexts she cannot master are in a sense co-responsible for her bodily activities. In coping with this new awareness that contrasts with her inborn proprioceptive awareness, the Self devises various vehicles of

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<sup>2</sup> Following Shaun Gallagher's quoted study, this turning point has much to do with several issues of how embodiment shapes the mind. More specifically, the way in which one's body enters into "the content of one's conscious experience" (Gallagher's expression) essentially contributes to the passage from pre-reflexive awareness to reflexive-judgmental life (in particular, the reflexive structuring of intentional experience). Gallagher explores the contribution of embodiment to the "phenomenal field of consciousness" in a broad (significantly inspired by Aron Gurwitsch) phenomenological perspective that allows him to integrate the first-person phenomenology and the third-person empirical studies of embodied cognition.

keeping intact the “natural” feeling of continuous self-identity<sup>3</sup>. To put it in terms of personality psychology: Only by preserving the feeling of continuous self-identity could the Self counterbalance the sense of being pluralized in contextually dependent positions that tend to diverge from each other. Both, the sense of being involved in contexts that can hardly be mastered, and the sense of continuous self-identity – as well as their balancing – should be attributed to the reflexive-Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency<sup>4</sup>.

There is a wide range of conceptions calling into question the pervasive role of consciousness in organizing human agency. Some of them are consonant with the ideas of agency’s nonlocality and indeterminacy. Narrativist conceptions, in particular, focus on the personal strategies for balancing the Self’s contextual dispersal and the Self’s biographic unity. A narrative approach to the personal Self is any approach that answers the question of what unites the diversity of contextual profiles of cognitive, emotive, and volitional dispositions attributable to one person by stressing that all of them are part of a single identity-constituting narrative

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<sup>3</sup> The inborn status of one’s proprioceptive awareness of one’s own body is a controversial subject. There is in developmental psychology the view that the infant is becoming pre-reflexively aware of its embodied self in the period from the middle to the end of the first year. Before that period, the infant is only rarely succeeding in integrating body parts with each other into a single embodied agents. (Barresi and Moore 1996) The sense of having embodied self as well as the sense of distinguishing between one’s embodied self and the others as embodied selves are probably acquired rather than inborn.

<sup>4</sup> The conception of the co-operation of the reflexive Self and existential agency does not contradict the naturalist conceptions of the Self’s “inborn subjectivity” (inclinations). Quite on the contrary, the Self’s inborn subjectivity is a requisite for the trans-subjective being of the Self’s agency.

(Schechtman 1996, 136) For the scientific conceptualization of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency, the Self exists through self-narrating. The Self's experience of self-agency can hardly be attained as an immediate experience. In her narrative self-description the Self narratively creates mediating local/contextual identities helping her to come to grips with her own agential power. Each of them is an identity of the Self-entangled-with-practices, that is, an identity of the Self as cooperating in special manner with existential agency in "gaining access" to the way in which she biographically makes herself. In narrating her experience, the Self may document how she – in certain contexts – ceases to be aware that she is the agent of her actions. The question arises of whether this loss of awareness is a sign of the Self's "absorption" in trans-subjective practices that comes down to the Self's inauthenticity.

The fact that the Self performs practices without becoming aware of this does not necessarily mean that she is no longer a sovereign agent of her actions. Roughly, one has to differentiate between two cases. In the first case, the Self's sense of agency is "expropriated" by the anonymous They of the public life (Heidegger's *das Man*). Not only the Self's sense of agency but the Self's authenticity is annihilated in the They's everydayness. Performing practices of this everydayness implies in an absolute sense that the Self is not aware of what she is doing, since it is the They that dictates her performances. The Self should resolutely choose herself in order to become an autonomous subject of her choices. In this Heideggerian scenario, one shifts the focus from the sense of agency to the autonomy of choosing. And here comes the second case to the fore: Choosing herself and gaining authentic existence does not rely on the Self's awareness that she is the agent

of her actions. In this case, the Self might become deprived of the sense of agency, but her agency becomes part and parcel of existential agency articulating an authentic lifeform. It is not the sense of agency, but reflexivity involved in the choices of possibilities that is a requisite for gaining authenticity. The sense of agency is a purely psychological (ontic) phenomenon, and entirely depends on the individual (cognitive, emotional, and volitional) life of the personal Self. In making choices, the Self constitutes her way of being by reflexively participating in the articulation of a lifeform. This constitution is a phenomenon that has important psychological aspects. But it is per se a meta-psychological phenomenon, and belongs to the reflexive-Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency.

As indicated, various experimentally observed forms of dissociations of the sense of agency and actual agency of agential behavior prompted a growing skepticism in empirical psychology about the classical view that action production is wholly enclosed in consciousness. In countering the kind of mentalist determinism about agency this view implies, I will raise the claim that the Self's "life of consciousness" might be made a pivotal (developmental-psychological) theme in studying the Self's being in the medium of interplaying practices and possibilities, but self-consciousness (not to be confused with reflexivity) plays only a limited role in controlling agency. The Self's consciousness (and self-consciousness) working in this medium is not a control center of the Self's agency. It is rather existential agency as supported by practices' endogenous reflexivity that serves the function of such a center, though the metaphor of control center is not quite appropriate in the present discussion. Due to existential agency, the Self becomes entangled with indefinite configurations of practices. Thanks to her mental

activities (and the ability of judgmental reflexivity), the Self is always capable of critically assessing this entanglement. Being exposed to constant challenges within the interplay of practices and possibilities, the Self responds to them by contextually multiplying her positions and cultural identities. The Self can only resolve the task of keeping personal unity under the conditions of a proliferation of cultural identities by intensifying the dialogue among her I-positions. How the Self's dialogical way of being is ensued by existential agency will be a central topic in the remainder of this paper.

As a driving force within the ecstatic unity of agential subjectivity and configured practices existential agency puts into operation motives, desires, intentions, plans, expectations, etc. – all factors that psychologists usually address under the heading “complex motivational economies” – within changing configurations of practices that generate possibilities for articulating cultural meaning. When the interplay of practices and possibilities takes place, existential agency discloses and articulates meaning that under certain conditions may take the form of a meaningful milieu of gaining personal authenticity. Thus considered, the work of existential agency – though essentially emancipated from the personal Self's agency – is a sine qua non for personal authenticity. Regardless of how resolute one is deciding to bring oneself back from one's thrownness in the anonymous public life, there is no chance for directly gaining personal authenticity within the practices of “average everydayness”. Attaining personal authenticity demands the participation in authentic cultural lifeforms disclosed and articulated by existential agency. (This observation still does not suffice for formulating a criterion for personal authenticity. I will resume in the next section the

discussion of the nexus of existential agency and personal authenticity by shedding more light on the concept of making existential choices.)

Tentatively, the painful search for the Self's authenticity intensifies the diversification of I-positions, thereby leading to a "multiple escape" from the inauthenticity of the public life's practices. Obviously, the success of this escape is at the price of such a pluralization of the Self that challenges the integral personal identity. Authenticity demands integral identity beyond the plurality of the Self's positions, and in spite of the dispersal of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency in a diversity of contexts. Precisely this integral identity is endangered when the quest for authenticity disperses the Self's existence in a plurality of lifeforms, thereby splitting the Self into a manifold of (supposedly internal) positions. In her search for authenticity, the dialogical Self is always under the pressure of setting priorities for deciding which lifeform is the "innermost" one in her existence <sup>5</sup>. The dialogue among the Self's particular positions related to her cultural identities and supposedly enabling authentic existence is indispensable when there is a tension between these positions.

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<sup>5</sup> A further analytical complication arises from the fact that the Self is always trying to come to terms with the routine practices of the public life's inauthentic everydayness. Escaping in authentic lifeforms quite rarely takes the form of classical escapism – committing to a lifeform (belonging, for instance, to the counterculture of the 1960s) that "has nothing to do" with the public life's average everydayness. The dialogical Self is, in particular, a personal strategy that offers a way out of the predicament characterized by the limbo state of (indispensably) being in the inauthenticity of manipulative public practices and being-escaped from these practices by performing practices articulating authentic lifeforms. By multiplying one's being in diverse ensembles of practices, one is able both to retain one's "standard routine" of playing regimented social roles and to achieve one's authenticity.

It goes without saying, however, that this dialogue does not provide a guarantee for eliminating the tension. Imagine, for instance, a lawyer who constitutes his identity as a “true professional” by participating in a juridical lifeform that is articulated within the practices of textualism. This identity is brought into play through the lawyer’s belief that the meaning of the textually expressed laws is entirely within the text, and does not need to invoke extra-textual sources for its proper interpretation. (In his view, amorphous categories such as the intent of the lawgiver, social justice, or the rectitude of the legal system have no place in interpreting the law and taking legal decisions.) The search for justice plays an essential role in “our lawyer’s” legal practice, but he strongly believes that justice is not something that can be conferred on the law from a social-moral (non-juridical) position. He is also convinced that justice is not “implanted” in law through legislative history. Justice should be revealed by properly interpreting the self-sufficient meaning of the legal text. In contrast to other lawyers who share the principles of textualism, however, our lawyer is not satisfied with the claim that the ordinary meanings of the words composing the legal text is the only thing that matters. For him, the meaning of the legal text always transcends the composition of the meanings of its lexical units. A transcendent authority is incorporated in juridical texts – a view inspired by religious feelings, though our lawyer tries to strictly separate his professional ethos from his religious position.

It is because of this authority that the proper interpretation of the legal text can generate justice in the legal practice. At this point, however, an unsurmountable tension with his identity as devout Christian – that is, with the position inspiring his

professional view of justice – begins to take shape. Imagine in this regard that our lawyer is not only a devout Christian but also that his religious denomination is a kind of non-Chalcedonian Christianity. Legal textualism might be entirely consonant with a Protestant theology based on the principle of *sola scriptura*, but not with a theology that does not restrict exegesis to that principle only. According to the monophysitist theology supported by our lawyer’s Church – a theology chiefly based on a sophisticated reading of the Gospel of Luke – the nature of moral deeds is immediate expression of divinity. Non-canonical (in the theological sense) texts instructing human beings how to be moral and equitable creatures are privative alienation from divinity. Morality is grafted in the righteous intent for action. Only the texts of the canonical Gospels are texts of the true nature of divinity. Textualizing moral or juridical instructions distorts original morality that must be spread by emulating righteous (mainly ascetic) comportment. Atonement can only be achieved – so the main ethical-theological argument goes – through emulation of comportment that avoids (non-canonical) written instructions. Humans can be reconciled to God if they become capable of immediately seeing and grasping the righteous deeds. A secondary elaboration on the intents for such deeds (like their representation as written prescriptions) is condemned as a sinful breaking of God’s moral law. No matter how it will be designed, the dialogue prompted by the lawyer’s dialogical Self can hardly harmonize his (radically anti-textualist) religious position with his (radically textualist) position of true professional. The moral tension is unavoidable. He may look for a kind of “narrating the Self” that avoids a religious legitimization of the profane professional life’s activities and initiatives. Yet this is a dubious solution that may

provoke a lot of new tensions and conflicts. The dialogical Self has its own limits when one is participating in practices of different lifeforms.

Reflecting on the Self in connection with the ecstatic unity of personal subjectivity and lifeforms' trans-subjectivity poses in the first place the issue about the status of existential possibilities that the Self chooses in making herself. Once these possibilities have been chosen, they become appropriated and actualized within the Self's personal existence. But the Self who makes choices is always in a certain hermeneutic situation when contextually choosing, appropriating, and actualizing a possibility. In other words, the Self's choices – and the personal subjectivity propelling them – are continuously fore-structured by what projects (and anticipates the actualization of) the possibilities. The fore-structuring might come from the practices of the anonymous public life in which the Self is thrown, and with which the Self is entangled. The fore-structuring is ecstatically within the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency and beyond the Self's subjectivity as situated within the interplay of practices and possibilities. The Self's struggle for authenticity can be successful if the trans-subjective fore-structuring of her choices of existential possibilities resists "reabsorption" in the They's public life. In working within the articulation of authentic forms of life, existential agency is the "genuine antagonist" of the They. This is the reason why only the Self cooperating with agency articulating an authentic lifeform can aspire for an authentic existing.

In partaking in the everyday practices of an authentic lifeform, the Self becomes embedded in its horizon of (trans-subjective) possibilities, trying to appropriate them as possibilities

within her own life. Obviously, this line of reasoning implies two sorts of possibilities – personal and non-personal – in the Self's existence. The non-personal possibilities come into being within the facticity of practices. The contextual revealing and concealing of these possibilities is due to the work of existential agency. The possibilities of the other sort open the biographical horizon of the Self. One might assume that since the Self is intrinsically involved in existential agency, the Self is capable of bearing responsibility not only for the choices of existential possibilities she makes whereby making herself. The Self should also bear responsibility for the trans-subjective articulation of those cultural lifeforms in which she participates. This conclusion (which will be spelled out in various upcoming contexts) is on a par with Sartre's existentialism, but I will suggest a non-Sartrean reading of it.

## THE SELF IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF TRANS-SUBJECTIVE EXISTENTIALISM

The life of any particular Self is involved in the configured practices of innumerable (informal or formally institutionalized) lifeforms as well as in administrative, technological, commercial, political, clinical, hygienic, and many other sorts of practices that shape the Self's way of being without constituting particular lifeforms. The Self finds herself thrown in the practices of her homo- or heterosexual life, her professional practices, the practices of her religious life, the practices of informal communication within the various circles of friends and relatives she has, the practices of her family life, the practices of taking care of her financial savings and having the desired economic standard of life, the practices of exercising her hobby, the practices of being in

harmony with fashion tendencies, the practices of making use of mass media, the practices of selecting and reading books, the practices of supporting and propagating her moral values and attitudes, practices related to her ethnic background, culinary and dietary practices, the practices of properly shaping her body, the practices of taking care of her pets, the practices of participating in public debates, ...

The Self's struggle for authenticity cannot be modeled upon a reflexive-emancipatory ideology that tries to liberate the individual (as an accountable actor, a moral personality, and a rational subject of knowledge acquisition capable of making effective choices) from trans-subjectively imposed (or self-imposed) repressive mechanisms, whereby the individual self will fully enjoy his "natural liberties". No radical reflexivity – presumably assisted by certain forms of critical psychoanalysis treating the super-ego as internalized web of practices – can liberate the Self from practices' routineness. The Self cannot exist beyond a routinized everydayness of practices. The liberation from trans-subjective repressive mechanisms can only be attained by participating in trans-subjective lifeforms and their pre-normatively constraining practices. (Even the most individualized Self exists in the routine of highly personalized configurations of social practices. The individuality of the Self is measured against her unique style of performing recurrent practices that, as a rule, belong to diverse lifeforms. In this regard, creating individuality amounts to developing individual everydayness by participating in the everyday articulation of a variety of forms of life. Attaining "perfect individuality" does not make the Self not-thrown-in-routine-practices. It goes without saying that such individuality essentially differs from the Self's authenticity. Yet like the latter, the

former is unthinkable without a proper everydayness of practices.)

Let me take up the motif of the considerations with which this section started. The view that the only way in which the Self may achieve autonomy and authenticity is by participating in configured practices disclosing and articulating authentic cultural lifeforms is at odds with those conceptions which admit that there is a constant succession of self-creation, and the latter is exclusively an achievement of the individual agent's active will. These (Kantian) conceptions accentuate the active will that is brought into existence by every moment of reflection, but is nevertheless accorded with universal moral law. (Korsgaard 1996, 232-235) In my view, "autonomous lawmaking" for a moral behavior cannot involve whatever kind of requirement of universalization as intrinsically constitutive of the activity itself, if this activity is produced by the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency in the articulation of an authentic lifeform. The free will of the individual agent cannot be a source of formally universal moral normativity, since all volitional (individual and collective) activity is always fore-structured by the hermeneutically pre-normative interplay of practices and possibilities. By implication, the normativity of moral claims cannot be found in agent's own will <sup>6</sup>.

When the volitional activities of an agent are fore-structured by the inauthentic everydayness of interplaying practices

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<sup>6</sup> What I am strongly disputing is the position that the "normative question is a first-person question that arises for the moral agent who must actually do what morality says." (Korsgaard 1996, 16) The "normative question" is a question that arises for agents who are always already situated in and transcended by configured practices. These agents become moral agents when cooperating with existential agency articulating authentic lifeforms.

and possibilities, the Self of this agent is doomed to inauthentic existence, regardless of how strongly his active will is supported by reflection. When the fore-structuring comes from configured practices articulating an authentic lifeform, the Self gains her authenticity by cooperating with existential agency enabling this articulation. It is the authority of the lifeform as mediated by existential agency that regulates, obliges, recommends, and guides without imposing a rigid normative codex. This authority is obeyed within the hermeneutic circularity of interplaying practices and possibilities to which the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency belongs. What the Self actually is following and obeying is the lifeform's ethos – the hermeneutically pre-normative force of its articulation within a characteristic hermeneutic situation. Only the obedience to the ethos of an authentic lifeform can redeem the Self from inauthentic existence.

Seen from a slightly different perspective, the Self's struggle for authentic existence can only be successful if proper trans-subjective horizons of possibilities are opened by existential agency. Thus considered, authentic existence is the Self's authentic potentiality-for-being as this potentiality is enabled by the Self's participation in the articulation of an authentic lifeform. In the inauthentic everydayness, the Self ensnared in routine public practices is enslaved by the anonymous power of the They. But in enslaving the Self, the total interrelatedness of practices provides the opportunities for the redemption of the Self by producing configurations capable of disclosing authentic cultural lifeforms.

