ADVANCES IN CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY: CONSTRUCTING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

# Beyond the Mind

## *Cultural Dynamics of the Psyche*

Giuseppina Marsico
Jaan Valsiner

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A volume in
*Advances in Cultural Psychology: Constructing Human Development*
Jaan Valsiner, *Series Editor*

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**Giuseppina Marsico**

*University of Salerno, Italy*

*Centre for Cultural Psychology,*
*Aalborg University, Denmark*

**Jaan Valsiner**

*Aalborg University, Denmark*

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INTRODUCTION

# *Desire for Basic Science of Human Being*

Giuseppina Marsico[1]

This book, *Beyond the Mind: Cultural Dynamics of the Psyche*, is unusual in the content and it the format. That's why it requires an unusual look. It has to do with a man, an intellectual journey, and uncountable travels across the world over the last two decades.

This man is Jaan Valsiner, and here you will read of his restless effort to elaborate ideas while going in different places as invited keynote. This book is mainly about his intellectual trajectory, which touches several places and several interconnected topics.

He lives traveling in the mind and in the physical world, and this is what makes him so special. With a great dose of self-irony, he defines himself as E.R.O.: Estonian Round Object!

For those who have the fortune to work with Jaan Valsiner, he is our (H.)E.R.O.—Heroic Estonian Round Object—because his enthusiasm and

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never-ending striving for the new has only a few equals in our contemporary academic world.

His way of being is not just an erratic way of existence, but instead his traveling around the globe comes from the deep consciousness that new ideas emerge from the periphery of the world and of our mind. Thus, he needs to move intellectually and physically (Figure I.1).

This book is about the "minutes" of his "bigger" and well organized works, and also it is a collection of only apparently fragmented texts (mainly keynote lectures, unpublished or rejected papers) where the readers will see the "step-by-step" elaboration over the years of new ideas, theories, models, and even schemas (which Jaan likes very much—maybe especially as he claims basic inability to draw anything).

In analogy with the collection of photos of growing babies in any ordinary families, this book shows the ontogenesis and the development of a coherent theoretical framework. Like a baby who grows and becomes stronger and more skillful, the volume encompasses the birth and the development of the cultural psychology of dynamic semiosis that Jaan Valsiner has elaborated over his productive career (Valsiner, 2007, 2014). Its roots are in observations of ordinary people in ordinary life contexts—children being

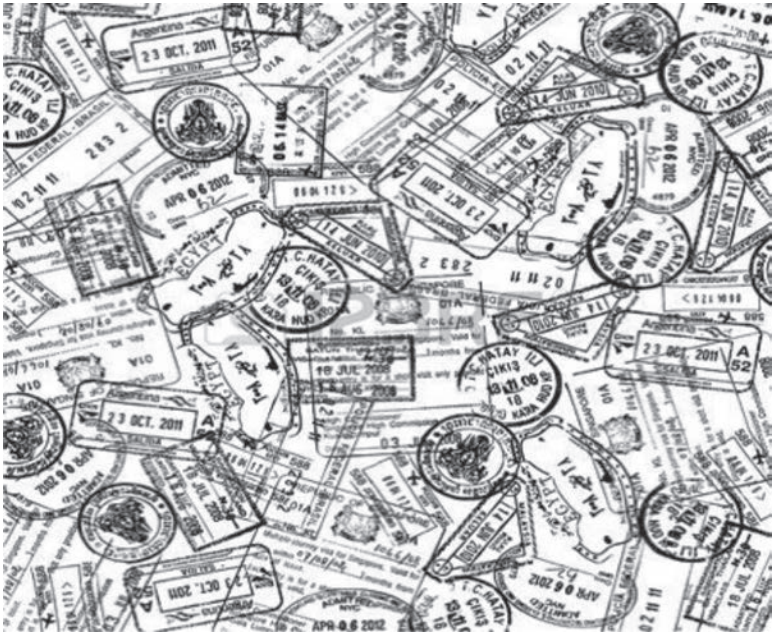

**Figure I.1** What Jaan Valsiner's passport looks like

fed in the kitchen (Valsiner, 1987), psychologists living in changing societies (Valsiner, 1988), and women dancing in temples (Valsiner, 1996) or waiting for beautiful moments of deeply personal lifelines. All this leads to a theoretical synthesis—in cultural psychology.

## Cultural Psychology: A New Science of the Human Nature

*Beyond the Mind: Cultural Dynamics of the Psyche* offers an overview of ideas, historical roots, and areas of investigations of that sophisticated theoretical proposal that goes under the label of cultural psychology, which aims to re-establish psychology as the science of the human nature (Valsiner, Marsico, Chaudhary, Sato, & Dazzani, 2016a).

Valsiner emphasizes how psychology deals with the experiences of the human being and his actions in the world. Humans are culture-makers and, therefore, every form of human activity becomes a legitimate object of study for psychology: art, technology, and institutionalized systems of collective life, but also fashion, religious experience, entertainments, ornaments, and the different ways of treating one's own body. The talks and papers here presented may appear quite diverse in the scope of their topics but in all of them the focal point is the *dynamic of the human psyche.*

Lecture after lecture, place after place, year after year, the readers will observe the construction of the Valsiner's proposal that looks at the richness and the intricacy of the high psychological functioning and at the variety of products of collective activity.

Psychology, in its history, has shown the difficulty of dealing with the complexity of psychological phenomena. The study of higher psychological functions has been gradually replaced by the analysis of elementary mechanisms. As a result, the human psyche has been reduced to its epiphenomenon, the elaboration of a general theory of psychological functioning replaced with a plethora of almost nonsensical research findings and the focus on processes with emphasis on products. In all this, the epistemic role of culture in the organization of human ways of existence has been lost (Marsico, 2015).

*Beyond the Mind: Cultural Dynamics of the Psyche* proposes, instead, the theoretical coordinates for rethinking psychology starting from the study of the higher psychological functions and the most sophisticated products of human knowledge as they have been constructed in the history of humanity. This volume helps to trace back all the numerous and interwoven intellectual trajectories that led Jaan Valsiner to relocate the psyche at the center of the psychological investigation.

> The human *Psyche* is complex, subjective, meaningful, and mysterious. As such it cannot be reduced to explanations that consider it accounted for by causal mechanisms of lower levels of organization. Thus, the efforts to reduce higher level psychological functions to physiological or genetic "causes" violates the hierarchical systemic structure of the totality of human beings. (Valsiner, Marsico, Chaudhary, Sato & Dazzani, 2016b, p. v)

Yet this book is not only about the past elaborations, but rather it is mostly about the future directions of cultural psychology. In the authors' intentions, indeed, this is meant as a powerful heuristic tool to support further theoretical elaborations and methodological advances—because Jaan Valsiner, as always, is already looking beyond.

## A Glimpse Into the Book

The books is organized in seven sections. Each of them contains a variable number of lectures and/or unpublished papers topically selected independently from any chronological order or geographical criterion. Starting from the epistemological foundation of psychology (Section I), the book provides an axis for understanding the dynamicity of psychological processes (Section II), the dialogical nature of the human being (Section III), and the relationship between infinities (Section IV). Then, some regulatory processes at interpersonal and societal level of analysis have been presented (Section V) followed by the discussion of specific cultural processes in society (Section VI) and of the new epistemological and methodological horizons in psychology (Section VII). Each section ends with the so called "coffee breaks." These are not merely intermezzos, but like in a real conference setting (where the coffee break is the moment for making additional comments about the lecture), they are meant to be dialogical spaces for posing provocative questions and intellectual challenges to the keynote.

Let me conclude with a biographical note. In the last ten years, I have had the fortune to read some of the papers that Jaan was going to present in the official conference venues or some of his articles, chapters, or books. Jaan always asks some young- or more-experienced colleagues for feedback, and this is unusual in contemporary over-arrogant academia. The acknowledgments at end of the papers in this book tell a lot of the intellectual integrity and generosity of Jaan Valsiner. There is a deep desire for joint work on constructing psychology as a basic human science in this—and the readers of this book are invited to share it.