Because of the ecstatic unity of the contextually acting Self who makes choices and the transcending horizon of possibilities upon which the Self projects her existence, the Self is at once in

herself and beyond herself. More specifically, the Self is at once in a position to reflexively deepen in her subjectivity, thereby (narratively) preserving her feeling of integral identity and holding sway on agonistic forces in her personality, and in a position to become aware of her “nonlocality”, that is, of her being beyond herself as being-thrown in practices opening up and ever shifting the transcending horizon of possibilities that the Self may potentially appropriate. Because of the cooperation of the Self’s agency with existential agency, the former is dissipated over contexts that are constituted by configurations of practices. As a result, the motivational factors driving intentional actions (or the factors building up the Self’s agential subjectivity) cease to be exclusive possession of the Self. Since the complexity of interrelated practices is “exceeding” the Self’s reflexive ability to hold sway on the way in which practices form and reform particular contexts in her life, the dispersal of the Self’s agency over growing number of contexts is beyond her control. By implication, the Self cannot fully master the ongoing contextualization of her subjective dispositions, motifs, beliefs, and desires driving her agency. The Self’s agential subjectivity – as the site of the “motivational economies” of an actor – becomes dispersed in the same way in which agency involved in particular practices is scattered over interrelated practices. There is a constant risk of emotional dissonances in the Self’s life due to this scattering. The pluralized Self strives for finding emotional balance by persistently looking for alterations in the motivational economy underlying the roles he plays and the positions he takes.

Insisting on the dispersal of the Self’s agential subjectivity over configured practices has important consequences for the issue of the Self’s authenticity. Since such practices are capable of

disclosing and articulating cultural forms of life, this dispersal enables the Self's being-in-a-plurality-of-cultural-lifeforms <sup>7</sup>.

The Self is constantly choosing possibilities by taking into account those factors (like her wishes and desires) which – in her estimation – are fully controlled by the Self. In the perspective of traditional moral philosophy, the kind of having control over the conditions of personal choices is addressed in terms of a sufficient condition for authenticity. Thus considered, authenticity is the counterpart of moral responsibility. The Self is fully responsible for the choices she makes and for the decisions she takes. Yet moral responsibility is not to be located in “punctual self”. The Self is morally responsible as co-operating with the existential agency of the lifeforms in which she participates. As already mentioned, stating this does not aim at diminishing the Self's moral responsibility. It is the other way around: The cooperation with existential agency enhances the Self's moral responsibility. The Self cannot excuse her choices and actions by invoking the trans-subjective power of existential agency. (One cannot justify, for instance, one's wrong choice of action by blaming the influence of relatively autonomous existential agency on making this choice.)

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<sup>7</sup> The dispersal of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency in diverse contexts constituted by the interplay of practices and possibilities does not mean, however, that the Self is an “illusion” as Miri Albahari argues. In developing a non-egological view of consciousness, Albahari (2006, 91) contends that the very idea of the Self comes into being when the assumption prevails that the individual subject possesses the property of boundedness by virtue of which the personal identity is gained through separating the subject from all other things. To be sure, this is an illusionary vision of the Self. But criticizing this vision does not imply that the Self is an illusion. An illusion is – in line with Albahari's criticism – only the image of “punctual self”.

On the contrary: In co-operating with lifeforms' existential agency, the Self is morally responsible not only for her personal choices and decisions, but also for all effects following from the articulation of the lifeforms in which she participates. Attributing moral responsibility to the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency is a position diametrically opposed to the position of the so-called Real Self View – the view postulating that the real self is “the self with which the agent is to be properly identified.” (Wolf 1990, 30) This view assumes that the responsible agent is punctual self who is able to govern what he is doing only on the basis of his subjective will and his subjective valuational system.

In traditional moral philosophy, the Self's ability to govern her own choices and decisions is also a necessary condition for reflexive autonomy: One chooses possibilities by exerting judgmental reflexivity with respect to the reasonability of the choices and the reliability of what is chosen. But the question remains open of how to address the status of possibilities that the Self may contextually choose, granted that the emergence of these possibilities is due to agency that operates beyond the Self's reflexive control. It hardly makes sense to ask this question in terms of an existentialist philosophy that strictly emphasizes the significance of personal choices. From a strongly existentialist point of view, all possibilities that can be appropriated in one's personal life are exclusively existential possibilities – that is, possibilities that exclusively concern the individual Self's existence as the terrain on which all choices are made. Phrased differently, the Self's existence constitutes itself through the ongoing choices that the Self makes.

The Self is nothing else but what she makes of herself through the chosen possibilities. (Following Simone de Beauvoir, it

is even via choices that the Self makes her- or himself a female or male – a viewpoint that has gained currency in gender studies, though the latter tend to interpret it in terms of social constructivism rather than Sartrean existentialism.) The position stressing the priority of choices can also be advocated by means of non-existentialist arguments. Thus, Korsgaard (2009, 19) argues – from her Kantian position – that there is no self prior to self’s choices and actions, because identity is “in a quite literal way constituted” by these choices and actions<sup>8</sup>. There is no “residuum” in personal existence produced outside the choices of existential possibilities. In the same vein, there are no existential possibilities preceding the acts of choosing, or being beyond the Self’s existence. Before these acts take place, there are options and opportunities, but not existential possibilities. In appropriating these options and opportunities – that can also be referred to under the heading of “trans-subjective possibilities” – the Self makes them into existential possibilities. The appropriation comes into being along with the acts of choosing, but is by no means reducible to them. The choices

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<sup>8</sup> Korsgaard defends this view by drawing a distinction between the “identity of a person” and the “identity of the human animal on whom the person normally supervenes”. It is not quite clear, however, which is the theoretical discourse in terms of which the distinction can be vindicated. All unsolvable problems Derrida and many others identified in connection with culture-nature distinction are completely relevant to Korsgaard’s distinction. It is my contention that there is no firm (constant, constitutive, absolute) difference between the identity of a person and the identity of a human animal. To reiterate a motif I discussed on several occasions in this study: There is only a play of contextual differences between my “biological self” (and identity as a human animal) and my cultural self (and identity as a person). All of these differences are produced not by an isolated agent/actor (who is supposedly the common site of a person and a human animal), but by the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency.

are fully dependent on the Self's personal subjectivity. By contrast, the appropriation (the transformation of trans-subjective possibilities into existential ones) takes place within and through existential agency. The appropriation is accomplished by the Self-cooperating-with-existential agency.

Though the position of trans-subjective existentialism I defend opposes in several respects Sartrean existentialism, the motif of transforming trans-subjective possibilities into existential ones can be regarded as an extension of Sartre's arguments against transcendental ego. (In Sartre's perspective, the observation that there are no possibilities before making choices leads to an existentialist radicalization of the phenomenological theory of the Self.) Like the insistence that the intentionality of consciousness is not grounded upon a transcendental ego leads to an existentialist radicalization of classical phenomenology, the insistence that the "possibility for having existential possibilities" lies in the way of being of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency radicalizes the phenomenological analysis of trans-subjectivity. In the perspective radicalizing classical phenomenology, there is a transcendental condition of existing-through-choosing-possibilities that evades any appeal to transcendental ego. In the perspective of trans-subjective existentialism – to return to the argument against general transcendental structure embedded in existential agency – the transcendental conditions cannot be conceptualized and represented through a metatheory, since these are contextually valid conditions: In each context-made-present, there are conditions for appropriating trans-subjective possibility and opening a horizon for existential choices.

Sartre cuts off the dimension of transforming trans-subjective possibilities when, for instance, discussing the sense in

which a war is my war. The war (as a lifeform) becomes my war via my positioning towards trans-subjective contexts in which the war is meaningfully constituted. The existential possibilities of committing suicide or undertaking desertion, thereby avoiding a participation in the war – as well as the existential possibilities of becoming a war hero or serving the honor of my family by participating the war – are possibilities arising from my positioning towards certain contexts in which the war is existentially meaningful. These possibilities can be chosen or rejected because my positioning unveils to me the war as a possible lifeform. But in my positioning, I am always already transcended by the interplay of practices and trans-subjective possibilities – the interplay in which my Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency contextually makes the war meaningful. Arguing that my positioning (and the appropriation of the war as my war) is from the very outset involved in the hermeneutic circularity of subjectivity and trans-subjectivity runs against Sartre’s doctrine that the human being’s state of passing-beyond belongs to the “universe of human subjectivity”. According to the alternative I suggest, the connection between subjectivity and transcendence belongs to trans-subjective existential agency.

It is the claim that existence precedes essence that prohibits a splitting of the way of being of possibilities (as discussed so far): Assuming that (a) there are possibilities independent of personal existence, and (b) they are only subsequently internalized in this existence through the way in which the personal Self makes choices would violate this claim, thereby leading to the splitting mentioned. The weak point of such an assumption is implied by the adverb “subsequently”. Using it suggests that the existential possibilities are produced through the internalization of another

sort of possibilities generated prior to the personal existence. Moreover, if there are possibilities supposedly undergoing a certain transformation before becoming existential possibilities of the personal Self, then the doubt remains that there is something beyond existence – something capable of generating what personality can choose. By implication, this “something” would allegedly be able to determine the Self’s choices. To be sure, thinking in this way – though intuitively justified – is in blatant conflict with the existentialist way of prioritizing existence.

Existentialists of various sorts have good reasons for ascribing a unitary status of possibilities within the Self’s personal existence. Admitting that along with the possibilities revealed and chosen within the personal life – that is, the possibilities that are not preexisting the personal Self’s choices, but are in a sense generated by these choices – there are possibilities that are trans-subjectively generated would imply a dualism that threatens to open the door to essentialism. From a strongly existentialist point of view, the social life in which the Self’s way of being is embedded provides various alternatives and opportunities, but only personal existence generates possibilities to be chosen. In making existential choices, the Self makes her existence.

I agree with such an argument. But my contention is that it can be accepted only if one treats the subject of making choices in terms of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency (as embracing the unity of subjectivity and trans-subjectivity), and not as a “punctual self”. Arguing in this way is the crux of trans-subjective existentialism. (Ginev 2014) Even when the personal Self is totally individualistically stylized, stripped of her being in practices, and shortened as trivial and formal biographic factuality – as opposed

to what Dilthey and Misch scrutinize in terms of “biographic and autobiographic facticity” – the Self does not morph into what Charles Taylor criticizes in terms of “punctual self”. It is existential agency that at once opens horizons of possibilities, and – by organizing ensembles of practices – appropriates and actualizes these possibilities. The Self as personal existence constantly remains entangled with the contexts-made-present in which existential agency opens and appropriates possibilities. In exerting judgmental reflexivity when making choices, the Self narratively organizes her experiences in a manner that allows the construction of narrative identities. “Narrating the Self” is accomplished by the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency, and is fore-structured by the interplay of practices and possibilities. Theorists of autobiography as a narrative genre draw the attention on narrator’s techniques of individualizing the protagonist’s story by attributing a crucial change in this story to a belief, a conviction, a thought. (Bruner 2001, 31) They call the episodes of such crucial change “turning points”.

One can extend the concept of turning points to cover all situations (episodes) in the Self’s life in which she unfolds special narratives for coping with the appropriation of a certain trans-subjective possibility (opportunity) that opens a new horizon of making existential choices. Choosing the latter prompts the Self’s positioning towards further contexts in which the Self might appropriate new trans-subjective possibilities. Individualizing her life by opening new horizons of existential choices, the Self succeeds in gaining a specific narrative identity anytime when the appropriation of a trans-subjective possibility takes place. According to Jerome Bruner (2001, 32), the narrative presentations

of turning points are “a way in which people free themselves in their self-consciousness from their history, their banal destiny, and conventionality.” These presentations also concern people’s reflexive positioning towards their entanglement with practices. A narrative identity of the Self is precisely a presentation of a turning point that (a) brings into play such a reflexive positioning, and (b) opens a horizon of existential choices.

Any narrative capable of creating identity at a turning point succeeds in emplotting (configuring) the entities enabling such a point. The most important among these entities are the positioning towards a context, the evaluative attitude towards a particular state of the Self’s entanglement with practices, the specification of an I-position, the preferences towards possible partners, the awareness of coming responsibilities, and the horizon of expectations. Accordingly, the Self gains through such a narrative a contextual-positional identity with regard to the way in which the Self affectively understands and assesses her entanglement with configurations of practices. In contrast to the integral personal narrative of the Self’s autobiography – as including patterns and cycling processes of growth and decay – a narrative that succeeds in constructing a turning point “documents” a particular transformation of trans-subjective possibilities into existential ones. Since such a transformation can later become ignored from a perspective aiming at an autobiographic reconstruction of the Self, a narrative that constructs a turning point belongs to the ongoing process of narrating the Self, but is not necessarily part and parcel of the post festum rationalization of the Self’s integral personal identity<sup>9</sup>. Finally, narratives about turning points “document” the ways in

which the Self apprehends her cooperation with an agential force that stems from her actions and activities but nonetheless transcends them.

In line with the (strictly existentialist) claim that actors are condemned to be free, I will further elaborate on the concept of existential agency by holding the position that there is no horizon of possibilities opened before making choices (i.e., before existence). Yet holding this position does not exclude that the process of choosing implies – through its enactment – a transformation within what is chosen. In accordance with the claim that choices of existential possibilities and appropriation of trans-subjective possibilities are on a par, one can hold that this transformation does not precede existence. Therefore, it is congruent with the tenets of trans-subjective existentialism. There

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<sup>9</sup> This rationalization might be conceived in terms of “defensive, fictional strategies for convincing ourselves that our lives do indeed have some semblance of meaning.” (Freeman 2001, 294) Speaking of a narrative rationalization of one’s life in this way is completely on a par with that paradigm of conceptualizing narrative phenomena which assumes that the meaning one attributes to totalities like human lives and historical episodes entirely results from the imposition of emplotted narratives upon manifolds of occurrences, events, particular actions and interactions, etc. Doubtless, this constructivist paradigm has great achievements in historiography, social anthropology, cultural studies, and many other disciplines. Yet the paradigm’s champions tend to neglect that there is ongoing constitution of meaning before any imposition of a narrative takes place. Since the constitution of meaning (in one’s life) is always characterized by a certain regime of temporalizing of temporality, one has good reasons to insist that the pre-narrative constitution of meaning involves phenomena that are already configured in a form resembling a temporalized plot. Arguing in this way opens the door for advocating a conception of pre-narrativity. The concept of the Self is intimately tied to (a) contextual narrative identities related to the construction of turning points; (b) pre-narrative entanglement with the interplay of practices and possibilities; and (c) continuous narration that mediates between (a) and (b).

is no chronological order between appropriating trans-subjective possibilities and making existential choices. Both processes are involved in the same hermeneutic circularity which – in enabling the ecstatic unity of subjectivity and trans-subjectivity – temporalizes the work of existential agency within the interplay of practices and possibilities.

The Self conceived in terms of trans-subjective existentialism appropriates opportunities and makes choices in concert with existential agency operating within the interplay of practices and possibilities. From the perspective of this existentialism, I should like to repeat with a slight modification a claim formulated in another context: The co-operation with existential agency does not diminish the radical responsibility which the Self is condemned to take in her existing. The Self's choices take place within the interplay, but the interplay does not “divest” responsibility from the Self for the choices made. The argument for radicalizing the responsibility of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency is simple: Without existential choices, there is no existential agency operating in the facticity of practices. The Self is responsible for enacting existential agency in articulating a lifeform. This claim ontologically assumes that without actors' choices there would be no interplay of practices and possibilities, and the *sui generis* reality of interrelated practices that constantly project their being upon possibilities would not take place. (Ginev 2018, 157-160) On a further assumption, the particular choices cannot be regarded as atomistic acts, since making a single choice tacitly presupposes the hermeneutic circularity of agential subjectivity and a configuration of practices. The same circularity puts into operation the transformation of trans-subjective possibilities into existential ones.

The transformation occurs on the territory of existence, and is driven by existential agency. In operating in and through hermeneutic circularity, existential agency can never be exactly located. It enables the entanglement of the actors' selves with the contexts constituted by the interplay of practices and possibilities. Existential agency mediates between two existential phenomena – the transformation in question and the making of existential choices – and has neither localizable actual presence nor essence preceding the phenomena it mediates. Thus considered, one can insist on the unavoidability of existential agency (when at issue is the conceptualization of actors' being-in-practices) without violating the existentialist principle that there is no essence that precedes the existence of the choosing Self, who in turn constitutes herself through the choices she makes. To reiterate, the appropriation of possibilities belongs to the trans-subjective being of personal subjectivity as existing through making choices and taking decisions. The Self is, on the one hand, thrown in an ocean of myriad trans-subjective possibilities contextually engendered by various assemblages of practices. On the other hand, the Self is in an ecstatic unity with horizons of possibilities she chooses and appropriates in her existence. Phrased slightly differently, the transformation under discussion is enacted by existential agency governing the Self's thrownness, and is part and parcel of the ecstatic unity of the Self and the indefinite horizons of possibilities corresponding to assemblages of concerted practices in which the Self's participates. Later I am going to defend the view that the transformation of trans-subjectively engendered possibilities into possibilities appropriated in the Self's personal existence also contributes to the Self's pluralization of I-positions.

The transformation of trans-subjectively generated possibilities into existential possibilities of the Self is to be regarded

as a dimension of one's personal being insofar this is the being of the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency. Spelling out the way in which the Self turns out to be entangled with interwoven contexts sets up a new direction of conceptualizing existential agency. My point is that the Self as situated in and transcended by horizons of possibilities that belong to various cultural lifeforms is destined to become – or condemned to morph into – the dialogical Self. At stake now is the issue of how the dialogical Self copes with the way of being in a plurality of lifeforms. (Ginev, forthcoming) There is a trend in cultural psychology that conceptualizes the dialogical Self in connection with the growing multiplicity of person's cultural identities provoked by the diversification of cultural forms of life. The focus in this trend is placed on the question of how the situation of expanding multiculturalism becomes reflected in the selves of individuals. In line with this trend, I will schematically adumbrate in the next section the nexus of the culturally pluralized dialogical Self and existential agency. Before doing this, however, let me resume the discussion of the criterion for personal authenticity. For this purpose, I return to the example of the religiously inspired lawyer who participates in two – causing tension in his personal life – authentic lifeforms.

The point I made previously can be summarized as follows: The more actively the Self-cooperating-with-existential-agency appropriates trans-subjective possibilities from the horizon on which an authentic lifeform projects its ultimate being, the more definitely the personal Self projects her being (as consisting in making choices) upon a horizon of authentic existence. Achieving personal authenticity requires that the Self not only participates in the everydayness of the lifeform's practices but actively partakes in the articulation of the lifeform. What marks a "turning point" in

the Self's personal life is the appropriation of a trans-subjective possibility for the lifeform's articulation that coevally opens a horizon for making new existential choices, granted that the appropriated possibility is among those on which the lifeform's transcendent meaning is inscribed. The example of "our lawyer" tacitly refers to two turning points in his life. The first one is not when he has participated the professional everydayness of practices articulating the juridical paradigm of textualism. The turning point has taken place when our lawyer has realized that not the meaning of words composing a legal text, but its whole meaning is what matters, since the whole meaning has the character of transcendent authority. By the same token, the other turning point in his life has happened not when he has started to perform ritualized and ceremonial practices of religious life, but when he, for instance, has undertaken an innovative Christological interpretation aiming at an enrichment of his profane life with new meanings.

But if our lawyer is not able to eliminate the personal discrepancies arising out of the lifeforms he actively articulates, he has no chance of achieving personal authenticity. In contrast to the turning points which result from appropriated possibilities for participating in new lifeforms, the "moment of vision" (Heidegger's *Augenblick*) is the moment at which the Self is capable of bringing in harmony the transcendent meanings in which he believes. As mentioned, the moment of vision cannot be reduced to a particular "now". It involves a whole regime of temporalizing of the temporality of the Self's existing. The Self can achieve authentic personal existence, if and only if she is existing through the unified temporalizing of the temporality of her personal life. Having different regimes of the temporalizing of the temporality of one's personal life due to one's participation in incompatible – though

authentic – lifeforms is a highly dangerous existential situation. The Self's way of being becomes split into multiple independent trajectories of opening future that makes present by unveiling what has been. If there is no way of bringing these trajectories into harmony, any personal identity is threatened to be destructed. The “moment of vision” enables the unified temporalizing of the personal life's temporality by harmonizing the Self's participation in different lifeforms.

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## CHAPTER 2

# TRANS-SUBJECTIVITY AND CARE: MODELLING THE HERMENEUTICS OF *BEING*

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53

### ABSTRACT

In this chapter I explore the role that trans-subjectivity plays in shaping *Care*. The interpretation of *Care* that I use here, draws on Martin Heidegger's seminal text *Being and Time* (1962) describing *Care* as those processes of human existence and living, the everyday experiences and activities of life, that help to constitute a person's mode of *Being*. In other words, I take as a central theme that the term *Care* describes a human-in-the-process-of-*Being*. Furthermore, this text presents an exploration of the role that trans-subjectivity plays in shaping *Care* as described through a **Model of Care**. The modelling of *Care* used here, describes four key elements of each person's life (namely, Experience, Living,

Projection and Time) that shape their mode of *Being*. A person's mode of being is what makes them uniquely individual, something that develops and evolves as their life unfolds. It is the intention of this chapter to demonstrate how *Care* is a central theme in any understanding of who human beings are and how trans-subjectivity is vital to the processes of shaping a mode of *Care* that characterises each and every human being. Understanding the dynamic interplay between trans-subjectivity and *Care* will help researchers better understand the way that human beings encounter, interact with and impact upon the world in which they live. In other words, each person's mode of *Being* (*Care*) while immediately as well as historically affected by trans-subjectivity, is ultimately determined by them (consciously or not) and thus, each person is responsible for the end results of their actions (intended or not).

*Keywords:* *Care*, trans-subjectivity, experience, hermeneutics.

## IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

The key terms used in this chapter are unusually loaded on a number of levels and deserving of some clarification before I begin.

### ***Trans-subjectivity***

In the presence of so many possible and potential interpretations of this term, I will take trans-subjectivity to describe the hermeneutical change in a person's historicity that occurs following immediate phenomenal lived-experience<sup>1</sup>. When memory of an experiential event is added to an individual's cumulative experiences, the individual's ontology and potentially their epistemology is changed or 'updated'. This is what

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<sup>1</sup> See Van Manen 2017 for a more detailed and precise description of lived-experience versus other popular misinterpretations.

Gadamer (1975) referred to as *historically affected consciousness*. That is, the change in each person's conscious and sub-conscious awareness that is brought about during the meeting of an old understanding and a new experiential understanding, at a point that Gadamer referred to as the 'horizon of understanding'.

In the process of understanding, a real fusing of horizons occurs - which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously superseded. To bring about this fusion in a regulated way, is the task of what we called historically effected consciousness (Gadamer 1975, p. 306).

Trans-subjectivity is then an individual's phenomenal change in perspective or awareness as derived through a continuous stream of iterative (hermeneutic cycle), hermeneutic (change inducing) interactions (experiences) with the world-as-encountered (including others worlds) over time. Trans-subjectivity is therefore not a state (fixed or dynamic) but a descriptive of change in an ontological position over time. Time in this instance is taken in its subjective sense as a critical element because without it none of the previous aspects of human life either exists or would make any sense. The hermeneutic pool of continually updating and changing information consciously and subconsciously (somatically) transforms a person's awareness in an iterative feedback loop steering their awareness and behaviour (responses) towards new interpretations of their responsibility and responsibility (see Section 2 - Response) acted out in their trans-subjectivity altered ontology.

### ***Care and care***

My use of the word care in this chapter carries with it two important terminological protocols to which I would draw the reader's attention. In the first instance I differentiate the noun care as naming an

attitude towards something or somebody (I care about ....) from *Care* describing an individual human state-of-being (*My Care*). Put another way,

1. care: (lower case form) A common or everyday form of care about 'others' and 'things'

This lower-case form of care represents the common usage both as noun (care) and verb (caring) often associated with activities in health and other medical related fields. For example, healthcare, aged care, personal care or child care. It might also be an activity as in, being caring or caring for or about something or somebody. This term is often confused with *concern* for and about 'things'.

2. *Care*: (Capitalised C) This important difference in designation represents a holistic notion of *Care*. It describes human *Being* in all of its living complexity. This second form of the word *Care*, has a verbal quality; one that describes everyday Human *Being* (In the Heideggerian sense of human *Being*) or simply, the activities and processes of being human or being in a human way (Heidegger, 1962; Van Hooft, 1995).

## ***The Model of Care***

Simon (1988) argues that any proper study of human beings in the broadest sense should mean a study of Human *Being*. Heidegger's thesis (1962) named *Care* as the structure of *Being*<sup>2</sup>. Taking this as a starting point in earlier research, a wide exploration of the notion of *Care*,

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<sup>2</sup> See Dreyfus 2007 lecture series Lecture #6 The worldhood of the world II "CARE is a name that Heidegger gives to the structure of being" and Lecture #22 Reality I "Care is the structure of Being" and further "Heidegger defined Care as the condition of man".

being human and Human *Being* was conducted, synthesised and represented graphically in the form of a model of *Care* i.e. a universal structure of Human *Being* (Coxon, 2015a). It is not intended that the model, presented in the form of four dimensions of Human *Being*, is to be taken as anything other than an abstraction of the dynamic nature of *Being* in all its complexity. It is proposed however, that representing the contentious notion of *Care* in a structured form enables the 'processes of being human' (*Care*), a continuously evolving state, to be better understood, communicated and included as a way of understanding the multitude of human activities within which all humans enact their *Being*.

## INTRODUCTION

The central thesis proposed in this chapter holds that trans-subjectivity is a fundamental and vital aspect of the larger 'process' of being human and that this process can be described (in its most complex form) as *Care*. In the following pages, I will discuss the role that trans-subjectivity plays in influencing each aspect of the human process-of-*Being* (*Care*) and the important role trans-subjectivity plays in shaping those key aspects of *Care* that help to make 'us' (human beings) so unique in terms of what and who 'we' are. In order to structure a way of showing how trans-subjectivity is fundamental to who *human beings* are, I will employ a *Model of Care* developed over a number of years out of research into the theme of *Care* and human development. The model is a synthesis of knowledge from philosophy as well as a wide reading of natural and human sciences invested in understanding the many complexities within *what it means to be human* (Coxon, 2015a). In the pages that follow, I will use the model to more deeply explore

the impact of trans-subjectivity on each of the following key dimensions of *Care*. They include,

1. *Trans-subjectivity and Experiencing*: Human experience as it is encountered, stored and accumulated over a lifetime.
2. *Trans-subjectivity and Living*: Encompassing those elements of life and living from individual consciousness to whole-of-ecology impact.
3. *Trans-subjectivity and Projecting*: The internal and external interactions with self, others and the various worlds that human beings inhabit.
4. *Trans-subjectivity and Time*: A crucial dimension which underscores, flavours and controls the continuum of *Care* and indeed all living things.

The *Model of Care*, while theoretical, has stood the test of time (so far) and held up well as a tool for exploring topics of interest to humanity in its universal form. Perhaps my exploration of trans-subjectivity in this text will highlight gaps in the logic of the model or conversely it will provide a sound structure for the thesis presented here; that trans-subjectivity is instrumental and foundational to shaping human *Being* or *Care*.

As an important qualification on my thesis: The position I take on *Care* does not in any way imply that it relates exclusively to the human world nor does it exclude the non-human, plants, animals and all other aspects of the global ecology that all human beings are an integral and certainly not separate part of. Quite the opposite. While I will not discuss *Care* from an animal, plant or insect perspective; the notion of *Care* presented here, assumes that

while they live, all human beings ARE *Care*, and that each and every expression of their *Care* directly impacts the greater ecology that sustains all living things. In this way, *Care* can never be considered separately from the earth and all that call it home. *Care* is dependent on the health of the earths ecology and the earths ecology needs *Care* to care.

If, as I say above, trans-subjectivity is such an integral aspect of what shapes and maintains *Care* for all human beings, then its importance increases when the notion of *Care* itself becomes the focus of more scrutiny and value. Discourse about *Care* has grown significantly in the last decade, gathering considerable cache and relevance in many fields such as Economics, Architecture, Education as well as new directions in Health<sup>3</sup>. There is growing interest in the topic as many fields<sup>4</sup> struggle to understand the role that *Care* can play in shaping more ethical ways of 'doing business'. Whatever way *Care* is understood, it remains an important new/old concept to consider in the struggle for new ways of doing things better; one that can provide a positive contribution to the many issues facing human (and non-human) beings in our collective, symbiotic future. Some of my colleagues have said that the problem of *Care* is that it is not a solution but a manifestation of the problem, This may be the case, however in explicating the relationship between trans-subjectivity and *Care* I hope to contribute to a better understanding of *Care* and its role in shaping

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in Economics see Praetorius 2015; in Architecture see Bates, et. al. 2016; in Health see Jones, 2013; and Engineering (Gunckel and Tolbert 2018).

<sup>4</sup> See proceedings from the NORDES conference in Helsinki, June 2019 titled Who Cares? and the Lancaster Universities workshops 2017 & 2019 asking, Does Design Care?

a better future. Ultimately, what will make it 'better' is up to all people, but I will comment more on that later. Suffice to say that, while I strongly believe that the consideration and inclusion of *Care* is vital if future business, social and institutional programmes are to contribute to improving the 'human condition', then how *Care* is to be used cannot be deterministic or prescriptive. Nor, I would suggest, is it a 'solution' to anything other than to say that its lack of inclusion adds to the problem. Simon has already suggested that "...solving a problem simply means representing it so as to make the solution transparent". In this case the discussion of trans-subjectivity and its relationship to *Care* presented here, while making the connection more visible and useful, does not solve a problem (like a formula) nor is it a magical *fix*. It does however, make new solutions more transparent in that *Care* is very obviously missing in so much of what is done in the artificial world. Making the problem of *Care* more apparent will help decision makers in many fields to better hold Human *Being* (even their own) in their immediate gaze. It will help them to better determine its value for themselves and the people they make decisions for. And in so doing, I suggest that these decision makers might find a more prominent place for human understanding within the many technological and instrumental processes of industry, government and the broader community. And this kind of understanding will help move human interaction towards a more Caring (humane) society which respectfully values its place in the sustaining ecological system we call Earth.

### ***A Brief Background to developing the model of Care***

In recent times, the word care has suffered from a form of normative misuse in common language, often reducing it to a banal

reference to interest in a subject or a nice disposition towards another. In the pages that follow I will reiterate that it is an important term that describes the core of who and what human beings are. Most people would probably say that they know the term, or think they do. Most English-speaking people would use the word care many times every day, but what is *Care* ...actually? And what makes it so important? Drawing on many philosophical and theoretical interpretations of *Care*; I propose that *Care*, described by Martin Heidegger (1962) and others from humanist traditions as human *Being* or the mode of *Being* of a human being, has a recognisable and universal structure. The *idea* of *Care*, once given a visible, tangible form, understood and utilised well, could help shape new opportunities and directions in business, governance and community life.

After extensive research and consultation, a radical simplification of thinking by many minds who have wrestled with their own thoughts, insights and interpretations about *Care* over the centuries has been synthesised into a representational model. The shoulders of giants, too numerous to acknowledge in this paper, have been used to explore and coalesce thinking about *Care* from diverse disciplines and fields; from eastern religions to neuroscience; from classical philosophers to modern social theorists. Propositions from a wide range of academic, philosophical and pragmatic discourse were explored, not all of which might be agreed with, all the while trying not to locate the topic of *Care* in too tight a context as it is a humanity-wide topic. I openly acknowledge that the 'Model of *Care*' is the result of a non-exhaustive study but it is at least a sound distillation from extensive research over many years. It has resulted in what might be deemed a 'work in progress' or a theoretical position. What has been

achieved is a robust synthesis of past and present discourse and while some readers might consider important contributions from their own field of interest have been overlooked, the model offers an opportunity to rethink the similarities and differences it presents to other perspectives. There may well be refinements to the model through future research, however at this point the model should be received as a theoretical proposition not a proven fact. Over the past few years, the Model of *Care* as it currently stands has reached a level of saturation or stability that enables it to be shared as a useful theoretical starting point for inclusion in human thinking and decision making. The model provides physical or structural form to the ephemeral and illusory notion of *Care*; one that enables the processes of *Care* to be better understood, communicated and made useful within a diversity of human activity.

## OVERVIEW OF THE MODEL OF CARE: THE FOUR DIMENSIONS (X, Y, Z, T)

In the following passages I will introduce, describe and explain what are referred to as 'Dimensions' of *Care*. In presenting the concept of *Care* in this way, I hope the reader understands that the four-dimensional structure is an abstract representation only, one that is provided simply as a means of visualising the complex act of human living, something that is otherwise extremely transitory and perpetually dynamic in nature. The naming protocols used in referring to the dimensions of *Care* (Experience, Living, Projection, Time) and their subsections, are also not as important to hold onto as the denoted meanings behind the various

words used to describe them. Wherever possible the naming of these terms has been drawn from established discourse. For the moment I will refer to them as dimensions and represent them on four axes. The Dimensions of *Care* model (figure 1) is a framework for understanding *Care* as a human way of *Being-in-the-world* and can be summarised textually as follows;

Care is what it means to be human: it is informed and shaped by everyday experience; it is constituted over time, in consciously aware responses that impact on the self, others and the ecological world of which all human beings are an inseparable part.

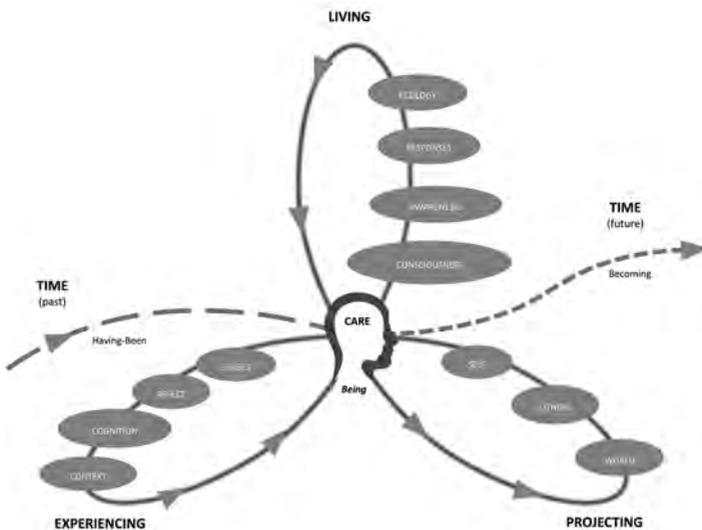


Figure 1. Model of Care

In the following pages I will explore the role that trans-subjectivity plays in each of the dimensions (aspects) of *Care* briefly described below.

### **1.0 Trans-subjectivity and Dimension X: Experience**

Trans-subjectivity shapes the everyday human experiential activities that inform a person's mode of *Care*. *Care* takes its meaning foundations from personal experiences shaped by trans-subjective variations in a continuous stream of senses, affects, cognitions and contexts.

### **2.0 Trans-subjectivity and Dimension Y: Living**

64

Living is constituted through a consciousness<sup>5</sup> that is reflected in awareness. Through life experiences, trans-subjectivity shapes conscious awareness, enabling each person to formulate responses which impact directly or indirectly on the earth's ecology. This combination constitutes a person's individual mode of *Living* or *way of life*.