## Note

1. University of Salerno (Italy) and Centre for Cultural Psychology. Aalborg Univerity (Denmark).

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# SECTION I

## *Suffering for Science: Where Psychology Fails*

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# 1

# *Culture in Psychology*

## *Towards the Study of Structured, Highly Variable, and Self-Regulatory Psychological Phenomena*[1]

Jaan Valsiner[2]

**Abstract**

Cultural psychology has a long history within psychology. It antedates the birth of experimental psychology of Wundt (in 1879) by about two decades (1860). The roots of our contemporary invention of cultural psychology are in the different *Völkerpsychologie* traditions (Lazarus, Steinthal, Wundt) and are related to the work of the "Würzburg School" (O. Külpe, K. Bühler) and the traditions of *Ganzheitspsychologie*. Furthermore, the psychology of Franz Brentano's heritage—the work of Alexius Meinong, particularly—sets the stage for the study of complex mental phenomena of cultural framing. Cultural psychology has entered the stage of contemporary psychology three times (end of 19th century—*Völkerpsychologie*, middle of the 20th century—the culture and personality "school," and end of the 20th century—various versions of cultural psychology). Different versions of cultural psychology have attempted to investigate complex human psychological functions—and (at least in the case of the first two attempts) have failed to survive. Will it survive now? The

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> answer to this question might depend on the openness of psychology at large to widen its methodological scope. The inclusion of culture in the psychological organization in the human species increases both the intra-individual and inter-individual variability of the phenomena under consideration, requiring the move towards new kinds of formal modeling of highly variable processes. Cultural regulators—meanings created by persons—operate as different kinds of hierarchies that can be transformed under specifiable conditions. Cultural psychologies return to long-forgotten and dismissed questions in psychology—such as the notion of will—and give it a new specification.

What is cultural psychology? I have no answer to this question that has haunted me since the establishment of my journal, *Culture* and *Psychology*, in 1995. Since that time, different colleagues—who claimed to be cultural psychologists themselves—have criticized that title, claiming that the journal should have been named *Cultur*al *Psychology*. I stubbornly brushed aside these criticisms, and the journal keeps its original name—which was meant from the beginning not to be a single-voiced perspective of some particular view of culture in psychology, but an experiment in the developmental sociology of science.

Developmental sociology of science is not a concept you can find in textbooks,[3] or explicitly addressed in our discussions about science. We often talk (and talk very passionately!) about social and local politics of science—usually ending up with some fatalistic diagnosis of the downfall of science in psychology, or of the stubborn resistance of funding agencies to fund that kind of research that we happen to want to do. I do not intend to contribute to this talk, but raise the issue of developmental sociology of a specific science that

1. starts by establishing a new label (cultural psychology) as a semiotic organizer of its own identity
2. sets up a position in relation to its historical predecessors in some way—ignoring some, glorifying others, and setting itself up in opposition to third ones
3. rhetorically negotiates its social role within the social power structure of the given discipline.

So—we look at the birth pangs of a (supposedly) new direction in its wider social context and are involved in the longitudinal follow-up of its growth, as well as nurturing that growth. A developmental sociologist of science can be likened to a caregiver in some kind of an intellectual kindergarten of the discipline.

## The Current State of the Enterprise (A Subjective Overview by a Caregiver)

When a new area becomes established, different active agents in the process become involved in negotiating its label and fighting for establishment of the priority claims of who had used that label first. Surely such activities are a part of the façade history of the emerging field—by discovery that Dr. X used the label in a bar conversation some months before it emerged in Dr. Y's published paper, we have not learned much about the newborn discipline. Such priority disputes within our current cultural psychology have ended up with claims that the term emerged sometime in the early 1980s. It is somewhat ironic that psychologists began to discuss the (re)use of that term as having a potential for their discipline at about the same time when the core users of the term—cultural anthropologists—discovered that the term is imprecise and unrepresentative of the phenomena they study within the globalizing mixing of people from various societies at the end of the 20th century. So—one discipline tries to bring the general term into itself—while the other attempts to get rid of it!

Emerging intellectual fields make their boundaries to chart out their rhetoric identities. Cultural psychologists can be observed to distance themselves from their cross-cultural counterparts (and vice versa)—like any establishing in-group creates extensive boundaries first of all with the closest neighbors. Indeed there are some conceptual reasons for this as well—the ways in which generalization of knowledge happens are diametrically opposite (Valsiner, 2003).

It needs to be added that the disputes about priority claims have been a North American pastime—the different European theoretical perspectives that have become included in cultural psychology over the last decade (e.g., the "dialogical self" of Hubert Hermans [Hermans & Kempen, 1993], the "symbolic action theory" of Ernst E. Boesch and Lutz Eckensberger, "discourse analysis" of Derek Edwards and Ana Smolka, "social representations" theories of Serge Moscovici and Wolfgang Wagner, and others) have not participated in that activity. Surely there is a difference between the continents in the functioning of identity-making labels.

### *Consolidation in the 1990s*

Contemporary cultural psychologies arrived at the stage of explicit organization of the various perspectives using the notion of culture in the beginning of the 1990s—perhaps the milestone was the publication of the

books by James Stigler, Richard Shweder and Gilbert Herdt (1990), Ernst E. Boesch (1991), John Shotter (1990), Barbara Rogoff (1990), James Wertsch (1991), Shinobu Kitayama and Hazel Markus (1994), and Michael Cole (1996). The journal *Culture and Psychology* was started in 1995—followed by a myriad of new journals that include the term *culture* in their title.[4] The social sciences of the end of the 20th century were suddenly saturated by the many uses of the appealing term *culture*.[5] So—psychology was only one of the sciences under the influence of the new catchword. What has happened since 1995 is overviewed in detail in various editorial summaries over the past 9 years (Valsiner, 1995, 1996a, 2001, 2004). The journal has managed to establish itself as a forum for discussions between social sciences and has indeed become the core journal for cultural psychologies. Perhaps the most curious development over these years for the journal is the permanence of the high rejection rate—around 90%—of *Culture and Psychology*. Something is seriously wrong with this newly developed area—so much waste indicates a state of affairs where the public fascination with the core term is not yet accompanied with serious scholarly efforts to link that term with new ways of empirical investigation.[6]

## Making Histories: Psychology's Self-Reflection Reconsidered

Psychology has rewritten its history in ways that justify its lack of connection with basic human cultural phenomena—the complex intentional forms of feeling, thinking, and acting that characterize our everyday lives. Curiously, over psychology's formal history, the basic reduction of human beings to be some special cases of salivating dogs or industriously lever-pushing rodents—has passed as if that guaranteed the "scientific status" of the discipline. The "hard" data on rewarding or punishing humans with tokens of consumables—food, money, and so on—have led the way to our modern versions of explaining complexity by way of simple elementary "effects" of some variables. Active persons—soul-searchers filled with curiosity—who create, perform, and feel about theatre, poetry, music; who read novels, organize revolutions and political debates, and worry about cholesterol levels, diets, prices, and marriages—are too "soft" for an "objective" study.

My depiction of the situation here is of course a caricature—yet one that keeps canalizing the history of psychology in-the-making. The claim of "softness" of complex psychological phenomena is of course a recognition of failure of the "hardness" of contemporary psychological science. In some sense, the claim of "hard psychology" is quite right—none of these precarious activities of unabashedly subjective human beings is explainable

by way of lower psychological functions—be those considered behavioral, physiological, or cognitive. There are two ways to deal with this mismatch of psychological science and complex psychological phenomena— not to study the latter, or to rethink the methodologies of the discipline in such ways so as to be able to address them.

Let me lead our discussion into yet another façade-historical priority claim—"cultural psychology came first!" Priority claims are interesting for a look at the history of the discipline, as they may reveal ideologically set "blind spots" in the self-reflection of a scientific discipline. The focus on cultural phenomena—mostly language—antedates official history of psychology as a separate discipline. The first specific treatments of culture can be traced to language philosophy of Wilhelm von Humboldt in the beginning of the 19th century (von Humboldt, 1836, 1905). Even in terms of social institutionalization, the cultural side of psychology antedates its experimental counterpart—by 19 years. The first professorship in psychology proper was not that of Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig (1879), but that of *Völkerpsychologie* for Moritz Lazarus in Bern. That fact has remained in the shadow of psychology's writing its history as if that were exclusively that of physiological and experimental discipline. Even the reflections of the "official beginner" of psychology—Wilhelm Wundt—have traditionally overlooked (or denigrated) the presence of both experimental and *Völkerpsychologie* traditions in his thinking.

The real history of psychology is much more complex than the origin myth of experimental psychology. It is the *Völkerpsychologie* tradition that was developing in parallel with experimental psychology in the second half of the 19th century—yet failing to establish links between the two (Valsiner, Diriwächter, & Sauck, 2004). Why such failure? The crucial ideological contrast that has kept cultural psychology in the shadow of its experimental sibling is the tension between holistic and elementaristic axiomatic assumptions in psychology.

## *Four Foundations for the Study of Complex Cultural Phenomena in the 19th Century*

Cultural psychologies today follow the general orientation of their 19th-century predecessors—in their holistic, dynamic, and developmental emphases. Four continental European traditions that flourished at the beginning of the 20th century—*Völkerpsychologie*, *Ganzheitspsychologie*, the introspection-based traditions of the "Würzburg School" of Oswald Külpe, and the various branches of the Austrian traditions of Franz Brentano—particularly the "Graz School" of Alexius Meinong.

Like any other discipline, *Völkerpsychologie* in the 19th century was filled with disputes between its major promoters—Moritz Lazarus, Heyman Steinthal contra Hermann Paul—and all of them taking Wilhelm Wundt to task for his version of folk psychology. Yet in its immediate empirical practices, it was a burgeoning discipline that produced many analysis efforts of cultural complexes. The separation of psychology from ethnology was in force in the 19th century as it is now—so the *Völkerpsychologie* traditions developed further in the direction of the study of *Volkskunde* (Valsiner et al., 2004). Within psychology, Wundt's late-life massive work in the area did not leave a direct impact in the German context. Yet from his general psychological world, two other contributors to our contemporary cultural psychology emerged. Both emerged as a result of intellectual defiance of the "father figure"—hence it may be appropriate to say that Wundt triggered the development of psychology of complex processes by evoking a defiant urge in his younger followers.

First there was the secession of Wundt's assistant Oswald Külpe, who—establishing himself at the University of Würzburg—established a small, short-lived, yet productive research program on the study of complex mental processes. It is from the roots of the "Würzburg School" that our contemporary cognitive psychology thrives (Simon, 1999). It is interestingly a forgotten fact that the *Aha-Erlebnis* (insight) was discovered in humans long before Wolfgang Köhler observed it in chimpanzees. The young assistant to Külpe—Karl Bühler—was the discoverer, and a relentless disputer with Wundt of the usability of experimental methods for the study of higher mental processes. From Bühler's work comes also a line of sociocultural thinking in cultural psychology—the signs-based (sematological) direction in psychology. Bühler's theory of communication—the *Organon Model*—is one of the bases for looking at communication within contemporary cultural psychology (Valsiner, 1998). It paralleled Lev Vygotsky's sign-mediation perspective in the 1920s (van der Veer & Valsiner, 1991). The Würzburg background is the historically shared area between cognitive and cultural psychologies. As both the process-oriented cognitive directions (productive thinking and problem solving—Otto Selz and Karl Duncker) and cultural psychology of today grow out of the Würzburg tradition, it is not surprising that there is phenomenological overlap in their areas of interest. However, in the usual histories of psychology, the "Würzburg School" is habitually presented as the epitome of a failing direction—the study of thinking processes through introspective methods.

The second secession from Wundt's line came with the establishment of the "Second Leipzig School" by his successor in Leipzig—Felix Krueger, and by Hans Volkelt. This direction—*Ganzheitspsychologie*—brought

together the developmental perspective with a focus on the primacy of the whole (Gestalt) over its parts (Krueger, 1926). In the local German context of the time, the *Ganzheitspsychologie* tradition continued the historical regional disputes—Leipzig with Berlin—and was eventually forgotten as the Berlin Gestalt psychology tradition found its place in psychology's official history. Yet the notion of the primacy of the whole over its parts was by far more inclusive in the Leipzig than in the Berlin tradition. It included the latter, together with two other centrally relevant themes of our contemporary kind—chaos as a form of order (rather than disorder), and the active role of the person who creates psychological order (a Gestalt requires a Gestalt-maker).

Perhaps the most important antecedent for contemporary cultural psychologies is the Austrian tradition in psychology that begins with Franz Brentano and was further exemplified by the "Graz School" of Alexius Meinong (cf. Albertazzi, Jacquette, & Poli, 2001). In its basic ideas, Meinong's construction of ideas had parallels with the Würzburg School (Lindenfeld, 1972) as their focus is on the analysis of the stream of mental processes that are mediated by presentations (*Vorstellung*). This focus allows the conceptualization of the future-oriented mental functions—expectations of what might happen. This take on coping with uncertainty is crucial for the emergence of cultural forms in phylogeny. The philosophical underpinnings of our focus on dialogical processes in cultural psychology found their basis in the emphasis on presentation (*Vorstellung*) of objects (*Gegenstände*). It is the forward-oriented role of human signification—presentation of objects for the immediate future needs—that the Graz School brought to psychology. In its focus on the poly-Gestalt nature of thinking and the active role of the presenter (Albertazzi, 2001) the Meinongian tradition covered conceptual grounds that our contemporary cognitive science is only beginning to conceptualize.

All in all, the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries provided psychology with a rich basis for further development of *Völkerpsychologie*—all four directions mentioned here stressed (a) the nature of higher—complex—psychological processes, which were (b) parts of the language and social rule systems of the persons, and (c) utilized by the persons in active ways in making sense of their experiences. Yet all of these traditions come from the continental European roots—and psychology lost its continuity with these roots by way of its center of intellectual gravity moving to the Anglo-Saxon world due to World War II. Thus, as part of the trans-Atlantic migration of many intellectual traditions, psychology moved out of the philosophical complexity of the German language and learned to "speak English." Together with this new language came the philosophical assumptions upheld

by the language users. The orientation towards the whole—the *Ganzheit* or Gestalt—was lost and replaced by an associations-based world view.

Hence the "second coming" of a predecessor to our contemporary cultural psychologies occurred in America—the so-called "culture and personality" tradition (Kluckhohn & Murray, 1948). For about the decade of the 1950s, the questions of culture-bound personality were being asked—is there specific personality for a particular "culture"? is there a "fascist personality"? Cultural anthropologists were interacting with psychologists then to discuss these questions. Social psychology was the area where integration with anthropology could have happened (see Sherif & Sherif, 1957)—yet it did not. By the 1960s, psychology in the U.S. was entering into the phase of defending the ailing complex of "behaviorism" as the supposed bastion of "science," and even those areas where culture could have been inserted into psychological research became culture-phobic.

So—since the 1990s we can observe the efforts to bring culture into the core of psychological science for the third time—over the past 144 years (since 1860). Without doubt, these efforts open new doors for psychologists legitimate research practices—a turn towards the use of qualitative methods is on its way, theoretical schemes used often transcend the limits of psychology (e.g., borrowing concepts from sociology—like *habitus*, or from literary scholarship like Bakhtinian *polyphony*—Smolka, 1994). Yet can this—third—effort succeed? Or better—what is necessary for it to succeed? Instead of asking how can cultural psychologies "join in" with current psychology, I would like to address the question—*how can psychological science accommodate itself to the phenomenological, methodological, and theoretical demands* that the (re)newed cultural psychologies bring to it? But why look at culture at all?

## Psychology, Homo Sapiens, and the Inevitability of Culture

Psychology as science is necessarily cultural in its core—as long as its object of investigation is the species of *Homo sapiens*. Members of that species are not merely involved in behaving—they act, construct new meanings, think, develop strategies of coalition making in social units, and feel in ways that are not explainable by the mere escaping from a bear suddenly encountered in a forest. They construct firearms to go hunting for the bears, believe in the powers of weapons of mass destruction—which they condemn, eat with curious attachments to the body (such as chopsticks, forks, knives), turn the freshest—raw—food into cooked, believe in deities and stock markets,

and the like. Ever since the first representative of the human species started to behave in such erratic manner, it has been through the construction of life-relevant instrumental artifacts that has allowed the species to survive.