### **3.0 Trans-subjectivity and Dimension Z: Projection**

*Care* is always projecting, firstly at a self then at others (including objects) as contextualised within an immediate life-world. Projection is the various ways that a trans-subjectivity

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<sup>5</sup> Here I am referring to the fact that in scientific circles, the existence of consciousness has been well established and much debated but its nature and basis for existence has still not been agreed (Blackmore, 2005; Varela, 1996).

mediated *Care (Being)* is manifested in the world as a person moves through it.

#### **4.0 Trans-subjectivity and Dimension T: Time**

*Care* takes place and is made intentional within a time continuum based on a past that shapes a present which in turn, projects a future. Trans-subjectivity by its very nature (trans) expresses a transition from old to new subjectivity both in the instance of experience and the cumulative effect of trans-subjectivity on these experiences over time.

One important benefit of representing The Dimensions of *Care* as a model is that it enables anyone to momentarily hold the highly dynamic conceptual idea of *Care* up for scrutiny, allowing the important concepts that underpin it to be held in focus. Each concept within the model can then be considered individually for their impact on and factored into the complexities governing the artificial world of companies, built environment, institutions, communities and a myriad of other technologies. Here I use the term *technology* in its broadest sense to refer to all those 'artificial' products, services and systems that human beings have created to serve them and to extend their ability to live in an otherwise natural world.

The concepts that constitute this formulation of *Care* are not fixed or immutable but should be seen as a general framework through which all human life is transacted in its myriad of forms from birth to death. In the following passages I will expand on the important role that trans-subjectivity plays in my depiction of *Care*, briefly discussing its impact on each of the various axes in

turn, while referencing some of the authors who have made important contributions to the way they have been depicted.

## 1.0 TRANS-SUBJECTIVITY AND EXPERIENCING

### ***Trans-subjectivity and the fundamentals of Experience***

Constituting the first dimension of the model of *Care, Experiencing* is based on senses, affect, cognition and context as the fundamental and essential building blocks of any experience (Coxon, 2013). These four essential aspects of human experience taken together, provide an important abstract structure for working with experience in any meaningful way (Coxon, 2015b).

In this chapter, I will not deeply explore or explain each of these elements as they are at least superficially familiar to most people but understandably, not in the same way to each person. The reader will probably already be at least partially aware of the influence of trans-subjectivity in the way that each of these elements of experience contributes to the experience as had. For example; the way that I sense (taste, smell, see, touch, hear) a bottle of wine is conditional on the way that I have previously experienced wine and assuming it is not the first time I have tried wine then I will compare it to my other experiences of wine. My 'experience-bank' or *cumulative* experience is shaped by the hermeneutic nature of each trans-subjective change event i.e. as an old experience encounters a new one. The change in subjective appreciation and accumulated knowledge of wine that I experience through drinking *this* particular wine, adds to my cumulative experience of drinking wine and prepares me for any future

experience of this or any other wine. This 'preconditioning' of my expectations of wine as a subject of experience, can also change the actual experience I have in the future or at least my pre-perception of it. My next experience of wine will either match with the preconditions I have previously established or not and thus generates a hermeneutic learning moment. Similarly, the emotions (affect) I may have towards the wine, my way of thinking (cognition and connotation) about the wine, as well as the contextual appreciation I have for the wine event will all be influenced by my previous trans-subjective experiences of a similar event.

An experience understood in the context of *Care*, is an individual, fully subjective (continually moderated by acquired trans-subjective influences) life-world event, which contributes to a person's mode of Living and understanding of Life.

### ***Trans-subjectivity shapes experience and Care***

Each person experiences life through a continuous stream of senses, affects, cognitions and contexts. Care, in the form of a living human being, takes its meaning<sup>6</sup> foundations from and is shaped by trans-subjectively mediated personal experience. As in the wine example above, trans-subjectivity is instrumental in the shaping of experience as it occurs, as it is stored into memory and as it is later recalled. Experience, mediated by trans-subjectivity, is the first fundamental dimension that shapes and formulates the

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<sup>6</sup> Herbert Dreyfus interprets Heidegger as saying "meaning is a synonym for Care and Care is the structure of Being [*Dasein*] meaning is 'in-terms-of-which' something becomes intelligible. ...Meaning is in terms of which something makes sense" (Dreyfus, 2007, Lecture#1 - interpreting Heidegger, 1962, p.193).

quality of *Care* exhibited in the actions that people take throughout their lives. Human experience is shaped and moulded by trans-subjectivity, which in turn shapes and moulds a person's view of life and the subsequent actions they take. These experience-informed-responses form the basis upon which *Care* is firstly projected back towards ones-self and then outwardly towards others and the world. A process of iterative, cumulative, evolving and forming of *Care* over time.

To look at this in another way, I can say that my experience of the world is coloured by my trans-subjectively altered perception of it, and the precepts that I hold are a product of a phenomenal, ontological view modified continually through my living of life in the way that I have done it, so far. This progressive absorption of life events (translated and modified by trans-subjectivity) add to a “cumulative experience” of the world and subsequent memory structures, which in turn contribute to and continually colour an ontological view; and so, the process goes around again.

### ***Trans-subjectivity and experience over time***

Time and a variety of other existential elements (corporeal aspects, spatial factors, social relationships and other temporal considerations) help to constitute an experience as unique on every occasion, making it impossible to ever have exactly the same experience twice. In this way, cumulative experience builds in an experience-specific way. This does however raise a question about repetition i.e. experiences that build skill and familiarity through a repeated experience of use. This line of thought enters into the realm of heuristically informed (trans-subjectivity moderated) cumulative experience and memory (recalled experience).

Recollection of experiences or memory enables a person to internally evaluate (through reflection or self-talk) and externally communicate (explicate) their past experiences. They can also draw on their memory (including somatic memory) to apply past experience in the performance of various tasks that require learned (previously experienced) skills.

A longitudinal, collective conceptualization of experience might also be considered in the way that experiences *appear* over time. Taking an anthropological view of experiences helps to consider the way in which whole experiences or snippets of experience might be stored and recalled in a certain phenomenal way such that they are absorbed into an individual's entire well of accumulated experience. This way of considering experience is difficult to access, as it is the subject of a lifelong experiential continuum, something which is buried deep in the human psyche. It brings in matters concerning the conscious, non-conscious and unconscious layers of mind that are poorly understood and in most ways are inaccessible. It is often talked about in generalised terms such as personal experience, business experience, life-experience, etc. Such categorizations describe a generic type of cumulative experience that the speaker is referring to but they convey little about the nature of the content within them. As mentioned earlier, to even begin to understand a person's life experience would require a very large book indeed. To begin the process of understanding experience at all requires a focus on one person's individual *lived* experience, i.e. *an* experience. Once there is a move beyond the individual phenomenal view (which is difficult enough to understand) a process of abstraction is comes into play that only takes understanding further from accessing the truth of the event i.e. the real meaning in an experience. So, if a researcher or

phenomenal inquiry starts on the premise of understanding groups of experiences, group experiences, or for that matter, different forms of joint-experience, then they are starting at a level of abstraction that can only be counterproductive to understanding the phenomena in question.

### ***Trans-subjectivity, experience and memory***

When I recall or remember an experience, either within my own mind or for example when a friend asks "how was your day"; I will re-experience the day's events through a mediating filter, i.e. how I selectively remember it—not necessarily how it actually happened. I will have applied a trans-subjectivity influenced interpretation of the day's events (phenomenally) as they went into my memory. And, as time passes and I have other experiences, my recollected (resurfaced) memory of the first experience is changed by a trans-subjectively altered perspective, one that is distorted from the original lived-experience (Forlizzi and Battarbee, 2004). Thus, cumulative memory of events is always phenomenally filtered by a trans-subjectively moderated ontological view both going in and coming back out. Experience in memory or recollective experience is always biased or prejudiced by the phenomenal transformation that takes place in its recording (encoding) and retrieval (decoding) in memory.

## **2.0 TRANS-SUBJECTIVITY AND LIVING**

Within the Model of *Care*', the LIVING dimension occupies a central and pivotal position. Put simply, Life and living are constituted through the mystery of consciousness made visible

through a trans-subjectivity effected awareness. Filtered through these two crucial first conditions (consciousness and awareness), responses are formulated which determine a person's impact in the earth's Ecology. These four aspects of living constitute a structure that defines all human beings. Within the holistic notion of *Care*, 'Living' is an aspect into and out of which the other three dimensions (Experience, Projection and Time) metaphorically flow. Remembering that, however important and vital, Living can only be understood within the framework of the other dimensions and conversely the other dimensions can only make sense to the living. A succinct representation of the Living dimension of Care might be shown as follows,

$$\textit{Consciousness} + \textit{Awareness} + \textit{Response} + \textit{Ecology} = \textit{Living}$$

The four dimensions above, are common aspects of life (Living) for each and every person and by default, are essential conditions for *Care* (a person's mode of *Being*) to exist. In the following passages I will discuss the relationship between trans-subjectivity and these four elements of living for a human in the process of *Being*. Remembering that, the four elements constitute just one (very important) dimension of the wider notion of *Care* that each human being projects into the world. The manner in which people choose to respond to life focusses attention on this key dimension of *Care* that is uniquely theirs to have and to govern<sup>7</sup>. The nature of each person's *Care* therefore offers all people the ability (and responsibility) to affect or control the qualities of their actions.

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<sup>7</sup> The term govern introduces aspects of stewardship, citizenship and responsibility collectively requiring personal governance.

## ***Trans-subjectivity and Consciousness***

I propose that Consciousness is the starting point, the essential constituent, without which any form of life, living or relationship to the world can exist. Consciousness<sup>8</sup> is the essential, base level requirement for a person to be considered alive and sentient. Consciousness is something that most people are somewhat aware of having but most would agree that they spend little time contemplating the nature of it.

In Buddhism, since the definition of 'living' refers to sentient beings, consciousness is the primary characteristic of life (p.106). ...The experience of consciousness is entirely subjective ...there is little consensus on what consciousness is (p.119) (Gyatso, 2005)

There has been much debate as to when consciousness begins, where it comes from or indeed where it goes when we die, but it is undoubtedly needed if human life is to be considered to exist at all. Trans-subjectivity cannot exist without a conscious mind to experience it, but once consciousness does exist then trans-subjectivity begins to shape the awareness necessary for consciousness to be effectively applied in responses. Based on the existence of consciousness, a person can gain awareness of their surroundings. Awareness is always filtered through a pool of past experiences that have been affected, moderated and altered trans-

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<sup>8</sup> In this instance I use the term Consciousness in a holistic sense so as to include alternative states of awareness such as unconsciousness, sleeping and subconscious thought processes.

subjectively within each phenomenal encounter in a process that continually impacts on both the storage and retrieval of cumulative experience upon which all responses are based. Varela highlights the importance of the link between experience and consciousness in saying,

We need to turn to a systematic exploration of the only link between mind and consciousness that seems both obvious and natural: the structure of human experience itself. (Varela, 1996, p.330)

Consciousness is subjective and remains largely unknown as to what it is. There has been considerable discussion in the neuro-sciences<sup>9</sup> about consciousness and its relation to brain functioning but even this relationship is on shifting ground. Beyond the neural/electro-chemical processes of individual neurophysiology, recent explorations into the plasticity of the human brain are beginning to erode some of the long-held tenets of neuro-science (Varela, 1996; Gallagher, 2005; Noë, 2009; Arrowsmith-Young, 2012).

Consciousness does not happen in our brains; it is not a product of the brain ...Cartesian neuroscience has no

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<sup>9</sup> In this paper I present a Human Science perspective on consciousness referring to "persons or beings that have consciousness and that act purposefully in and on the world by creating objects of meaning that are expressions of how human beings exist in the world" (Van Manen, 1997, p.4). I have placed a stronger emphasis on subjective human meaning structures within my presentation of the notion of Care, as against a Natural Science view of neurological and physiological factors or even some of the more generic psychological / anthropological views from Social Science.

empirical support for its basic assumption that conscious experience is an exhaustively neural phenomenon (Noë, 2009. p.171; 173)

Even though the topic of consciousness lies within a vibrant and contentious field, it should be easy enough to agree that humans in the process of Being rely on consciousness as a foundational element for making meaning in their lives; whatever form that takes. Perhaps decision makers could reconsider the role of consciousness in any process that utilises terms such as 'users', customers, markets, demographics and other normative terms that tend to dehumanise or delegitimise the sovereignty of another person's individual consciousness.

### ***Trans-subjectivity and Awareness***

In the model of *Care* presented in this chapter, I will draw on many authors for guidance on my interpretation of the term *Awareness*. In my work, I use the word awareness to encapsulate meanings such as, becoming aware of; alert to the existence of; paying attention to; recognising; observing; identifying; bringing into focus (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Le Vasseur, 2003; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Awareness is a *Being-with* aspect of a person's presence in proximity to other things (people and objects). Awareness is a matter of focussing consciousness or in some cases a pre-conscious awareness of, or attention to, something in proximity that is 'attended to' either pre-reflectively or by focussed reflection (Gallagher, 2005; van Manen, 1997).

Attention (or heed or regard) has, for centuries, been one of the meanings of care; it remains an element of care today... the notion of attention is not only a

concept parallel to care; it is an ingredient in care  
(Reich, 1995 p.334)

Trans-subjectivity helps to build foundations for Awareness which in turn provides a basis from which responses (judgements) can be made. Variations in awareness reception can be seen in the filters that people apply to selectively choose their awareness or to decide what they will or will not allow themselves to become aware of. Here, the presence of trans-subjectivity can be felt strongly as it helps to colour the choices that individuals make about what information they will accept and what they will do in response i.e. the experience-based interpretation that they will place on the information.

Trans-subjectivity is a determining factor in the development of awareness as it changes and evolves over time. The decisions I make now about what I choose to be aware of are quite different to those I made in my childhood or teen years. Over my lifetime, trans-subjectivity has a profound influence on the quality and nature of what I accept into my awareness, so I can say that it also has an equally profound bearing on the qualities portrayed in the responses I make as an adult human being.

75

### ***Trans-subjectivity and Response***

With the very existence of conscious awareness, responses will certainly follow, even if they are non-responses (inaction). The qualities imbued in the responses formulated and chosen are continually modified under the hermeneutic influence of trans-subjectivity. So, it can be said that trans-subjectivity plays a strong role in shaping responses that in turn describe the 'nature of a

person's *Care*'. So, in formulating the model of *Care*, the term response carries with it two very important facets that need to be further explained;

- a) **Respons-ability:** (a practical dimension): Describes a person's 'ability' to respond i.e. the practical, physical, intentional or goal-directed conditions that contextualise and influence the nature of responses, actions or activities in the course of a person's interactions with self, others and the world in which these responses take place.
- b) **Respons-ibility:** (a psychological dimension, sometimes referred to as spiritual<sup>10</sup>): Describing the moral and ethical principles evidenced in a person's responses. All actions reflect the nature of a person's conscious awareness while showcasing the quality of their judgement, decision-making, ethics and aesthetics, free will and agency.

### *Respons-ability*

A person's 'ability' to respond appropriately to life's challenges is a somewhat contested conceptual space. In the first instance my ability to respond may be hampered by practical, real world issues. For instance, I may work as a small part of a larger

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<sup>10</sup> The term spiritual is used here in the sense of an antonym to actions which have a material quality. It is not intended to carry any religious significance however it is understood that respons-ibility is often influenced by religious belief or practices. See also van Hooft (1995) and his use of the term 'spiritual level' in his four-dimension model of care. His model does not include a Time dimension.

team and my ability to respond is restricted by my place in the team's hierarchy. I may not be able to respond the way I would like to due to all kinds of impediments such as resources, distance, expertise, politics or many other factors that may hamper my *ability* to respond. Conversely, the ability to respond may not always be an obviously practical issue especially if it is the subject of a bias of awareness. For example; if I perceive an in-ability to respond (false or not) based on a trans-subjectivity modulated, filtered awareness, then the barrier to action is real in my mind and my respons-ability will be impaired. This situation is the subject of much discussion in fields such as Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) as well as the wealth of personal self-help theories that encourage perceptual manipulation in order to facilitate 'better' decision making and responses to environmental factors (Bandler, et al. 1982; Sharmar, 2009). From my perspective, I consider this way of thinking to be flawed. Perceptual rewiring, reframing or selectively filtering reality is a way of artificially suppressing the trans-subjective experience of a lifetime. It is a way to re-perceive or 're-engineer' an environment or situation in such a way as to artificially produce an alternative fabricated reality rather than the natural product of a trans-subjectivity informed ontology with all its flaws. Forms of this altered reality are celebrated by some practitioners as a more enlightened or desirable outcome often based on a theoretical desirability for personal improvement or attainment i.e. to 'be all you can be'. But perhaps that is another discussion for another time. For the moment I will leave this topic to others to debate and return to my proposal, that respons-ability is in its simplest sense, the 'ability' a person has (of feels they have) to respond to their trans-subjectivity modulated, conscious awareness of a set of experiential circumstances.

## *Respons-ibility*

The role that trans-subjectivity plays in formulating the 'respons-ibility' aspect of *Living* can be understood more clearly when I look at its role in developing *embodied knowledge* or that form of knowledge that comes from an iterative, hermeneutic understanding of life events that develops over time. Put another way; If I make a consciously aware decision to formulate a response to a given set of experiential circumstances, I am able through consciousness and cognitive ability to step outside myself as it were, and observe my response. Of course, I will not do this in every instance and very often I will formulate responses on 'auto-pilot' in the sense of not making a truly conscious (autonomic or intuitive) decision on the action. However, if for the sake of argument, I am consciously aware of my response and I am able to mentally observe my actions, I will experience a trans-subjective change in my knowledge base as a hermeneutic reaction to the experience of my first response. Therefore, experiencing a trans-subjective feedback event will alter my awareness and thus the aesthetic judgement foundations affecting future responses. My future responses will be altered as they are now based on a new awareness.