Thus, culture as a set of socially created action, feeling, and thinking tools is an evolutionary emergent. But why was its emergence inevitable? Most nonhuman species have been proven to adjust to their environments quite sufficiently without the invention of such special instruments. An answer to this question may be in the realm of increasing variability of the ecological demands, uncertainly of their futures, and—most importantly—*perception of such uncertainty of the futures* on the basis of experiences of the past. Such perception requires memory functions to link these past experiences with the immediate perception/action field.

There is no need to invent any *new* means to handle the future if the species is well fitted into the environment. The set of environmental demands—be it elaborate and highly complex—guarantees the life needs of the species. This would stay the case even if these demands fluctuate systematically—as any seasonal variation or day/night change does. It is either under conditions of nonsystematic fluctuations of these demands or qualitative escalations in these demands, or both, that the ecological need for invention of cultural tools becomes inevitable. Thus, the roots of emergence of human culture may be looked for in handling very basic processes—such as thermoregulation of the body under unexpected day/night increased variation of ambient temperatures or wandering by the protohominids to terrains where the ground is impassable by barefoot walking. Thus, possibly the invention of blankets and sandals, rather than stone choppers, was the starting point for emergence of culture in protohominids. This must have followed by handling of alimentary uncertainties of the future in terms of cognitive decisions about edibility of different food sources at different stages of their maturation (vegetarian diets) or decay (in meat scavenging). Nonhuman species in their natural habitats are masters of such decisions without any invention of cultural tools—a basic nonlanguage-encoded knowledge base seems sufficient. But note that this latter task—even if it includes dealing with variability (of the maturation and decay)—still is of systemic kind. The fruits do not become overripe (nor the found dead animal meat rotten) in an erratic time schedule.[7]

Of course there is a long historical distance that *Homo sapiens* has covered, from the first sandals-wearing early humans to females in high-heeled shoes and ritualistically over-reddened lips, or from devouring the unclaimed dead meat in the forest to our concerns about the edibility dates written on frozen meat packages in supermarkets by the owners of the meat who are interested in your money in exchange for such frozen meat-like

substance. Yet the nature of cultural phenomena is the same—there is some constructed artifact, tool, or sign that mediates the relation of the human bodily processes with the environment within which the body exists. The double nature of such artifacts is crucial—tools and signs fortify one another and increase the variability of the human psychological system. Making of new tools leads to making of new signification about these tools and their relation with their object of application and to new action plans how to modify the tool. The active human being creates psychological variability even when the environment is set up to make it unlikely—our freedom of imagination we carry with us anywhere we go. *The human psychological world is the world of potentially ever-increasable variability of new feelings, thoughts, and actions.* Such variability is a necessary result of forward-oriented pre-adaptation efforts of the organism to live within not-yet-known conditions.

Human goals-oriented actions in changing their environments set the stage for the increasing uncertainty of the future conditions. The more our species has exercised the efforts to control the ecological conditions of living, the more open to new versions of variation these relations become. By constructing an environmental setting—be it a building or a corner in one's apartment—persons project into these settings meaning complexes that turn the architectural structures into subjectively functional places (Lang, 1992). Likewise, they turn a current political debate into a passionate personal credo in the name of which they may denounce long-term friends and become vehicles of social action for social institutions. The high variability of meaningful setting-construction is canalized by the directing of human meaning-making activities in socially acceptable directions.[8]

To summarize: Human beings create meaningfulness in their life worlds—and by doing that they increase the variability—or differentiation—in their relations with their environments. If the latter consists of S different settings, within each of which the person can act in P different ways (where P is at least 1), then adding a set of possible meanings (M) to the actions (P) increases the variability: S x (P x M). The constructing of M to be added to P doubles the variability even if P=1 (e.g., a person acts in setting S in ways P, which could be either "sincere" or "insincere"). If P > 1, or if the range of meanings includes not a discrete set of options but a field of highly nuanced "shades of meaning" (e.g., "probably sincere," "obviously sincere," "possibly sincere," "showing off as if sincere," "insincere but doesn't want it"), we get a dramatic increase in the field of possible cultural forms related to the same act in the same setting. Add to this the creation of an increasing number of settings and of action possibilities (called "choices" in our usual speech), and we face a situation where human conduct is characterized by proliferation of infinite number of culturally constructed

forms. Variability is the name of the game—and any effort to operate on the basis of reducing it to some aggregated central tendency (average, prototype) misses the very nature of the phenomena we need to study.

### *What About a Science of Prediction and Control of Behavior?*

The focus on human culture as a tool puts to rest the oft-quoted explanation of psychology as a science of "prediction" and "control" of behavior. Or—more precisely—it shows how such definition itself is an act of cultural desperation—an effort to develop a tool (science) that can handle the ever-proliferating variability. We can rephrase the explanation of psychology, with rather interesting result—*psychology is the science of the prediction of the unpredic*table*, of the control of the uncontrollable, and of the detection of whatever "behavior" may be taken to mean.*

This alternative look at psychology may look like a joke—but unfortunately it is not. The problem for psychology as science is the reality of high variability in its phenomena and the open-endedness of cultural construction of tools and meanings. If psychology is to be a science of prediction and control processes—of thinking, feeling, and acting—then cultural psychologies become the core of such science. It is not the outcomes of "prediction and control" but the processes through which these outcomes are attempted to be reached, that constitute the core of the investigation. These processes in human species are signification processes—meaning-making is the main realm of human efforts to control their relations with their worlds.

## Implications for Research Process: Mutuality of Meaning Construction

The focus on human psychological pre-adaptation as based on signification (sign construction) renders the procedures psychologists use in their research and clinical work as mutual meaning construction contexts. There can be no inherently "neutral stimulus" in the process of any research encounter; even if the stimulus is made to be that at the outset (e.g., "nonsense syllables" in classic memory experiments), it ceases to be that the moment the subject begins to do anything with it (e.g., makes an effort to memorize "nonsense syllables," projecting into them meaningful memorizing tactics).

In sum, the researcher inevitably changes the phenomenon under study—as any "administration of the research procedures" is also a trigger for construction of some new meaning on the side of the subject ("How

satisfied are with your X?"—"if she is asking X it implies I should pay attention to X"). Psychological research follows the lead of the classic "Achilles and tortoise" paradox where the obviously speedier human cannot overtake the slowly moving animal. The set-up of directed meaning starts from formulating a research question and the feed-forward of its formulation to the everyday life of future subjects. For instance, studying persons who are considered to be "at risk" for something—and in modern world we are all "at risk" for something[9]—leads to the proliferation of the notion of "being at risk" in the society's common sense, with potentials for self-fulfilling prophecies.

How can human beings communicate if their cultural organization entails proliferation of differences? The handling the high variability in communication is made possible by meta-level implicit assumptions—implicit, illusory, contracts—that treat the high variability as if it did not exist. Communication entails the creation of illusion of similarity of perspectives—illusory intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1992). Such intersubjectivity is needed as a frame within which the participants try to establish some version or real intersubjectivity.

The reliance upon a state of shared illusory intersubjectivity is encoded into the researcher<>subject relationship in the process of responding to any kind of questionnaire or standardized personality inventory. This is evident in the ease with which subjects in personality studies can quickly give simple answers to very complex questions (Valsiner, Diriwächter & Sauck, 2004)—for instance, a somewhat usual MMPI (or any other personality inventory) item

"I frequently have to fight against showing that I am bashful"

is more than a mere statement a person can easily endorse or reject ("true" versus "false" forced choice), or even rate its truthfulness on a rating scale. To give a quick answer ("true" or "false") to such a complex question is possible only if some meta-contract of superficially quick answering style is established—the researcher and subject play a game in which the researcher can ask any complex question and the subject give any first answer that comes to mind (illusory intersubjectivity). Neither of the two are eager to go in depth of pondering of what "bashful" or "frequently" mean in this sentence, and what is the basis for the leading suggestion that the person "has to fight against" it—in the realm of "showing" (versus "being"). What for personality researchers has been an unproblematic issue[10]—the complexity of meanings of items included in personality questionnaires—becomes a major obstacle for making sense of human personality as a complex of personal self-referential meanings.