78

Res-ponsi-bility is also a noun derived from the prefix 'res-' and the Latin verb 'spondere', and it has assumed the meaning of being answerable to someone or to something or for one's own actions (Boff, 2008, p.170)

Throughout a person's life, Trans-subjectivity builds the residual structures of ethical, moral, value or belief-based systems that underpin and support their response decisions. The combined influences of a person's cultural and social history strongly shape

the moral/ethical principles upon which their responses to self, others and world are based. Throughout its history humankind has been happy to accept the creative possibilities of its imaginings but has struggled with accepting the responsibilities that come with the possibilities (and outcomes) they so engender. This is an aspect of responsibility that is increasingly missing in much of what is done in the name of human progress.

### ***Trans-subjectivity and Ecology***

Responses formulated on the basis of conscious awareness (shaped and informed as they are by trans-subjectivity) are always determined within a context (micro-level), life-world (mezzo level) and an ecology (macro level) (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). In my research I have adopted an interpretation of the term Ecology from the Greek word *Oikos* meaning 'home' (Encyclo, 2014). Following Bateson (1972); Gyatso (2005); Capra (1996) and others, I take the foundational view that people are an integral part of the planetary ecology that all human and non-human beings call home. A person's activities (responses) can make either a positive or a negative contribution to the earth's ecology but they cannot be isolated from it. The activities of human beings are important to evaluate because they are the intentional product of a species that has the conscious awareness (sentience) to choose to influence the ecology positively or not. Reich highlights this importance difference in attitude,

Care also bears the meaning of solicitude or 'caring for' ... tending to, nurturing, caring for the Earth and for our fellow human beings as opposed to merely taking care of them (Reich, 1995. p.327).

There is no trans-subjectivity without an ecology in which it can take place and the ecology that human beings make in turn, changes the nature of trans-subjectivity that is experienced. Every single action taken by each and every person, has a direct and cumulative impact on the wider ecology of plant, animal and mineral life on this planet. Human beings are only a small (and relatively unimportant) part of that fragile ecological balance (Bateson, 1972). By corollary, the world and worlds that each person inhabits and has helped to create, will in turn change and modify the nature of life they enjoy within the environments they live in. All living things are not just a product of their environment, they are responsible for the environment they have created.

80

Anything that exists and has an identity, does so only within the total network of everything that has a possible or potential relation to it....What we do and think in our lives, then, becomes of extreme importance as it effects everything we are connected to" (Gyatso, 2005, p.64)

The great irony here is that, while there can be no consciousness in human life without an ecology and as much as human beings believe themselves to be so very important, the ecology is quite capable of surviving and indeed flourishing without the presence of human beings.

### 3.0 TRANS-SUBJECTIVITY AND PROJECTING

*Care* is 'projected' or intentionally directed, firstly towards a *self*, secondly at others (including objects) and lastly at the

immediate life-worlds that they (self and others) inhabit. In terms of *Care*, I propose that especially for human beings, projection needs to be reciprocal and co-constituting for its participants. Projection, simply means the way in which a person projects their *self* out into an external world and also the way this self is projected inwards and reflected back within a private inner-world known only to the persons *self*. Earlier I described how everyday trans-subjectively moderated experience continuously informs and develops consciousness, awareness and the responses that are formulated to meet the challenges of everyday life. The activities (responses) initiated in meeting these challenges are acts of projection, directed both internally and externally. Once again, an extensive discussion of what terms such as Self, Others and World could mean or contain is well beyond the scope of this text however, I will briefly touch on each of them in terms of the role that trans-subjectivity plays in shaping their impact on *Care*

### ***Trans-subjectivity, Projection and Self***

Trans-subjectivity plays a foundational role in shaping my understanding of my *self* from a neonate throughout my life. Through my daily experiences and learning (trans-subjective events) I shape and modify my self through a constant stream of self-talk and internal dialogue (Willis, 1998) that shapes the narrative that I use to describe my *self* to myself or to others. I might say, 'I am a good person' based on my actions and an internal dialogue with my past experiences of what constitutes a good person. This hermeneutic dialogue takes place in what might be called my 'mind', a locus of cognition/connation which also includes physiological processes of embodied experience but is different to (but not separated from) my biological brain processes. Van Hooft describes this 'mind' aspect of my *Care* as Spiritual. It certainly has

a meta-physical quality to it as it is entirely subjective and develops over a lifetime through trans-subjective experiences that shape an ontological view of my *self*.

The integration of our lives is an existential project: the most fundamental existential project that we can have: the project of being ourselves. This project generates the spiritual level of our being and expresses the existentiality of our being through time (Van Hooft, 1995. p.6)

From a phenomenal standpoint, *Care* can be seen as primarily about a 'self' and at a secondary level, how this self (I, me) interacts (is concerned) with others. When I externalise *My Care*, I become more Concerned for others-as-things (a *technical* type of *Care*). This is much easier to recognise as concern when I interact with objects-as-things. It is this confusion between the common use of care and the mis-use of concern that can be seen at the heart of many points of contention in the modern world. For example, by prioritising 'objects of desire' and fostering a ubiquitous dependence on 'things', consumerism can be seen more as a matter of concern because 'things' can never be objects of *Care* as they have no reciprocity. Stated simply;

Care is affirmed when one consciousness recognises itself in an 'other' consciousness. This can only happen between living beings.

Human beings need to *Care* for themselves before they can be concerned for and about others. This may sound 'self-ish' but without *Care* for self, there cannot be concern for others. After all,

in essence, *Care* only exists when there is a self. The nature of the *self* a person constructs over their lifetime is determined by the trans-subjectively mediated experiences they have had. *Care* for others must take a secondary position to *Care* of the originating self or it will not be genuine or enduring. That is not to say that people need to be overly selfish in regard to others - quite the opposite. In being consciously aware and responsible for their actions, a person can for example, establish a sound basis for helping others to *Care* for themselves and their world, which includes all things upon which they depend. This is Caring better for our-selves as well as for each other (as recipients of *Care*).

### ***Trans-subjectivity, Projection and Others (People and Things)***

83

#### ***Trans-subjectivity and People as others***

The very act of living, presupposes a level of interaction outside of the *self*. Trans-subjectivity is a conductor for the actions, activities and behaviours that become projected onto and thus into the lives of other people. Trans-subjective feedback through social interaction helps shape the *self* which in turn shapes future interactions and ultimately the qualities in each person's mode of *Care*.

Caring ...is a relationship that develops with changes in the one who cares and the one cared for ...In caring, we experience the other person as other, as apart from us, and at the same time as also one with us" (Mayeroff, 1971. p.463)

A vitally important aspect of my social interactions is the way in which I use the *other* to help me to identify who I am through my relationship with them – a kind of measuring-up or way of evaluating my self through exploratory interactions with and comparisons to others. Mayeroff refers to this reflection on self and other as *difference saying*,

The sense of identity in caring involves awareness of difference, and the awareness of difference between the other and ourselves involves a feeling of oneness between us. ...identity-in-difference is fundamental (Mayeroff, 1971. p.464).

So, I might say that I use trans-subjectivity in my relationships with others to see and understand my self like a mirror, a way of looking at my self, as reflected in an other's responses to me. I need others in order to use trans-subjectivity to know myself.

Those ephemeral moments that emerge as we interact. These take on deep consequence as we realize how, through their sum total, we create one another (Goleman, 2006, p.5)

### *Trans-subjectivity and Concern for Things*

Looking through Latour's (2004) lens on the relationship between objects and things I might say that, Objects are something a person encounters or knows the existence of and that these objects become *Things* through the interactions that a person has with them. The nature of the interactions that people have with

objects and the trans-subjectivity that these encounters generate, brings them into awareness, thus making them part of a person's *Care* (Reich, 1995).

In the artificial world that people have built, the human and non-human are very different and the level of care imbued in products, services and systems (technologies) designed to support them is poorest when the human (and non-human) outcome is considered last rather than first. For example, how might a decision (and the outcome) be more Caring (solicitous) in almost any field of endeavour, if the decision maker stopped and asked themselves, does this decision represent an act of *Care* (i.e. is it people focussed) or is it an expression of concern for things? The philosopher Martin Heidegger put it this way,

85

Because Being-in-the-world is essentially care, Being-alongside the ready-to-hand could be taken in our previous analysis as concern, and Being with the da sein-with of Others as we encounter it within-the-world could be taken as solicitude (Heidegger, 1962. p.237)

The prioritisation of concern for things can be seen in the development of artificial or technical solutions to many of the challenges of modern life. Using consciousness, awareness and responsibility, scientists, designers and engineers have developed synthetic answers to a multitude of natural problems. These answers have produced many useful outcomes. However, knowing when to stop and how far to go is also a sign of advanced emotional and spiritual intelligence and this has been less evident as imperatives for 'innovation' gain seemingly unstoppable momentum. Jones puts it clearly when he says,

Can Implies Ought. ...just because we can develop a technology, the capability implied by that technology should not be implemented unwittingly. Innovation does not obviate the ethical demand to envision the possible future consequences (Jones, 2013. p.309).

Respons-ability and respons-ibility (both cumulative outcomes of applied trans-subjectivity) can be seen in many of the decisions that are made in support of technological advancement. These 'abilities' were shown earlier to be an integral aspect of *Care*. However, 'ability' to innovate is only one side of the responses a person might make to a given challenge. The other side of responses, 'respons-ibility' (the moral and ethical side) needs to be also factored into decisions as an essential part of the innovation process. The two really are inseparable and a lack of consideration for one lessens the value of the other.

### ***Trans-subjectivity, World and Life-world***

The *Care* of self and others takes place within and because of a world outside of myself that exists, at least partially outside of my trans-subjectivity phenomenal way of understanding it. A life-world is the world that each person encounters every day as they travel through life. It is the people, things, places, events, occurrences and melange of inputs that all people encounter as they navigate the fundamental act of living. Trans-subjectivity shapes the way that each person processes the immediate context of their everyday life-experiences (a microsystem). Each individual's experiential context lies within a life-world (a mesosystem) that occasionally bumps up against other people's life-worlds and so on. And lastly, the cumulative effect of all of these life-worlds impacts

directly on the greater ecological macrosystem to which all people belong (Bronfenbrenner, 2005); the parts and whole are intertwined. Trans-subjectivity shapes the way each person *Cares* and the intersection of all of these units of Care shapes the ecology that sustains all human *Being*.

Caring for self and others is always done in the world. This care for persons cannot be divorced from care for the world. ...being-in-the-world, signifies that being and world are integrally related" (Bishop 1991 p.62)



Figure 2. Levels of Care

### *Projection and Levels of Care*

If figure 2 above reminds some readers of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs then I am not surprised. I have not intentionally modelled it after Maslow's pyramid but it is easy enough to understand that both are based on human *Being* as their common ground. The fields of *Care* (Human *Being*) shown above, are not

separate but overlap, continually co-constituting each other within the one Oikos (home) in which all the planet's living organism's dwell. All thought and action by human beings produces an unavoidable consequence; subjectivity is changed (trans-subjectively). This means the life-worlds and world in which they exist, must also be changed. The primary objective of most human endeavour has not really been about the *things* in life; those have mostly been a means to an end. As Maslow pointed out "self-actualisation" is one of human kinds strongest needs (at the micro level), a need that can only be satisfied in the spiritual realm and not by material means. This explains why *Care* and the way that I enact *My Care* is so important.

#### 4.0 TRANS-SUBJECTIVITY AND TIME

*Care* takes place and is made intentional within a time continuum based on a trans-subjectively coloured version of the past, that in turn alters the way the present is enacted, which in turn influences the way the future is conceived. The role and influence of trans-subjectivity within every facet of human life becomes compelling when I consider the magnitude of complexity in any single human life. The model of *Care* is designed to simplify this complexity by bringing the entire process of living into view however momentarily, as *My Care* can only be truly understood in the instant. The very nature of trans-subjectivity is governed by time. The *trans* prefix highlights a transition from an old subjectivity to new subjectivity both in the instance of an experience and the longitudinal cumulative effect of trans-subjectivity on the interpretation of these experiences, over time.

The anthropological impact of human activity (*Care* responses) can last a very long time. This is a solemn responsibility for all human beings to consider i.e. how the responses they formulate will impact on others and their interactions with (concern for) the objects (things) that they produce.

Care and time have a precious and precarious relationship, which can be seen in everyday expressions such as spending time, lost time, giving time to something or somebody, wasting time, and ultimately when time is up.

Time is important to industrial processes and was proven to be particularly important when industrialisation sought to increase productivity (use less time) or improve efficiency (save time) and advances in these areas have been promoted as enabling more leisure time, family time, health time and time to socialise with others. There is little evidence that industrial processes have actually resulted in any improvement in human needs versus wants. The drive for productivity and efficiency is further evident in outsourcing, robo-sourcing and the like (Gore, 2013; Pinker, 2018) which do not adequately factor in the human need for meaningful use of time at work. A revised valuing of time, 'to human beings' needs to be maturely addressed. Time is not simply a commodity to be saved and redistributed like money. For Thoreau time holds real human value and meaning,

The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run (Thoreau, 2004. P.31)

From another perspective, Heidegger tells us that *Care* is essentially a process of having-Been, *Being* and Becoming (1962). These stages of human Being and becoming are something that industrial processes already powerfully influence. People become response-enabled in the present through their ability to act, and responsible for a future through the qualities they define in the actions they take (Adams, 2009). Drawing on the seeds of their conception during the industrial revolution, industrial practices have mostly focussed on the idea of what-might-become. This shift in time factoring, from a past interpreted in the present to making alternative futures that are brought into being more and more rapidly, has created an almost *permanent present*. Memory of human behaviour and impacts in the past has become unreliable and disgraced (even denied) and human beings now appear to face (for the very first time) a precariously uncertain **future<sup>11</sup>** for the species, putting even more pressure on an already overheated present. The value and importance of Time has a new focus as human-kind struggles with developing or even accepting changes to many generations of destructive behaviour. A human future, detached from the past is increasingly reliant on what transpires in the present. Uncertainty is a new determinant in the value of time.

## 5.0 CLOSING COMMENTS

In this paper I have proposed that trans-subjectivity is integral to shaping the nature of each person's *Care* (human *Being*)

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<sup>11</sup> See opposing discussions of species extinction in Gore (2013) and Pinker (2018).

and that Caring (humanising) is intrinsic to 'respons-ible' thinking. To structure this argument, I have used a 'Model of *Care*' to highlight the role that trans-subjectivity plays in the various elements that constitute a person's mode of Care. The model offers a starting point for how people might begin to consider *Care* in a similar way to how they now consider the value of wellbeing or work/life balance. In my presentation of the key elements of *Care* (Experience, Living, Projection and Time) I firstly highlighted the vital role that trans-subjectivity plays in shaping the nature of everyday human experience. How these experiences contribute to and are continually influenced by trans-subjectivity in their development and interpretations of awareness. How the hermeneutic qualities of a trans-subjective feedback system can alter a person's responses in the form of how they interpret their respons-ibility and to a degree their respons-ability. I hope that decision makers of many kinds will begin to factor *Care* and its attendant responsibility elements as a practical structure that they can work with, reference and build upon in their efforts to give tangible form to Care throughout the processes of doing business. Trans-subjectivity enhanced awareness can guide decision making as it is made but it does not 'direct it'. There are many who advocate that a person's past experiences determine (the *determinism* argument) what they will do today (van Inwagen, 2008) and there are those who argue against that position (Libet, 1999). What is not contested is that most sentient human beings have some form of *free will*. Furthermore, they respond with a level of judgement (informed by trans-subjective awareness) which may or may not lie outside of the hegemony of past experience. All of this only reinforces the obligation placed on all living, thinking human beings to take respons-*ibility* for their actions.

Considering the contents of this paper from an everyday perspective; many of the aspects and dimensions of *Care* that I have presented might seem obvious; for example, everybody has Experiences; Living is unavoidable if a person is breathing; the elements of Projection towards self, others and the world are not new; and the importance of Time is equally self-evident. What is vital to draw attention to about all of these things is their obviousness; and this highlights one of their greatest problems. They are all vital parts of what it means to be human, and this is something that has been to a large extent left behind, forgotten or deemed unimportant; not only within many functions of the business world, but in so much of the vital infrastructure of modern living. Once relegated to the obvious, 'humanness' has become assumed and taken for granted. Like many of the hidden and undervalued support systems of industrial production, consideration for *Care* has been dismissed as 'of little commercial value', particularly in terms of what has been described as *social reproduction* i.e. ensuring the project of Capitalism has a continuum of consumers (Barnes, 2012; Praetorius, 2015; Fraser, 2016). At another level, particularly in Healthcare; the idea of care is continuing to align its identity with activities that hold mostly commercial or practical value with less and less relevance to its deeper value to human beings. Regardless of the level at which *Care* is evaluated, the role of trans-subjectivity in the shaping of *Being* itself, is unquestionably one of the many essential, authentic, background processes underpinning the hidden economy upon which all social and business processes are dependant. It is important that *Care* is revisited and returned to a priority position if the processes of industrialisation are to positively contribute to the flourishing of a future human world where trans-subjectivity is even a factor.

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## CHAPTER 3

# TRANS-SUBJECTIVATION AND ELECTRONIC NETWORKS: AVATARS OF THE *ZOON ELEKTRONIKÓN*

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97

### ABSTRACT

The processes of individualization and subjectivation have occupied the attention of various disciplines such as Anthropology, Psychology or Sociology since their origins. The outbreak of the cybernetic world and the expansion of social networks have generated new contributions to this reflection, fundamentally with the aim of characterizing a new form of individualization, which we call "zoon elektronikón", as well as the possible virtualities of its modes of subjectivation.