## Making of a New Psychology: Methodological Directions

All this complex set of phenomena—proliferation of high variability of meaningful forms by persons, and efforts to limit that variability by social orders—leads the science of psychology to the question of how one can study complex psychological issues. Cultural psychologies of our time are perhaps at the forefront of the efforts to address that issue. As a newly rediscovered topical area of vast width, it cannot show internal inconsistency—to endorse the notion of variability in its fascination with phenomena—and yet proceed along the lines of traditional study of central tendencies. The third attempt—after the failures if the late 19th and mid-20th century—of bringing the notion of culture into psychology can succeed if psychology's general methodological scope is reexamined.

### *Science Is One, and It Is Universal*

Despite taking different forms—some European, some North-American—cultural psychologies are unified as being a part of science. In its ideal form, science has no nation boundaries. There is no separate "American psychology," "Australian psychology," "Russian psychology," "indigenous psychology," and the like, but one general science that benefits from the work of scientists in any country. Yet such an ideal is far from being a reality in psychology where the sociopolitical power structures either explicitly (by direct imposition of some classificatory scheme from one country to another—e.g., APA telling clinical psychology programs in Canada to emphasize "cultural minorities" and evaluate these programs based on their inclusion of such "minorities") or implicitly monopolize the given discipline. In its history, psychology has moved from European to North American dominance—with the latter resisting internationalization of the discipline's investigative practices at equal terms. Yet it is precisely that restoration of international nature of the knowledge creation enterprise that brings psychology back from having become a social tool of any country's dominance over another on the epistemic markets of sciences to the universal domain of knowing (*Wissenschaft*).

Cultural psychology—a (re)new(ed) direction at the intersection of social and developmental psychology on the one hand, and cultural anthropology on the other—is one of our contemporary efforts to break out of the closed circle of national dominance fights in psychology. Its emergence was prepared by the transposition of traditional empirical research on group comparisons to include materials from different societies. At the present time, cultural psychology has moved in a direction that is open

to new theoretical models and to integration of approaches with cultural anthropology, social and developmental psychology, history, and sociology.

### *Variability of Psychological Forms Is the Center of Inquiry*

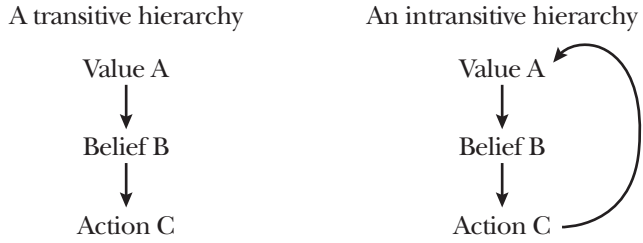
Cultural psychologies have rediscovered the prevalence of variability of phenomena in psychology. True—variability exists in behavioral phenomena (as well as in physiological, and genomic phenomena) on a large scale and does not require any cultural psychology to bring it to be the center of our attention. Yet the rigidity of psychology's methodological imperatives of the past five decades made it not possible to rediscover variability—a new, qualitatively oriented and context-appreciative perspective could do it, being free of the conceptual blinders. And, as stated above, the cultural nature of human psychological processes leads to the growth of the variability.

The focus on variability has become crucial in a number of areas of psychology, other than cultural. There has been a major breakthrough in look at variability in psychometrics. Treatment of interindividual variability as if it were isomorphic with intraindividual variability has been proven inadequate in mathematical terms (Molenaar, Huizinga, & Nesselroade, 2002). The implications of such proof for practices of research are profound—large sample sizes become irrelevant, and the focus will be on the intraindividual (i.e., temporal and cross-contextual) variability in the psychological phenomena. The centrality of the individual subject—rather than sample (from a population)—becomes reinstated in contemporary psychology (Lamiell, 2003).

While these breakthroughs come from developmental and personality psychology, as well as from psychometrics, they set the stage for cultural psychologies. It is obvious that it is the individual person—in one's social surroundings—who creates ever-new meanings in one's facing of the future situations. Furthermore, the individual person is involved in dialogical self-organization (Marková, 1990) and his or her conduct is innovative as play (Köpping, 1997). The increased intrasystemic variability in cultural-psychological phenomena leads to the need to look at the dynamic hierarchical self-regulation of the psychological processes. Here, cultural psychologies transcend the simple hierarchical structure—of "lower" and "higher" (volitional) psychological functions that come from the "Würzburg tradition" through Lev Vygotsky's and Alexander Luria's cultural-historical perspective as an intermediary. It becomes replaced by multilevel self-regulatory hierarchy of cultural organizers—both in the intrapersonal (mental) and interpersonal domains. The question of organization of cultural-psychological

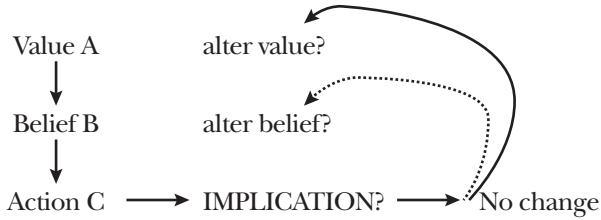
systems is parallel to the problems facing modern genetics: how to find the regulatory hierarchies in gene-to-gene interaction.

In the human cultural-psychological system, different levels of cultural organizers set the stage for both stability and modifiability of the personal psychological system. Different forms of sign hierarchies—transitive and intransitive—coexist in the psychological systems and dynamically adjust to changing circumstances:




While a transitive hierarchy (A > B > C and no C > A) entails the fixity of an existing psychological system, the intransitive hierarchy (which is practically a cycle within which "dominance relation" literally wanders across levels: A > B > C > A . . . etc.) represents the dynamics of such relation. Intransitive hierarchies are found in human projective cycles of agents of control into the environment (e.g., the "paradoxical" power roles of the devadasi in Hindu temples—Valsiner, 1996b; the role of making of "external control agencies" in person-centered psychotherapy—Valsiner, 1999).

Intransitive (circular) hierarchies of cultural organizers are adaptive to dynamically changing environments. Yet the contrast between transitive and intransitive cultural regulatory schemes is only that of two kinds of stabilities—static (deductive, transitive) and dynamic (intransitive). The crucial feature of pre-adaptation of the regulatory hierarchies is the possibility of transformation of either of these into an open-ended structure. Consider change in a transitive hierarchy:




By way of implications of C—which are not allowed in case of transitive hierarchy, and which are automatized in case of its intransitive counterpart (where C > A is set to be in place)—the open-ended cultural regulation

hierarchy entails a decision domain where the implications of each experience are preemptively constructed. That domain operates as a kind of "conservative filter"—mostly attenuating or eliminating the impacts of the lived-through experiences (No change), but also allowing for alterations at higher levels of the hierarchy. This decision domain can be characterized as probabilistic[11] or as an "attractor ruin" (attractor that has become disintegrated) in terms of dynamic systems theory. It is on the basis of forward-oriented constraining of the trajectories of itinerant attractors based on the previous uncertainty zones of attractors ("attractor ruins") that novelty emerges in the dynamic systems (Valsiner, 2002, Figure 7).

Empirical investigations of human life-course development can provide rich evidence for the transformations in the cultural regulator hierarchies. The crucial moment is the emergence of doubt to enter into a hierarchical relation. A closed cycle may become open in ways unexpected to the participants—the present of an encyclopedia by a well-meaning relative to a girl growing up in an Orthodox Jewish family may lead to a sequence of transitions in the personal world of the girl, culminating in the exit from the background family's social organization (Lawrence, Benedikt, & Valsiner, 1992).

Given the possibility for the decision domain to move into a state of doubt (and potential downfall of the previous organizational order), it is of no surprise that political and religious social institutions or any authority-maintaining social power source do their utmost to prevent the transformation of closed (strict, or circular) hierarchies into open ones. The potential "dangers of doubting" as precursors for development is certainly recognized by agents whose goals include resistance to any change in the presently established social or psychological order.

Hence the issue of functioning of cultural regulatory hierarchies entails a strategic moment—human beings act in ways as to preemptively block (or enhance) "doubt zones" in one's feelings, reasoning, or in negotiations between persons, social interest groups, and countries. The images of desired future states lead the meaning-making efforts. This kind of discursive practice can entail much more than mere interaction or "exchange of information" (of what already is known); its major role is to guide the person (or social organism of higher order—group, community, etc.) towards selective attending and acting towards future expected experiences. What is happening in the cultural regulation HERE-AND-NOW operates in the function of being ready for possible future conditions of THERE-AND-THEN. Human cultural organization implies psychological distancing. Psychological distancing always includes the context within which the person is, and in relation to which the distancing takes place. It takes the form of "I reflect upon this context in which I am a part." This reflection—which is cognitive

and affective at the same time—allows the psychological system to consider contexts of the past, imagine contexts of the future, and take perspectives of other persons (in the form of empathy).

We have reached a peculiar point in this exposition: From a wide open field of various cultural psychologies and their recurrent histories, we come to the subclass of those that emphasize the central role of the person in integrating the myriad of life experiences while facing the future. The future is moved towards from an intentional basis—persons set themselves goals, orient towards different possible futures, and so on. The long-discredited concept in psychology—the *personal will*—becomes an inevitable link between person and the social world. Personal will can be viewed as a *generalized semiotic operator* that provides generic orientation of the self towards the future, selectively highlighting some aspects of the present. When viewed from this angle, culture (as the system of semiotic operators) guarantees that any person would be ready to resist and counteract social suggestions (and disconfirmation of beliefs) by the environment. Culture makes persons free from the demands of the immediate social environments—and thus makes them dependent upon the personally created meanings that have created that freedom.

## Acknowledgments

My gratitude goes to the University of Melbourne for the opportunity to give this inaugural lecture and to return to Melbourne to enjoy its ambience. Jeanette Lawrence and Agnes Dodds have over years helped my thinking by providing it with careful, humorous, and constructive guidance. Ideas expressed in this lecture have been fermenting in the context of the "Kitchen Seminar" at Clark—a weekly meeting of interested people who discuss constructive ideas rather than politics. Most particularly, the evolutionary slant in the present lecture owes to interactions with Nicholas Thompson, a fellow anarchist, and to Gilbert Gottlieb at the Center of Developmental Science of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

## Notes

1. The First Brotherton Lecture School of Behavioural Sciences, University of Melbourne, March, 18, 2004.
2. Frances L. Hiatt School of Psychology, Clark University, Worcester, MA, 01610, USA.
3. In addition—let me question the issue of why psychology is myopic to its own social roles within a given society. I have yet to find a psychology department

in the world that would include seminars on the social role of psychologists within their society—the applied sociology of science seems to have escaped our attention.

4. Many of them published by SAGE in London.
5. The sociopolitical contexts of the world at large cannot be left unmentioned as possible catalyzers of that tendency: globalization disputes, the challenges of multilingualism in countries filling up with immigrants or guest workers—would bring the theme of "cultural differences" to the discourses in various corridors of social powers.
6. I differ from the people who consider high rejection rate an indicator of the quality of the journal. Instead of viewing this result in a self-congratulatory way, I wonder why so many people send in insufficiently scholarly manuscripts and fail to understand that (re)introduction of the notion of culture into psychology is a deep intellectual project that is likely to lead to reorganization of the discipline's methodology at its very base (Valsiner, 1997).
7. Nonhuman species have meaning construction codes that can be considered presemiotic—see Von Uexküll (1980). Such codes may be sufficient for the immediate—intuitive—handling of the here-and-now decision-making situations but are insufficient for considering multiple possibilities in future-oriented decision making of preplanning kind.
8. Included among those are both positively and negatively valued directions. Thus, a society guides some persons—and successfully—towards taking on the roles of "criminals," "delinquents," "patients," "terrorists," "enemies," and the like in order to build up its own action schemes using such designated symbolic agents as the targets of their actions. A society in which suddenly all "criminals" were to vanish would be in a social turmoil—since the whole set of social system that deals with these opponents of law and order becomes unnecessary. Hence there is a social need for recurrent symbolic construction of socially legitimate "antisocial" roles.
9. Except for "being at risk" for *not* "being at risk." In modern societies, a stand that would block the openness to "at risk" designations would not be socially approved, as it neutralizes the mechanisms for creating social panics. Note the importance of generating rhetorical panics for the purposes of unifying mass audiences—markets—for the adoption of commercially available tools and symbols for "overcoming" the "at risk" status. In order to create a legitimate context for new cultural tools, their function has to be symbolically set up—and for such purposes, symbolic designation of "risk" is a mechanism of social innovation (see further Heyman, 2004a, 2004b)
10. Within the tradition of building personality questionnaires, that issue has been avoided by the belief in accumulation of the numbers of endorsements of groups of items that generally converge to some meta-meaning ("social introversion," "neuroticism," etc.). The absence of clear links (other than statistical ones) between the item meanings and these meta-level meanings is part of the meta-contract accepted by researchers.
11. Out of the three probability notions—subjective, propensity, and frequentist—only the first two are applicable here. Frequentist probability that is based on

the accumulated past history of events is by itself inconsequential for future—except when it is turned into a subjective probability estimate.

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# 2

# *Science of Psychology Today*

## *Future Horizons*[1]

Jaan Valsiner[2]

心理学の新しい地平線
*'Shinrigaku no atarashii chiheisen'*


## Abstract

Science of psychology is in an ambiguous state ever since its beginning. It has developed along two parallel trajectories over the 20th century—the "American" line of quantitative study of elementary behaviors, and the "continental European" orientation towards qualitative wholes and their relations with their parts (Toomela, 2007). Any science develops through careful investigation of the phenomena under study, together with the advancement of high-level abstract generalizations. Psychology is at the doorstep of a major breakthrough as its new focus emerges through unity of general theories in conjunction with new ways of the generation of the data. What is a *psychological fact* becomes a central question for the development of science. While the American line has largely dominated psychology and led it to considering statistically analyzed data to count as "facts" in science, it is the continental


*Beyond the Mind,* pages 25–48

European line that is beginning to re-establish its central role as it focuses on qualitative perspectives, study of complex dynamic phenomena, and investigation of emerging histories of human life courses (TEM—trajectory equifinality model—developed by Tatsuya Sato). New forms of qualitative mathematics are becoming available for the social scientists to replace the intellectual impasse of reliance on statistical techniques that have failed to adequately represent the phenomena. Psychology in the 21st century is likely to follow the path of investigation of human experiencing that unfolds in time and in culturally structured contexts.

*The irrelevance of much of present-day psychology to human lives comes from its emphasis on mechanical aspects of reactivity to the neglect of man's wider experiences, his aspirations, and his incessant endeavour to master and to mould his environment.*

—Gordon Allport (1967, p. 23)

Psychology struggles with its self-identity. It tries hard to live up to the standards of science—imported from other sciences—and resists the ephemeral nature of its own phenomena. Our real psychological experience is that of the fullness of feeling, thinking, and acting as we are—here and now. These phenomena are rapid (emerge and vanish at an instant), multilayered (as they include metalevel reflexivity), and collective (individuals—be they persons or representatives of animal species—are embedded in a wider social network). Furthermore, the psychological phenomena of here-and-now (acting, feeling, and thinking) are guided by their histories (through memory) and anticipations of the future (goal setting and actions towards future objectives).

None of this is new in psychology—the focus on human deeply subjective experience was there at the times when psychology as an independent branch of *Wissenschaft*[3] was born out of philosophy and physiology in the late 19th century. The philosophies of Henri Bergson, Kitaro Nishida, and William Stern created a fruitful framework for the science of psychology to proceed—yet it failed to do so in the direction of making sense of human experience. For example, it has taken a full century for psychology to (re)start asking questions about "psychology of well-being" (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwartz, 2003)—a very vague and subjective general everyday term. Of course the subjectivity of "well-being" is accessible through introspection, which was discredited in early 20th century. Psychology seems to take on most interesting phenomena—then turns these into most uninventive forms of data (quantified signs)—and then laments about the lack of its own understanding of the complexities of the phenomena. How can a new science of the human souls be so self-denying?