*Keywords:* Individuation, Subjectivation, Zoon elektronikón, Avatar.

## INTRODUCTION

The concepts of "individuation" and "subjectivation" as social analysers have been evolving since the dawn of Sociology, very much conditioned by the historical realities in which they were conceived and to which they wanted to refer.

Nevertheless, from the approaches of Émile Durkheim or Max Weber to those of Fredric Jameson or Slavoj Žižek, through those of Herbert Mead, Gilbert Simondon or Thomas Luckmann, the tension has always been maintained between what society generated about the biological condition of human beings and the different responses of these to the processes of socialization, with the consequent redefinition of borders of a symbolic nature (with respect to the real, the corporal, authorship, etc.).

The emergence, since the beginning of this century, of a type of social links linked to an electronic reinvention of both forms and relations (in terms of computers, networks, media supports, Internet...), has forced a rethinking of the concepts used until then, to characterize possible trans-subjective developments, in the same way that the corresponding trans-individuals had been studied before.

In the following pages, we point to the latter direction.

## INDIVIDUALIZATION AND SUBJECTIVATION

### *The processes of individuation*

In order to better understand the reflection that follows, it is convenient to take into account some basic distinctions.

Thus, for example, the concept of "individuation", of generation or production of individuals, which, in this case, is based on the argument developed at the time by Michel Foucault in several of his works from the so-called "genealogical stage" (Huici, 1994, 2007).

In them the French thinker points out the particularity of a type of power that has developed in western society since the seventeenth century, and that aims at the systematic control of the life of men and women in order to turn them into "machines" and "population". This power is called "bio-power" and is a "microphysical power" as opposed to the "macrophysical power" of the State apparatus. In this respect, Foucault develops the first aspect in *Surveiller et punir* (1975) and the second, in *Histoire de la Sexualité, 1 La Volonté de savoir* (1976).

Thus, in *Surveiller et punir*, a whole series of procedures and instruments are set out that allow for the application of a "disciplinary regime". Among the procedures are listed the

following: the orderly distribution of human beings in space; the control of activity; the segmentation of productive work; and the composition of the forces generated. Among the instruments, hierarchical surveillance, standardizing punishment, and examination are mentioned: "Discipline individualizes bodies by a location that does not implant them, but distributes them and circulates them in a system of relations" (Foucault, 1977: 149).

Likewise, for Michel Foucault, the proposal of the "Panopticon" of the English utilitarian Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) comes to constitute the architectural figure that will spatially model the institutionalization of the disciplinary procedures by constituting a particular regime of surveillance:

100

"The panopticon device disposes of spatial units that allow us to constantly see and recognize the point. In short, the principle of the dungeon is reversed; or rather of its three functions - enclosure, deprivation of light and concealment - only the first is retained and the other two are suppressed. The full light and the gaze of a watchman capture better than the shadow, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap" (Foucault, 1977: 203-204).

With all this, human biological force is converted into work force, and in this sense, people can be individualized, that is, converted into "individuals" (op. cit.: 153), susceptible of being substituted by others, that is, interchangeable.

For his part, in *Histoire de la Sexualité, 1 .La Volonté de savoir*, Foucault analyzes the function of sex as a regulator of the

population that may be susceptible to discipline. To this end, he describes how a so-called "sexual science" has been developed that legitimizes certain behaviors while penalizing others, in response to specific demographic needs:

"The important thing is that sex has not only been a question of sensation and pleasure, of law or interdiction, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex has become something essential, useful or dangerous, precious or fearsome" (Foucault, 1978: 71).

Likewise, he highlights a "line of action" among which the following stand out: the hysterization of the woman's body; the pedagogization of the child's sex; the socialization of procreative conducts; and, finally, the psychiatry of perverse pleasure. Nevertheless, from the end of the XIX century, the reproductive role would be reconverted "in the controlled circuits of the economy", constituting itself in "a super-repressive desublimation", propelling either a "sex-reproducer", or a "sex-desublimated" (op. cit.: 139).

From this perspective, according to Foucault, the "individual", arisen with the development of capitalism would participate of the double condition of being, therefore, a productive machine and a reproductive machine, always in consonance with the needs of the new economic system.

### ***The processes of subjectivation***

This process of individuation would be, nevertheless, a *sine qua non* condition so that any initiative of "subjectivation" could be

initiated later, in which some individuals, being conscious of their situation, could operate with their own will by means of some "technologies of the self that allow the individuals to carry out, on their own account or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their body and soul, thoughts, conduct, or any form of being, thus obtaining a transformation of themselves" (Foucault, 1990: 48). It is true that for this, the French thinker refers to the study of the classical world (*Histoire de la sexualité, 2. L'usage des plaisirs, 1984; Histoire de la sexualité, 3. Le souci de soi, 1984*) with the aim of "reaching a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom or immortality" (idem supra), but it is still very suggestive.

In this sense, the "technology of the self" would not be but the "way in which an individual acts on himself" (Foucault, 1990: 49), but attending more to the principle of "self-care" than of "self-knowledge", because:

"There has been an inversion between the hierarchy of the two principles of the Antiquity, "Worry about yourself" and "Know yourself". In Greco-Roman culture self-knowledge was presented as the consequence of self-care. In the modern world, self-knowledge constitutes the fundamental principle" (Foucault, 1990: 55).

And such "care of oneself" fundamentally supposes some "practices" that go from listening in silence, spatial isolation and meditation to written reflection in the form of notes or letters to the most friends: "It is a set of practices through which one can acquire, assimilate and transform the truth into a permanent

principle of action. *Aletheia* becomes *ethos*. It is a process towards a greater degree of subjectivity" (Foucault, 1990: 74).

### ***Limitations and operations***

The previous distinctions are posed in principle as operative, despite the limitations that may be assumed when ascribing them to a general structuralist conception or one nuanced by the Hegelian-Marxist imprint (Lukács, 1969), as Michel Foucault himself confesses: 'I try to work on that form of philosophy which, from Hegel to the Frankfurt School, through Nietzsche and Max Weber, has founded a form of reflection' (Foucault, 1985: 207).

They could also be conditioned by the Eurocentrism that informs them, which would perhaps make them unviable in other cultural contexts such as those of the East (Dumont, 1970), in which the historical changes outlined for the West have not taken place.

Nevertheless, of the Foucaultian distinctions it would be good to retain the following for the further development of the argument.

Thus, in the first place, the conception of individuality as a condition of subjectivity.

In second place, the prevailing relationship between individuality and spatiality and temporality, both of which are subject to a disciplinary regime.

In third place, the reversible character of the visibility of the panopticon.

In fourth place, the relationship of the legitimate regulation of the libido as the foundation of individuation.

And, finally, in fifth place, the openness to subjectivation through practices such as isolation, meditation, written reflection or dialogue with friends.

## THE ZOON ELEKTRONIKÓN: A NEW FORM OF INDIVIDUATION

### *Characterization of the zoon elektronikón*

104

The onset of the 2007 economic crisis coincided with the expansion of Facebook and other social networks. Within a few years, users of this new infrastructure numbered in the billions (no less than 1,350 in 2015, according to official data), while the electronic monopoly grew and Facebook absorbed first Instagram (2012) and then Whatsapp (2014).

This expansion has been legitimized by the development of techno-social theories that defend their use, arguing that the networks, in their implementation, "would bring democracy, transparency and equality", and that in fact these already "contribute to peace and universal partnership, as they carry out an artificial planetary coverage" (Musso, 2003: 247). Nevertheless, in many occasions, the lights and shades of these new technologies have been "rarely admitted by techno-optimistic visions that sin of intellectual laziness when ignoring the historical-social context that anchors the interaction between society and technology" (Waisbord, 2015: 76).

In any case, one of the consequences of this process has been the emergence of a new form of individuation in which the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are the axis of its socialization, because, as the psychologist Sherry Turkle has pointed out, the ICT have not only changed our way of doing, but also our way of being (Turkle, 2010). A new figure that could be called "zoon elektronikón", reinterpreting the old Aristotelian figure of the "zoon politikón".

We have been studying this figure of the "zoon elektronikón" on different occasions and from different perspectives (Huici and Davila, 2016; Huici, 2017). However, for the purposes of the topic that has been proposed, it is now appropriate to rescue its fundamental characterization, considering as "zoon elektronikón" in principle a certain "individual in network, permanently connected, spatially and temporally dislocated, whose scope of sociality is linked to its own activation in the network for which it needs only a limited working memory" (Huici and Davila, 2016: 767).

Thus, in this context, the use of electronic devices tends to value connection more than communication: to be connected or connected has so much greater relevance insofar as it can be subjected to calculation (Cardon, 2018) and independently of the qualitative aspect of communication. Connections, networks and all the nuclei of shared -and conveniently paid- information acquire value by themselves. On the other hand, the expansive character of ICTs tends to generate an endless dynamic of self-demand for services, as it was early warned in those cases where a computer system was installed and then, regardless of the needs for which it had been installed, one proceeded to "invent work in order to use

it" (Turkle, 1984: 22). In fact, after a few years, "we no longer need to keep the computers busy as it is they who keep us busy" (Turkle, 2011: 279) with their endless supply of services from all kinds of media, applications and updates.

Similarly, there has been an alteration in the link with spatial-temporal perception, which was common until very recently (Huici Urmeneta, 2007), by assuming permanent availability over time, as well as systematic spatial dislocation. Such availability seems to have accelerated vertiginously certain social dynamics, but mainly it has created the possibility of the asynchronous relational simultaneity, opening "a space of encounter of people who objectively cannot agree" and generating what Betty Martinez Ojeda (2006: vi-vii) denominates "spaces of flows".

On the other hand, there is a progressive confusion between the multi-sensorial *face to face* and the electronic feed-back. Only the effective verification of the difference, made evident in the meetings face to face individuals or in groups, shows the consequences, sometimes painful, of the confusion, since, as it was already predicted in the eighties of the last century, these sophisticated instruments had become depositories of "a singular hope: that of compensating frustrations or lacks of a way of life" (Horacio C. Reggini quoted in Turkle, 1984: 10), and even when the ICT offered "with its capacity of reaction and interaction, a company where the reciprocity and the complexity of a human relation are absent" (op. cit.: 27).

Finally, from a neuropsychological point of view, the growing relevance of working or short-term memory over long-

term memory can be observed. In fact, long-term memory is displaced to hard disks or electronic clouds, with only short-term resources needed to activate the fundamental contents and relationships. In this sense, the idea of memory externalization as one of the achievements of new technologies confuses, perhaps interestingly, 'working memory with long-term memory' (Carr, 2011: 232).

Among all these aspects it is also interesting to note that the profusion of tools such as PowerPoint, and the generalization of the use of electronic presentations in the form of a succession of slides (which may include images, texts, hyperlinks, etc.) promote both a 'cognitive style' (Tufte, 2006) and a 'universal rhetoric' (d'Huy, 2007) that make the world appear 'condensed, simplified and flatter, bright and hyperreal' (Frommer, 2011: 15).

107

Moreover, the display of the world determines that "little or nothing is seen if it is not on screen. What matters is shown on the screen, and if it is not shown, it does not matter, it does not exist" (Behar Block, 2009: 135). This generates an atmosphere of "electronic euphoria" (Leung, 2007), one of the effects of which is the normalization of a state of communication in the form of a permanent "murmur" or "chatter" (Serres, 2014: 54-55), and that nevertheless has been favoring at the same time what has been called the "digital hermitages" (Servais, 2017), a retreat from the world, analogous to that of the ancient hermits, today verifiable in the figure of the Japanese "hikikomori" (Vila-Matas, 2016: 106).

On the other hand, the own technological fragility with respect to the materialization of the memory makes that the act

today so habitual of "publishing in the network can be like writing in the sand" (Lafuente, 2007: 263).

### ***The individualization of the zoon elektronikón***

In the second decade of the 21st century, the prevalence of the assignment of the social dimension to the interactivity characteristic of web culture is such that, surely, the publication of a sociological study about "how to orient oneself in the social world" (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2015) would seem to be inevitably dedicated to the ways of handling social media (or Social Media), whether these be communication, collaboration, entertainment or multimedia.

Well then, focusing this study on the conformation of the ordinary representations of the social order, attending to both individual (differences of individual competence) and collective (processes of socialization as well as of instituted representation of social groups) modalities, according to the practical manufacture of a social classification through identification exercises, it could perfectly be extrapolated to the reach of the new (and electronic) social networks: think about the algorithmic generation of social categorizations among those who use channels and platforms like YouTube, without going further.

In any case, we should not lose sight of the fact that Gilbert Simondon rightly drew attention to the fact that "individuation as an operation is not linked to the identity of a subject, but to a modification of state" (Simondon, 2009: 108). And in this regard, in relation to the paradigm of individuation studied by Michel Foucault, the first thing that is surprising in the case of the zoon

elektronikón is the declared dissociation of individuality from spatiality and temporality. As has been shown, this new form of individuation dispenses with such conditions and conditioning, since it can be exercised at any time and from any place, provided that there is adequate coverage of the electro-electronic network.

In this sense, it is not surprising that the repeated celebration of the role that cyberspace can play in the advent of, in the words of Bill Gates, a "frictionless capitalism"; although it requires not losing sight of the fact that, as Slavoj Žižek points out, all this is combined in the following terms:

"In the social conditions of late capitalism, the very materiality of cyberspace automatically generates the illusion of an abstract space, with a 'frictionless' exchange in which the particularity of the social position of the participants is erased. The "spontaneous ideology of cyberspace" that predominates is called "cyber- revolutionism " and considers cyberspace (or the World Wide Web) as an organism that self-evolves, (...) [while] hiding the set of power relations (of political decisions, of institutional conditions) that the "organisms" like Internet (or the market, or capitalism, etc.) need to prosper" (Žižek, 1998: 154 and 156).

The individualization, therefore, is produced in a system of these relational characteristics, where the transindividual modes of existence (Haumont, 2002) are conceived according to the submission to a disciplinary regime, key in the device of the reviewed bio-power, which appears in this case covered with imperative need if it is desired to maintain the sociality that is

constitutive of it; However, and because of all this, the panopticon becomes reversible, since the urgency of control by a central authority is no longer so great, since the individual is forced, more or less consciously, to provide all the data necessary for its correct classification, and these can be used according to the relevant algorithms (Cardon, 2018), depending on the interest in each case.

On the other hand, and without being always in an explicit way, the *zoon elektronikón* is submitted to a regulation of the libido in different levels, in many occasions by means of commercial extensions, and almost always in planned devices of "over-repressive desublimation", of "libido liberation, socially allowed and favored" (Marcuse 1993: 108) as it is evident through the reach of pornography in the networks.

## AVATARS OF THE *ZOON ELEKTRONIKÓN*: EMERGING FORMS OF SUBJECTIVATION

If in the Foucaultian approach, the opening to subjectivation was mediated through practices such as isolation, meditation, written reflection and dialogue with friends, one might ask how one could open up in the case of *zoon elektronikón*.

Not in vain, the ontological and experiential basis of the subjectivities modelled on an electronic background (that is, inscribed in the connective disjunctions, dissipative structures, etc. that conform it), lies in a dematerialization process; process that does not begin nor is exhausted in the virtualizing character of the present communication technologies and their systems, since the

"increasing dematerialization of numerous production activities has found -as Gonzalo Abril reminds us- a clear historical correspondence in the progressive de-embodiment of the interaction practices, this is, of the communicative action and the textual activity" (Abril, 2003: 39). Just as it is shown in the case of the socio-historical conformation of the book in the West, although undoubtedly it seems more evident according to the current of computer science dispositions.

Thus, reflecting on the computerized disposition of some daily activities of informative organization such as generating "documents", filing in "folders", throwing to the "trash can"... it can be observed that, instead of handling those "things" materially, their digital representations are used -to which we know as icons- as "if the known physical objects had been sucked from the desk towards the computer" (Mitchell, 2001: 43), where they would pass to enjoy a (better) ghost life.

Likewise, forms such as chat and the like becomes trivial conversation, making it not so much ordinary as unspecific (Davila and Huici, 2018) through a digital metaphorization of the *face-to-face* encounter.

For its part, the current preponderance of electronic virtuality only intensifies this dematerialization of corporeality, although, curiously, it invokes the mythical-religious resource of incarnation on many occasions. And perhaps one of the best known forms in which it does so is that of the *avatar*, adopted today by an infinite number of Internet users as a dig-identity or character of infographic identification that displays its interactive representation in cyberspace (this image of synthesis may be little

or not at all faithful to the traits of the empirical user, who will construct this representation according to the type of interaction desired rather than his own personal characteristics).

On the other hand, the current socio-cultural rooting in an electronic horizon of practices, representations and discourses, not only exacerbates recurrent processes of communication (Sfez, 1988) or of shielding (Block de Behar, 2009), but also promotes the adoption of -and accommodation to- a series of logics of instantaneity, registration, tracking, flow... that thus become hegemonic values. It is an electronic construction of social interaction that is combined through the use of platforms for videoconferencing in both the personal and professional spheres (whether it be to take part in a business meeting, participate in a family reunion, receive a class, etc.); also through the frequentation of videogames, serious games, augmented reality, etc. And not least, it is also conjugated through a "Quantified Self", or configuration of certain self-knowledge based on the quantified information that comes from a growing proliferation of objects in continuous connection that each person carries (from mobile phones and their applications to glasses, watches, bracelets, etc. ) as if it were an extension of oneself; a generation of measurements and calculations that, on the other hand, arbitrate a greater and better capacity for control and surveillance (both public and private) of those who produce and contribute such a flow of data about their actions and interactions thus organized and unfolded, that is, contributing to a generalized normalization of subjectivities in a context marked by the imperative: "Express yourself", through which both expressive individualism and neoliberal interactivity are declared dominant.

In this sense, the expressive individualism would manifest a supposed hot and immediate freedom, granted by the electronic

media that would have its counterpart in the cold and technocratic limitation of the algorithm that vehicles interactivity. Contraposition that refers to the emotional character (affective and intimate) acquired by the economic relations, taking Eva Illouz to raise the notion of "emotional capitalism" (Illouz, 2007), and that alludes to the socio-cultural reorganization that has supposed the postindustrial establishment of a new communicative ethics linking emotions and instrumental reason.

Institutionalization of a new communicative ethos that modifies the social construction of feelings in relation to market logic. A construction, on the other hand, not exempt of an ambivalent character, as this same author makes clear when analyzing the scope of the Self-Help or discourse of self-help that dominates the therapeutic culture; that, in turn, is today hegemonic, replacing a culture of love and romanticism: "I believe that Internet supposes a drastic distance of that tradition of love. If romantic love was characterized by an ideology of spontaneity, the Internet demands a rational way of choosing a partner, which contradicts the idea of love as an unexpected epiphany, which appears in life against all will and reason" (op. cit.: 191).

In this respect, it is convenient to remember that each one has been decades not only assisting but also contributing actively to a "cyber experience" (Le Breton, 1999), disembodied, but at the same time conforming a "cyber self" (or "Cybersoi") in the conditions that some time ago Régine Robin dictated: "The cyberspace forces a new examination of our self, of our relations with others, with the community, citizenship, sex, gender, identity that has become fluid until arriving at the dissolution" (Robin, 2001: 266). Only that since then, and according to the facts of a

rampant economy of cognitive cut, certain emotional logics have established a strategy of social domination, giving form to what Maria Jose Sanchez Leyva denominates as "emotional turn", considering "the expressive, experiential and moralizing turn that has conquered and saturated the public space and its forms of intervention" (Sanchez Leyva, 2016: 146); emotional turn that "makes us share suffering and not acting" (op. cit.: p. 150), according to which these emotional logics would have "necessarily to be revised and denounced in their role of candid and perverse support of the new economy" (op. cit.: p. 149).

114

An economic regime that promotes a narrative of self-realization celebrates formats such as entrepreneurship (or management of individual initiative) and takes on different forms of self-assurance, while at the same time creating structural precarization, driving increasing off shoring and generating all kinds of distributive inequalities. Hence, the repeated expression "digital divide" not only reveals an inequality of possibilities with regard to access to or benefit from ICTs and the Internet, but also reveals the establishment of another frontier as a scenario of otherness and untimeliness.

Recently the semiologist Paolo Fabbri coined the term "Far Web" to refer to the borderline that constitutes the division between Clear and Deep Web, the latter being the secret part of the visible Internet (which thus becomes negligible in relation to the whole) and which would resemble "the new Far West" (Fabbri, 2016). Following on this allusion it will not be superfluous to remember here that in cases as emblematic as those of the North American Far West (in the 19th century) or the Amazon rainforest (in the 20th), what is evident is the eagerness to establish the

frontier as a place where something new is created, a situation by means of which modernization is induced - whether by introducing social relations marked by the market, or by promoting certain changes in ways of life under civilizational pressure... -, thus leading to a conflict in which the indigenous peoples concerned would be irremediably trapped, declaring them to be out of date. A situation that, in spite of knowing an inversion in the denominations (for example, the use of the expression "digital natives" to characterize those who navigate fluently, expect instantaneous answers, create their own contents...), in reality is not so far away from that which animates the symbolic conformation of the electronic border at the beginning of the 21st century (Davila and Huici, 2020); not only with respect to the globalized world that is drawn through its generalized transactions (in no way alien to frontier capitalism), but also with regard to the manifest opposition managed among those who respond to the characterization of being natives or, on the contrary, digital immigrants.

Although these two figures have become naturalized during the last decades, mainly from their conceptual formulation by Marc Prensky in a series of articles published already twenty years ago (Prensky, 2001a and 2001b), both categories already appeared in "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace", document published online on February 8, 1996 (and written by John Perry Barlow, co-founder of the EFF or the Electronic Frontier Foundation, precisely), opposing any appropriation of a rapidly expanding internet (and one that is situated "outside the borders of any country") by any form of power, be it governmental or non-governmental, since it is claimed to be autonomous and capable of self-regulation (under the principles of an ethic of reciprocity). And even so, in this declaration we can read in the paragraph that

mentions both categories the following: "You are afraid of your own descendants because they are natives in a world in which you will always be immigrants".

Hence, once the above-mentioned practices of distancing have been transferred to our times -and without, as Foucault himself warned, having to be mimetic-, almost all of them would prove to be useful to move away from the "transmediatic haemorrhage" in which we are immersed and which favours all kinds of manifestations of "extimacy" (Sibilia, 2011); One of which, perhaps the most relevant because of its characteristics, is that of the "selfie", a new form of "autonomy and self-affirmation" (Lachance, 2017) in accordance with the necessary exchange of glances that it establishes.

However, given the individuation in a current context of "space of flows", subjectivation would not emerge by mere decontextualization, that is, by disconnecting (in the Luddite manner), historicizing and spatializing, stimulating the generation of a medium-term memory, distancing itself definitively from the environment of electronic euphoria (Leung) and permanent murmuring or chatter (Serres).

Rather, subjectivation will come from the handling of the elements generated in the process of individuation by overcoming them, by means of critical connectivity avoiding such "euphoria" and such "chatter"; that is, by means of the spatial-temporal punctual link (in the form of "*friend* meetings"), the alternation of a *face-to-face*/digital socialization, and the stimulation of analytical memory.

Only thus the transcendence of the *zoon elektronikón* as

post-critical individual (or subject) will be conceived as an exercise valued "by its healthy dispersion of the ideal I and that experiences that dispersion as a static rupture of the limits" (Gratton in Eakin, 1994: 24). In this respect, it would be argued in favour of a "digital wisdom" (Prensky, 2009), according to certain creative dynamics that would characterize social networks and web culture; although this would take place in such a "state of things [that] the mobilization of feelings, the improvisation of the game or other expressive capacities of subjectivity no longer constitute by themselves guarantees of disturbance of the public-political sphere but its perverse support" (Sánchez Leyva, 2016: 158).

A public sphere that the use of the digital media is transforming, and that should make think about the way in which it is proceeded in that sphere thus modified to "the elaboration of passions and conflicts" (Peñamarín, 2016), as opposed to its rational and dispassionate conception. Indeed, following Cristina Peñamarín's invitation to rely on Hanna Arendt's (the human condition of plurality) instead of Junger Habermas's (the communicative idealization), this sphere reveals itself as a place of collaboration and conflict: "Recognition and reciprocity are the key values of the public space of diversity. It is those values that allow articulating collaboration and conflict in the progressive and endless composition of a common world, the imperfect balance in which politics consists" (Peñamarín, 2016: 42).

Undoubtedly, it is possible to observe daily examples of this dynamic such as the edition of personalized web pages (or "site personnel") in search of an audience -of all types and conditions, according to the orientation of the web in question- with which to

interact (about a subject of individual and/or collective interest).

The same occurs in the case of practices of contestation or resistance through telecommunications and electronic social networks, (as occurred in the different revolts framed in the socio-political phenomenon that has come to be known as "Arab springs" or in the MeToo movement, for example), although it has also been estimated that "digi-activism is a recharged version of techno-optimism that needs to be compared and criticized in order to correct its errors and myths" (Waisbord, 2015: 79)

The basic motivation behind these or other examples is to share, whether it be content, actions, access, etc. But we must not lose sight of the fact that this motivation and the creative dynamic that shapes it develops in all directions, since here it is important both the diffusion of certain feelings (whether narcissistic or citizen) as well as the incidence of some diffuse forms of feeling (becoming a capacity to act); forming, in fact, processes of collective subjectivation in which both laughter and group hatred can play a prominent role, without going any further, perhaps simply figuring a "new way of being together" (Rincón, 2015: 189).

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## CHAPTER 4

# MULTIDIMENSIONAL SOCIOHERMENEUTICS ON SOCIAL STUDIES: A PRAGMATIC, TRANS- SUBJECTIVITY, AND INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

125

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this text is to introduce Multidimensional Sociohermeneutics (MSH). This perspective is influenced by “prudent sociology”, a sociological current that defends a relational, analogical or phronetic sociology. This article reviews the current social thought which develops the MSH approach. MSH conjugates sociological theories proposed by Mustafa Emirbayer, Isaac Reed, Bent Flyvberg or Dimitri Ginev with Mauricio Beuchot’s Analogical Hermeneutics. MSH also includes the sentient sphere as a key element of analysis. Therefore, MSH is a sociological view that falls halfway between sapiential knowledge and scientific knowledge.

*Keywords:* social hermeneutics, analogy, phronesis, ontology, social reality

## INTRODUCTION

**H**ermeneutics is a knowledge frame, traditionally developed as a convergent way between art and science. Indeed, hermeneutics is shaped, in a very simplified way, as a methodological focus (Schleiermacher, Durkheim, Reitzer, Baeza, Oevermann, etc.) and also as a theoretical paradigm (Gadamer, Heidegger, Ricoeur, Vattimo, etc.). Recently, a new conception has powerfully emerged within the hermeneutics frame stemming from an analogical or phronetical perspective (Beuchot, 2015; Heller, 1989; Flyvberg, 2001). Latin American author Mauricio Beuchot and his proposal, *Analogical Hermeneutic*, are the flagship of this hermeneutic approach. Beuchot shows that analogical interpretation is in line with Aristotelian *phronesis*. However, *phronesis* means proportional sense, and *proportio* is analogy. That is the underlying “model of hermeneutics” (Beuchot 2012). This model, this hermeneutics, is a “map” of reality, an icon –according to Peirce– that can direct us or move us within the social reality. Analogical Hermeneutics and pragmatics conjugate in knowing the contextual meaning of the speaker: “[...] when one realizes that the objectification cannot be accomplished without studying reflexively the contextualization in which it takes place” (Ginev 2016: 150).

The starting point for this paper is the premise that “understanding is relational in the sense that it is relative to the actors or the actor’s project” (Heller, 1989: 303). Relation, analogy,

phronesis, integration, etc. are only parts of the great prism of the hermeneutics of social sciences. The multi-focuses socio-hermeneutic we are presenting here aims at integrating diverse epistemic elements into different phronetical perspectives.

In this article, the focus is on the development of multidimensional socio-hermeneutics (MSH). This sociohermeneutical perspective could be seen as a theory deriving from the so-called *Analogical Hermeneutics*. This theory, postulated by Mauricio Beuchot in Mexico, has had a great reception in Latin America. This perspective focuses on connecting the hermeneutic tradition (especially Greek, namely Aristotelian philosophy, and Mediaeval thought) of moderation thinking (specifically *phronesis* or *analogia*) with the present world. Beuchot deals with the hermeneutical process of texts and icons (Peirce), on the one hand, and, on the other, with the concept of analogy as an element of medial interpretation between the univocal and the equivocal hermeneutics. This Mexican philosopher treads a theoretical path of knowledge to consider that there is an ontological and analogical scale of interpretation. Nowadays, we can find that there are many lines of research within Analogical Hermeneutics in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Italy, Romania, Spain and Venezuela (Beuchot, 2015). Furthermore, Analogical Hermeneutics walks through a number of disciplines: philosophy, nursing, sociology, history, etc.

This theoretical position comes from the idea that, facing the opposite poles of equivocism (i.e. postmodern perspective) and univocism (i.e. modern perspective), Analogical Hermeneutics presents a phronetical model of understanding inspired in Aristotle's analogical doctrine and Mediaeval thinkers (Beuchot

2015). In this way, Analogical Hermeneutics is a relationship with the relevant phronetical perspective of, for instance, Bent Flyvberg (2001, 2006). In his suggestive book *Making social science matter*, Flyvberg (2001) states that the view of social science as a science is restricted. This author explains that social sciences study human interactions that involve human consciousness, volition, power and reflexivity. Then he exposes that this very idea of social sciences must be replaced by reincorporating context-sensitive research (Flyvbjerg et al. 2012).

A current drift in social science has made this knowledge discipline to fall into relative oblivion in the sociological field. In fact, if we search “sociological hermeneutics” or “socio-hermeneutics” in *Web of Science*, we will get very few results. Thus, MSH arises from the necessity to propose a deeper or broader comprehension method to study sociological facts and actions:

“The telling of the facts of the matter, in human affairs, already involves a structure of meaning and intention, and, therefore, of inference on the part of the investigator toward aspects of life that are not visible, and never were nor will be visible. Social facts understood in this manner can never be fully stated in protocol sentences that are verifiable by literal observation, but must be inferred and understood in a dialogue about what is happening or has happened, at a certain time, in a certain space, in a given society” (Reed, 2011: 16).

## THE FEATURES OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL SOCIOHERMENEUTICS

Multidimensional sociohermeneutics (MSH) stem from certain dissatisfaction at the dominance of historical rationality in the hermeneutical focus. We consider that a historical view has been hypertrophied as a general hermeneutical standpoint.. This is the reason why our methodology aims to understand –fundamentally– the personal facts and the personal actions involved in a determinate social context. Just like Flyvberg (2001), Reed (2011) and Ginev (2016), we advocate a personal sociohermeneutics in which episteme, reason, intuition, experience, meaning and wisdom have their place. Owing to this, MSH moves away from the dominance of the temporal dimension of the past as expression of historical consciousness (Gadamer, 1975). We are aware that this perspective is not generally accepted (Dilthey, 2002; Endress, 2014; Heller, 1989; Ricœur, 1976 & 2007; Seeböhm, 2004) but we consider that historical hermeneutics has limited the social possibilities of this one, in the present social system. The person lives in a historical context, it is true; but everybody senses, experiences, wishes loves, and so on at the present instant of their lives. In this present instant (it is very important); history has a short capacity to understand social and actual reality.

We particularly follow Schutz (1970) when he says that our consciousness is always and already structured into a determinate horizon and into a theme (Nasu, 2014). Schutz claimed that the “genetic features of the history of our knowledge are of decisive

importance for the structuration of the world in which we live” (Schutz 1970, p. 97). This structuration, as we understand the social phenomenology, is based on the *real world* (ontology), but their knowledge is developing through the interpretation of reality (our intersubjectivity construction). In turn, the *life world* is based on the personal context and also is based in a subjectivised approach modelled by the existence of ontological schemes. That is to say, we structure our personal and collective life through the convergence of that which is outside us and the inner of us. Two ways that come together, but this process occurs analogically. Then, the comprehension of personal life, within a multidimensional perspective, needs also a conjunction of the temporal and spatial context of life. However this does not mean that the MSH will be dependent of history; only, that our collective history contextualizes the understanding of reality. That is to say, social ontology shares meaning with reality (social and personal world) and, secondarily, with history (the context that pre-structures the world).

Indeed, our perspective relates to Ginev’s theory (2016, 2016a). The hermeneutic approach of Dimitri Ginev (2016a, 3) puts forward a theory with two subjects: the constitution of science’s cognitive specificity (which has a meta-epistemological nature), and the disclosure and the meaningful articulation of reality’s domain through scientific inquiry (ontological nature). Starting from this perspective, we do not agree with Alfred Schutz when he said: “there is no primordial experience upon which all subsequent knowledge could possibly be founded” (Schutz, 1970, p. 75).

MSH is a hermeneutical proposal that assumes the relevance of the personal elements of understanding (internalism).

That is to say, personal concepts as important in a Latin American context as *saudade's philosophy* (Piñeiro, 2001), *sentient intelligence* (Zubiri, 1998), *vital reason* (Ortega y Gasset, 1983) or *poetic reason* (Zambrano, 1971). These and other theorists, who base their theories on several elements coming from entities of conscience and sense -as wisdom or empathy- have a very relevant position in MSH (Coca, 2017).

In this sense, a sociological trans-action denominated by Emirbayer (1997) as a *relational sociology* in which it rejects “the notion that one can posit discrete, pregiven units such as the individual or society as ultimate starting points of sociological analysis” (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 287). These relationships generate “facts” which are “transitive and socially produced in the sense that they require humans to experience and process them, but *real structures* are not, and hence science retains a real referent, and thus it is intelligibility and rationality” (Reed, 2008, p. 104). We think that both approaches (Emirbayer's and Reed's) have some relation with a broader rationality.

131

Emirbayerian Relationalism, Reedian realism and MSH converge in the Ricœurian “paradigm of the text” (Ricœur, 1991).

“This paradigm draws its main features from the status of the text itself as characterized by (1) the fixation of the meaning, (2) its dissociation from the mental intention of the author, (3) the display of non-ostensive references, and (4) the universal range of its addresses. These four traits taken together constitute the “objectivity” of the text” (Ricœur, 1991, p. 157)

For Ricœur, people perform actions and these could be drawn as texts, which constitute the *social* dimension of action (Ricœur, 2007; Heller, 1989). However, this framework will be inserted in a pragmatist dimension. In fact, “pragmatists would like to replace the desire for objectivity [...] with the desire for solidarity with that community” (Rorty, 1999, p. 39). This idea is continued, in a way, by Xie (2014) in his critical intercultural hermeneutics presupposing the openness, receptivity, inadequacy and limits of one's own understanding of the world.

MSH shares these features. It is pragmatic, phronetic, relationalistic, realistic; in short: *analogical*. This perspective includes some elements of the Schutzian life-world, but our proposal is not a phenomenological methodology –although it has some influence. MSH is a hermeneutic methodology and it establishes three conventional elements for analysis: actor, text and reader.

Regardless of what was said, following Reed (2010 & 2011) we can make an epistemic differentiation between context of investigation and context of explanation. This epistemic consideration let us open a new frame of research for Analogical Hermeneutics.