## How Insisting on the Purity of the Scientific Method Defies Wissenschaft

The paradox of psychology as science—desiring to be that, and insisting upon "the scientific method" haunts psychology over the 20th century. In some sense, psychology can be viewed as a "Puritan science"—where much ideological discourse has been devoted to social positioning of oneself within some general perspective designated by an *-ism* (mental*ism*, behavior*ism*, cognitiv*ism*, interaction*ism*, transaction*ism*, sociocultural*ism*, and even human*ism*!) and setting up socially normative prescriptions for the methods through which "scientific facts" are produced. The *-isms* have been fighting one another for dominance in the field—leading from the "Era of Behavior*ism*" to the "Cognitiv*ism* Restoration," and to further eras. Yet the basic knowledge resulting from these ideologically positioned perspectives advances slowly, in a nonlinear way. We may know less about some aspect of the human psyche in the beginning of the technologically advanced 21st century than we knew 50 or 100 years before. The phenomena of personal experiences of living—the focus of Gordon Allport quoted in the beginning of this chapter—may be a good example.

Psychology's traditional methodology since the "Era of Behavior*ism*" has been ill-prepared to study the phenomena of personal experiencing. The normative purification of "the scientific method"—freeing it from the richness of the phenomena—has contributed to our poverty of *Wissenschaft*. Psychologists' "measure" some psychological characteristics—ironically, the "measurement" of various psychological features of human beings—personality and the like—is seen as a contribution to science, while the phenomena—temporary, never to repeat themselves—and acts of conduct are let to escape the sieve of psychology's research instruments. A "standardized method" collects answers from respondents that are immediately decontextualized—hence losing their psychological specificity. Seemingly such methods "gather facts"—but that is precisely a problem. In general terms, psychology lacks a clear understanding of *what a fact is*—how it is created and how solidly it stands within the ocean of alternative interpretations.

## A Semiotic Perspective: Facts Are Signs

Fact is not a given ("true") entity, but knowledge that has been created at the intersection of the object of study and the subject who studies the object. As such, what is constructed out of the object of investigation as a fact is a sign—some meaning that stands for some aspect of reality. Yet "facts"—in contrast to other signs—are presented as if they were "the truth." Yet

in psychology there is no "truth" outside of context-dependency that the sociocultural paradigms have emphasized in recent decades, and that was prominent already in Gordon Allport's personality theory in the 1930s (Allport, 1937).

Let us consider the most obvious (and widely accepted) notion—is a behavior a fact? A behaves towards B in way X:

A man bites into an ice cream
A dog bites into the calf of a man
A dog bites another dog
A small puppy (dog) bites its mother (dog)
A small child bites the nipple of his mother
A mosquito bites all of the above (except for the ice cream)

These are all examples of similar behavior—biting—done by different agents to others. Yet in our "making of the facts" out of these behaviors we use different frames of meaning that we apply. Thus, the frame of eating might make the ice cream-eating man and the man-eating mosquito doing "the same thing" (eating), while the offspring's biting of their mothers is another "same thing" (playing) rather than the "fight" of the two dogs.

Furthermore—is *absence* of a particular behavioral act itself a behavior? During my visit to the Kyoto Primate Center in 2004, while observing an experiment carried out on chimpanzee cognition, I tried to remain passive in the background (with the assumption that my sociality towards the chimp could interfere with the experiment). The chimpanzee tried hard to get my attention (yet I kept up my nonresponse) and after a while moaned and spat in my direction. Only later did it reach my Western scientific mind that within the "Kyoto tradition" of chimpanzee research all "social others"—experimenters, visitors, and so on—are viewed as natural environment in the Center. Hence my nonbehavior was interpreted—by the chimpanzee—as very impolite behavior (and responded to appropriately). Yet my nonbehavior became behavior through the act of interpretation—by the chimpanzee—of my part in the given environment. Furthermore—the presence of "zero signifiers" in human communication (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994) shows how nonevents are as much meaningful (or more) than events. Psychology as long declared—in North America—as "the study of behavior" has thus missed its own target.

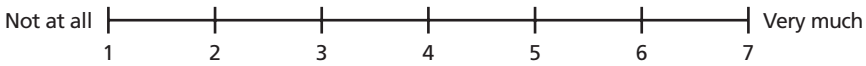
So—facts are not "givens" as such, they are facts *only* as they are interpreted to be such. They acquire their "truth value" in that process of *interpretive fact-making*. Facts—in semiotic sense—are signs that stand for something else. When I look at the outside thermometer on my window and see that the

temperature has fallen under 0 degrees Celsius, I have a background system that makes this number a fact. For 0 degrees on the Kelvin scale I have no comparable fact-making system. Nor would I comprehend the notion that a particular star is 500 light-years away from the Earth. This may be true—hence a fact within the system of astrophysical measurements—yet for my personal fact-making universe it is outside of my imagination. Hence, facts are signs that are treated as if they were true. As long as there is no "fact-defining framework" constructed around such fact-making, they are ambiguous. Miracles are events treated as facts within a particular belief system (Josephs & Valsiner, 1999). Once such framework is given—through hypergeneralized semiotic fields (Valsiner, 2005a)—they become "facts" (for the believers) and puzzles or impossibilities for the others. The processes of "fact making" are well described in the classic study of *When Prophecy Fails* (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 1956) and remain visible to us in our daily lives when we look at the TV news from far-away corners of the world.

## Data as Signs: Signifying What?

Data are signs (Valsiner, 2000). In psychology there is a tendency to generate quantitative data—signs that take the form of real numbers. The scientific nature of data is often viewed as a result of "assigning numbers" to phenomena. These numbers—once assigned—begin to "live a life of their own" in ever-complex data analysis systems. For example—you ask me "how much do you like X" and give me a 7-point scale from "not at all" to "very much," with equal intervals marked on a linear line:

Is psychology a science telling us about the human soul?




As you can see, this task is a deeply confusing one. At the manifest content level it seems straightforward—we (as psychologists) probably have a clear generalized picture in our minds what PSYCHOLOGY AS SCIENCE is. Furthermore, as human beings and as psychologists we probably have some perspective on what the HUMAN SOUL is—and how we connect it (or refuse to connect it) with SCIENCE. Yet these are general—vague and unspecific—terms of many meanings possible. Each of us would have our own—so comparison of your answer with mine should be in principle impossible. Yet in psychology we assume that a similar mark on such a linear scale represents similar psychological realities.

Further confusion is added to the task by quantification—pre-assuming the linearity of the scale and the equality of units. A mark at 5 is supposed to be at the same distance from one at 4, as a mark at 3 is from 2. Our deeply subjective meaning construction about psychology as science and its representation of the soul is pressured here into a pseudo-quantified framework. There is no psychological reality in a mark "5" outside of the process by which I could bring myself to put a mark on that location. The rating is not a fact—but an artifact.[4] It has no interpretability outside of the unique process that created it. Yet—as it happens in psychology—rating scale data are treated as if they represent something—analyzed under such assumptions (see further Wagoner & Valsiner, 2005). The data are deeply ideological—in the sense of their dependence upon the interpretation framework:

> Behind psychological research exists an ideological support structure. By this I mean a discipline-wide, shared system of beliefs which, while it may not be universal, maintains both the dominant methodological practices and the content of the dominant methodological educational programmes. This ideological support structure is manifest in three ways: in the contents of textbooks; in the contents of methodology courses; and in the research programmes of psychologists. In the case of measurement in psychology *this ideological support structure works to prevent psychologists from recognizing otherwise accessible methodological facts relevant to their research.* (Michell, 1997, p. 374, emphasis added)

Rephrasing Smedslund's (1997) critique—psychology is *ideologically pseudoempirical*. Its social norms require obtaining "facts" (data) derived from the phenomena, their analyses within a prescribed normative framework, and their interpretation within a seemingly universal framework that still provides hard times for use in far-from-laboratory conditions.