“To thematize these issues and their possible interrelation, and thus get a handle on the problems of the philosophy of social science in a postpositivist era, I would like to appropriate and transform the language of Reichenbach and Popper, and draw a distinction between the *context of investigation* and the *context of*

*explanation.* The context of investigation refers to the social and intellectual context of the sociologist herself. The context of explanation refers to the reality that she wishes to investigate, and in particular the social actions she wishes to explain and the pieces or aspects of those actions' surrounding context that she uses to explain them. The context of investigation would include both of Reichenbach's contexts (of discovery and justification); the context of explanation is invoked, in one way or another, by any empirically driven truth claim in sociological research". (Reed, 2010, p. 22)

Then, the multidimensional (or analogical) perspective shows us that this hermeneutics could operate as if it were a bridge between both contexts: investigation and explanation. MSH aims to explain the reality through the epistemic dimension that moves between the *micro* (investigation) and the *macro* (explanation), and also in a rational dimension that moves between a *sentient rationality* and a scientific rationality. The first dimension will be the author of our text (understanding that social reality is, broadly, a text). The second dimension will be the reader of a sociological text. MSH is so a second order sociological methodology in which many elements not strictly sociological come in: aims, intentionality, relations, affections, feelings, and so on.

“Meaning and subjectivity in social life [...] provide a great deal of dynamism to the social object, particularity in so far as they are *unrealistic*. Subjectivity, understood literally as that element of the

world that continually exceeds its objective constraints, gives to the social object of study a distinct historical dynamism and cultural difference” (Reed, 2011, p. 62).

In the second one it is possible introduce de history as a heuristic elements. But this not means that history as a fundamental dimension of the research understanding. This aspect strongly contrasts with Dilthey’s proposal. This author developed his methodological hermeneutics basing on the analysis of the historical world. In this sense, each text can be understood as an expression of the people life or society life. That is to say, meaningful texts are icons of life and to do hermeneutics it is necessary to include the historical connectedness of life. From a sociological perspective, it is possible to make any research without departing from historical hermeneutics. In fact, socio-hermeneutics can be developed through ethno-methodology, the observation or the narrative perspectives. These methodologies and their relationship with understanding have been shown by Bleicher (2015) when he states:

“Hermeneutic experience is neither monological as is science, nor is it dialectical as is Hegel’s universal history. Since Gadamer explains it on the model of human discourse I shall refer to it as ‘dialogical’ rather than ‘dialectical’.” (Bleicher, 2015, p. 75)

For these reasons we could say that socio-hermeneutics is an integrative frame for sociology and the sociological theory. Our integrative socio-hermeneutic frame is a realistic and methodological environment in which *Geisteswissenschaften* could be apprehended analogically. However, we consider that

multidimensional socio-hermeneutics is “necessarily critical and is guided by an interest in emancipation” (Bleicher, 2015, p. 150). In some way, this perspective is closely related with de *South Epistemologies* (Santos, 2012). However, MSH is not a relativist perspective, but an analogical perspective. Then, we turn to Reed (2010) to state that it is necessary to clarify the epistemic distinction between the investigation and explanation contexts. But we also think that comprehensive context is also relevant for research.

According to Reed, when the researcher approaches his investigated object, he encounters different contexts that are culturally structured and reorders that information according with social theories. But it is necessary to clarify that “sociological *theory* is not ontological in the sense of establishing a unified, abstract account of the fundamental mechanisms according to which social life works” (Reed, 2008, p. 119). But, for us, sociological theory is relatively ontological, since it seeks to analyse analogical the social structures which configure the social space. Reed shows us this argument in four steps:

“1) Meanings orient social action. 2) Social actors are oriented by remarkably different or “local” meanings. 3) The meanings that orient social investigators are the relatively esoteric ones called “social theories”, which tend to be abstract and have been explicitly developed for the purpose of understanding the meanings that orient others’ actions. 4) Thus, the meanings that orient others’ actions are brought out and represented in the context of investigation” (Reed, 2010, p. 35).

Then, we cannot talk about universal hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1975). We prefer to work with contextual hermeneutics.

In this sense, Dimitri Ginev shows us that the “most significant deficiency consists in ignoring the way in which the objectivity of scientific knowledge is contextualized without becoming relativized” (Ginev, 2016, p. 30). In fact, “a text only renews and fulfils itself in a specific act of reading” (Roberge, 2011, p. 13). Indeed, in this sense, one person responds to the thing of text in an “appropriation” phenomenon (Ricœur, 2007). This process implies that the human action will be symbolically mediated (Roberge, 2011). But, despite what has been said, our perspective will be closely related with visual understanding. We say this to prevent our words from being misunderstood. Human action is symbolically mediated but we could be detecting the symbolic element through an observational approach. Human action, human interpretation of the world will be generated as an emotional stamp, a symbolic landscape that we could understand toward a deep observation of social ontologies and social relationships. We will return to this later.

Then, we enter two new contexts: inside the contexts of investigation and explanation, and namely the inner experience and collective meaning. These aspects do not mean that our hermeneutic focus is on the relativism’s centre. In fact, we do not agree with Alexander (2000) when he said: “But whereas this new hermeneutically-oriented social science advocates value relativism and deconstruction [...] philosophical thinkers like Alistair MacIntyre, Richard Rorty, Michael Walzer, and Charles Taylor very explicitly have related their interpretive programs to the task of creating a better life” (Alexander, 2000, p. 274). Our point of view implies that hermeneutics could be beyond objectivity and subjectivity (Bernstein, 2011) in a hermeneutical trans-subjectivity. Nowadays there is a wide variety of contemporary works about

hermeneutic social science or phronetic social science from Pierre Boudieu, to Richard J. Bernstein or to Bent Flyvbjerg.

“Phronetic social science puts the emphasis not on particular research methods or types of data, but on producing research that can enhance phronesis by increasing understanding in specific contexts as opposed to questing after the ghost of an abstract knowledge of law-like processes. Therefore, phronetic social science calls for social scientists to revise their standards for acceptable research methodologies, re-incorporating context-sensitive research, such as case studies that help social actors learn to appreciate the complexities of social relations and practice various crafts more effectively” (Schram, 2012, p. 19)

137

## ONTOLOGICAL AND PHRONETIC ELEMENTS ON SOCIETY

Marcus Morgan (2016, p. 1) claims that since “at least the 1970s there has been a great deal of discussion within the humanities and social sciences over the ‘death’, ‘dissolution’, ‘deconstruction’, or ‘decentring’” of the person. However, this author states that the sociological knowledge could contribute to implement a humanistic perspective. For this, it is necessary recover the possibility for sociology to incorporate personal wisdom as a structuring element. Rorty (1979) and Gadamer (1975) expose that, rather than searching timeless truths, hermeneutics ought to be a *bildung*. That is to say, hermeneutical knowledge has the relevant function to provoke a self-creation (personal) and also a hetero-creation (social).

Then, the *person* is located in the core of the sociological system of knowledge, but the *person* is conditioned by the social. Now, as Morgan (2016) says, this personal and relational perspective will be inside the pragmatist sphere. Indeed:

“Relational theorists reject the notion that one can posit discrete, pre-given units such as the individual or society as ultimate starting points of sociological analysis (as in the self-actional perspective). Individual persons, whether strategic or norm following, are inseparable from the trans-actional contexts within which they are embedded [...]” (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 287)

Emirbayer claims, as we said before, that his relational sociology is a transactional point of view and reconceptualises sociological level on a *continuum* from ‘macro’ to ‘micro’. Based on this idea, MSH is a pragmatic hermeneutic that search a better possible understanding of life for a person in society. For that, we need to analyse the reality under the magnifying glass of the *phronesis* and the relational perspective. In this sense, we agree with Isaac Ariail Reed (2008, p. 102) when he says:

“I will suggest a move toward “layered interpretivism” that investigates the following as a route to sociological explanation: (1) intelligible subjects’ reasons for action, (2) structures of signification and meaning (culture), and (3) “objectivized” artifices of human labor as themselves possessing a meaningful logic”.

Reed does not consider the sentient elements in his theory or in his epistemological proposal. He states the following:

“The subjects of social science have the same essential capacities for coherent thought and intentional action as the investigator does. Thus, insofar as people act in a way that “makes sense” to themselves (or deviates in a discernable way from sensible action), it is possible for the investigator to come to an understanding of their action” (Reed, 2008, p. 116).

We agree with Reed, but in turn we consider that the *sentient sphere* allows us to understand personal and social action more completely. In a way, he is approaching to our perspective (or vice versa) when defending the *interpretative epistemic mode*. Reed discusses three different epistemic modes: realism, normativism and interpretivism. All three modes “have to be approached indirectly, mediated through the interpretation of social meaning” (Reed, 2008, p. 90). These three epistemic modes are different ways to apprehend social reality through social symbolic facts. Now, Reed does not defend a strong ontology via “objects” of theory. His view is that many realisms in social sciences have ontological “schemas” that could be interpreted. Then, our sentient elements could be related with these *ontological schemas* because all of them operate in the same *sphere*.

In certain sense, the sentient sphere is the field of experiential development of human beings. In fact, pragmatist hermeneutics focuses on signifying (intentionally communicative)

and asignifying (unintentionally meaningful) acts that form a semiotic chain (Shalin, 2007). The semiotic chain works as the central meaning in sociological hermeneutics; one that can be seen as a processual and relational meaning (Bleicher, 2015, p. 139). Likewise, the pragmatist perspective of Dmitri Shalin focuses its interest on the “special role of our feelings, sentiments and emotionally charged narratives play in forging semiotic chains” (Shalin, 2007, p. 203). These elements complement the Reedian epistemic theory, and also our MSH.

140

Semiotic chains are very important especially in relation with asignifying acts. In fact, MSH brings in some comprehension elements linked with the alter-rationality, and with the trans-subjectivity. In this sense, our theory broadens other perspectives as, for example, Taylor’s proposal (1980). He states that in order to understand people, it is necessary to be able to give an account of desirability characterizations (volitions, desirability, desires, and so on). Taylor considers that, among people, a misunderstanding phenomenon occurs in the intersubjectivity; this is due to the incommensurability of the interpretation process. We could add to this consideration that this incommensurability succeeds in all the epistemic scope of the human being. From an ontological and realistic perspective, hermeneutics allows us know the reality, but we cannot approach the *real* world (the deep ontology). This happens because ontological elements can only be apprehended indirectly through the aforesaid ontological “schemas”.

We can directly learn the interpersonal dialogue, social communication, personal facts and social action. But we need a broader methodology to comprehend the social symbols and the ontological aspects of *the real*. Then MSH considers that the main

elements on which its own elements pivot are those of the *reality* and of the *real*, which can be considered texts, namely: dialogue, communication, personal facts, social action, human symbols, personal experience and sentient comprehension. Therefore, this hermeneutics is close to wisdom and traditional knowledge since “hermeneutical point of view articulates a cultural sense of practical truths with respect to common convictions” (Misgeld, 1983). Wisdom is a special kind of insight or perception, for this one truly wise person grasps to do things according to wide reality in context and they are motivated to do it without inner conflict (Tiberius, 2016). But MSH also considers the micro-sociological perspective through the study of the personal (individual) elements of the hermeneutical process.

## SIGNIFICATION CHAINS IN MULTIDIMENSIONAL SOCIOHERMENEUTICS

MSH is related with other phronetical, relational, epistemic and methodological perspectives. This theoretical proposal definitely encompasses a multidimensional sociological work. We are aware that MSH still needs to be worked on but we think that nowadays it is possible to comprehend our personal and social reality (not the real) thanks to it. Then, it is the moment to describe the sociohermeneutical process to understand the person’s actions and *the social’s* facts.

The hermeneutical process presents three traditional elements and their own signification’s chains. For that, we consider the following worlds of symbolization as fundamental in the

hermeneutical phenomenon: the person (the author of the “text”), the own text (that which will be understood) and the social (the reader of our “text”). We will explain the three worlds of signification in a minute, but it is necessary to explain one more thing before. The concept of the hermeneutical cycle shows us that the understanding phenomenon is epistemically circular. That is to say:

“By that, I mean that the movement of understanding from the whole to the part and back to the whole is a mental operation that plays out in the brain of every interpreter and could be analyzed with the tools of empirical science. In this case, the circle of understanding has nothing to do with ontology or with logic, but rather with the representation of knowledge in the mind of the interpreter [...]” (Mantzavinos, 2005, pp. 38-39)

Then, the hermeneutical circle suggests that the symbolic process goes from the person to the social, and recursively from the social to the person. Similarly, Dimitri Ginev (2016, p. 200) suggests that the “circulation has its own hermeneutic device of preserving itself that consists in the ongoing mutual translatability of the semiotic systems involved in the meaningful articulation and objectification [...]”. Now, in the person’s world exists creativity factors that introduce new information to the signification system.

When we analyse the person’s world, we will consider personal convictions, individual feelings, sentiments without object (*saudade*), *self*-construction, and so on. The knowledge of this world needs a detailed (micro-) comprehension, then the researchers

cannot reduce the own context to a mere verbal environment (Sinclair, 1997; Widdowson, 2004; Ginev, 2016). In this case the researcher needs to introduce one relevant methodological element: intuition. This is what “the researcher chooses as phenomena and holds it in his/her imagination. He/she then moves to develop examples of similar experiences through imaginative variation. Finally, integration of these variations is achieved through synthesis [...]” (Lavery, 2003) in your rationality’s process.

Secondly we find the *text*, the “world’s text”; an intersubjective world in which intentionality holds a very important place. Indeed, in this world person share your sentiment, your feelings. The “world’s text” is a battlefield where some opponents fight each other to gain power over the other. Then, social research needs to analyse this conflict. Here the winner, the “powerful”, establishes *one dimensional view* of the “world’s text” (Clegg & Pitsis, 2012). All this “concentrated on observable behavior and concrete decisions that are expressed in over conflict concerning specific issues, revealed in political participation” (Clegg & Pitsis, 2012, p. 69).

The aim of our sociohermeneutics is to study the unique power’s dimensional view –an epistemic social perspective– and how this one operates in the social system. But it is also necessary to know the relationship between *the author* and *the reader* of our social “text”. In this sense, the analysis of power’s dimensional view shows us that this textual process is wider than other methodological observational perspectives. This is due to the insertion of transubjective elements. In fact, social practices are “something more” than socially and symbolically recognized forms of activity (Ginev, 2014).

The author –of the sociohermeneutical phenomenon– constructs the “text” through a representation of reality and through a social construction of the social and personal reality. For this, the hermeneutics of social “text” analyses the materialization of this one and its conditional elements. That is to say, social ‘text’ configures a transsubjective reality: “the continuous constitution of meaning is the practical-meaningful articulation of what is ready to hand within the world” (Ginev, 2014: 86).

“In this context, knowledge calls for our courage and compassion to transform existing structures of domination and dominant communication and create multiverse of knowledge in our multiple languages of communication, making knowledge neither a monument nor a document but a movement of activist and meditative transformation” (Giri, 2011: 103).

The third element is the *reader*. When we talk about the reader, we are referring to the social system, or a part of it, in which it is interpreted the text itself. That is to say, the society, the community, the social group and so on will be that reader. Therefore, the social research needs to investigate the identity group in this process, the social conflict and the establishment of social imaginaries. The latter will be analysed from the double perspective of the *instituting imaginaries*, *instituted imaginaries* of societies, in general, or the social groups, concretely (Castoriadis, 1998).

Castoriadis’s perspective is too close to the institutional elements of society. For us, the social imaginary theory does not

reflect the trans-subjective reality or its elements. Multidimensional socio-hermeneutics focused its interest inside the ‘veins’ of the social words, but pays attention to the personal reality and the “real trans-subjective ontology”. For this, analysing of the *reader’s word* means comprehending the subjective and trans-subjective elements that determinate the wide understanding of the hermeneutical text.

It is not the time to explore the imaginary concept and its utility in social analysis. We will only refer to Castoriadis’s theory and its linking to MSH.

In the investigation of the author of the text and its reader, it is really important to know the typology of collective actions (the author’s and the reader’s) with the objective to characterize the significance of collective intention. This will allow us to raise the trans-subjectivity ontologies that operate in the social world. According to Dascal (2003), this typology is based on two basic dimensions: on the one hand, the existence of a prior intention (PI) and/or of an intention in action (IA); on the other hand, we have the level of awareness of the sharing of these intentions inside social groups, the members of the groups themselves, the part of the social system, etc.

Dascal (2003) even states that there could be no collective PI in those mentioned contexts. Then, there could be, in turn, a collective IA in a determinate *social reader*. If a collective IA exists and a collective PI does not, then “spontaneous” collective actions will be generated. However, this philosopher claims that the canonical case of collective action (the “non-spontaneous” collective action) will be related to the sharing of a PI.

The triple hermeneutical process (author, text and reader) open a wide number of research and methodology possibilities. Both possibilities, due to their multidimensional character, move in a vertical degree of understanding. On the top, we find a trans-subjectivity world, broader than the inter-subjectivity Schutzian world, in which we find personal intentionality, social creativity and so on. In contrast, at the bottom, we find social imaginaries too attached to the materialized social reality.

These coordinates will allow us to lay the foundations of a broader research process of social research that we have denominated *multidimensional socio-hermeneutics*.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have introduced a new sociohermeneutical perspective. This approach considers the society as a complex texture that could be understood and also admits a methodological approach to the three fundamental elements of the comprehension process: *author, text* and *reader*. Our perspective tries to encompass the wide sociological standpoints as a whole. For that we consider a textual sociological position as a better focus to analyse the world of social significances. Lastly, multidimensional sociohermeneutics implements an analogical or phronetical view. It provides the possibility to reach wider conclusions with more contextures of meanings. Nowadays we are working to implement this theoretical perspective and materialize an operational process of meaning analysis

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