## Distance from the Phenomena Created by the Data

Whether the data construction is quantitative or qualitative, it entails distancing of the researcher's experience from the immediate experience with the phenomena for the sake of arriving at the power of abstractive generalizations. In this sense, data are facts (signs) that are impoverished in relation to the phenomena of their origin and not yet empowered by the act of abstractive generalization. There are three directions in the transformation of phenomena into data that guarantee the artifactual status of the latter:

Eliminating *the dynamic flow* of the phenomena in the data
Eliminating *the hierarchical order* (part<>whole relations) in the transformation of phenomena into data

Eliminating *the immediate context* of the phenomenon in its transformation into data.

Each of these elimination strategies blocks the movement of *Wissenschaft* into some area. The elimination of evidence about the dynamic flow of phenomena in the data has blocked the advancement of developmental science for about a century (Cairns, 1998). The elimination of hierarchical order has made it difficult to handle issues of complexity. The elimination of context has led psychology to overlook the social nature of psychological phenomena. Given all these obstacles to knowledge, it is obvious that the key to further breakthroughs in psychology is in the domain of general methodology—the cyclical relation of all features of generating new knowledge (Branco & Valsiner, 1997). In Figure 2.1 we can observe a model of such cyclical relation.

Obviously, psychology in the 21st century has much to learn from its own history—especially from the failures of the discipline to capture the crucial phenomena of human existence. It has been criticized for its pseudo-empiricism (Smedslund, 1997)—proving by empirical studies what is already known through the implications of the common language. Smedslund's suggestion of replacement of the inductive generalization strategy with its deductive counterpart would restore general focus to otherwise "facts-driven" area of psychology. Yet it would not be sufficient—since generation of new knowledge is an *abductive* (i.e., neither inductive nor deductive, but synthetic) enterprise. Abductive synthesis—the only kind that can create new ideas (Peirce, 1935, CP 2.777)—entails a qualitative "jump" beyond what is known inductively and what is assumed deductively. The issue of synthesis is a conceptual theme at which psychology has arrived a

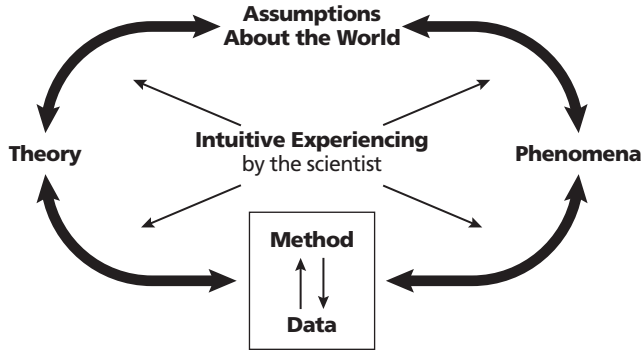



**Figure 2.1** The Methodology Cycle (after Branco and Valsiner, 1997).

number of times—from Wundt, Baldwin, Piaget, Krueger, and Vygotsky to contemporary builders of neural networks—yet it has not been resolved.

## Psychology as a Migrant—Consequences of History

The center of where the "core" of psychology as science is located has been moving over the history of the discipline. While acquiring its independence in Germany (and in German) around 1870s, it has been exported from Europe in all directions. As a consequence of the historical turmoils of World War II, psychology's center of activities had moved to North America. Of course the move out of the German language room to the Anglo-Saxon chapel of cultural heritance started already after World War I and progressed slowly (but surely). The applied entrepreneurship in North America in the 1920s was a ground for extended proliferation of psychological techniques in social practices—something that in the inflation-ridden Weimar Germany or ideologically volatile Russia in the 1920s could not easily happen.[5] The ideas—which usually are creative under ideological and economic stress—flourished in Europe in the 1920s, but applied practices developed in the United States.

The migration of a critical mass of psychologists from Europe to North America after 1933 was not the first trans-Atlantic migration of the discipline. This had happened before—at the end of the 19th century (Valsiner & van der Veer, 2000). Yet the first migration was by a dominant perspective that the North American self-liberating intellectual world accepted as something to follow. This led to adaptation of European ideas to North American socio-moral contexts (Dolby, 1977)—yet with preservation of the centrality of the German language in philosophical[6] and psychological discourses. America at the turn of the 20th century was a novice in psychology—learning from the Germans (and in German). Yet that learning soon took a practical turn—under the influence of pragmatism (Valsiner, 2000).

The second migration in the 1930s was very different. The European migrants were powerless—having lost their university positions in Europe, they had hard times getting into the academic establishment in the United States, despite their American colleagues' efforts to help. The United States was in deep recession after 1929, and the antiforeigner feelings that usually go together with economic downturns were high. The applied orientation of psychology had developed rapidly in the 1920s and framed the expectations for psychology in the 1930s. Theoretical pursuits were clearly secondary to social practices, and Central European academics had to survive under these flop-sided social demands.[7]

## Migration of Ideas—and the Opportunities for Psychology in Japan

Migration results in all kinds of adaptation issues. Migrants can be seen as maintaining their habits of origin while under "assimilation pressures" from the receiving social context—or, just the opposite, show a pattern of hyperassimilation. Can we find impact of the second trans-Atlantic migration (Europe to North America) in the ways in which psychology operates now? Is psychology operating under the influence of some dominant extrascientific agenda that is a result of such migration? Frequent stories—often laments—about the dominance of "American psychology" all over the world seem to point in that direction. Yet I would argue that there are two partners in a dance (even if one leads the other)—so if there is an effect of the "other," there has to be an accepting recipient—or a partner—in that act of influence.

The history of psychology in Japan is of particular interest from this perspective. Japan—for long time a country closed to foreigners until 1870s—became a place of active import of the newly established discipline from both Europe—the place of its origin—and the United States (where the European traditions were already being transformed by local social demands). Yet it was both the holistic direction from Germany (the Gestalt impact) and the American imports that reached Japan (Sato et al., 2007). Japan had no fixed alternative of its own—so its import created (and keeps creating) a complex arena for both imitation of others' practices as well as for serious innovation. As Miki Takasuna has argued, "Japanese culture has some unfixed boundaries, which correlates well to the scientific methods and premises required by both [the scientific methods and the culture]" (2007, p. 91).

I cover some of these potentials elsewhere (Valsiner, 2008). It is a very interesting historical experiment in the making to see in which ways subareas of psychology in Japan emerge in leadership roles in the world. Once technology makers in Japan have succeeded in that—then why not knowledge makers? Yet such examples of success—when found—are necessarily surrounded by similar examples of nonsuccess. The latter—through imitating others' successes in a fixed way—participate in the blocking of the development of psychology's knowledge base. Science's movement to develop Wissenschaft are uneven, and multiple.

## Contrasting Methodological Trajectories

Aaro Toomela (2007) has recently brought to our attention the development of psychology in the second half of the 20th century along two

trajectories—the North American and the German-Austrian methodological orientations. Based on the analysis of these two trajectories already back in the 1930s, Toomela points out the intellectual impasse of the dominance of the quantitatively oriented North American trajectory:

> Last 60 years in psychological research have given us thousands, perhaps even millions, of ways how to predict statistically one psychological variable by way of another. At the same time, many fundamental questions have even not been asked because of limited methodological thinking. We still find "objective" scores without knowing how many different psychological mechanisms may underlie the same score. We do not know how psychological aspect of experimental conditions may have contributed to study results. Study of fragments gives very little to understanding of a human person as a whole. . . . Statistical probabilistic prediction has become an end goal of studies even though *most of the thinking and insight should begin where the science of mainstream psychology seems to end now.* (Toomela, 2007, p. 18, emphasis added)

We can perhaps create a parallel to HIV in the biological world in the form of IIDS ("intellectual immune deficiency syndrome"). Like in the breakdown of biological immunity, the migration of dominant ideas—propagated with a missionary kind of fervor—may break down the natural intellectual immune system of thinkers in another society. For instance—the axiomatic acceptance of *quantification as the guarantor of objectivity* in psychology[8] is possible only if the natural intuitive anti-position "but the psychological phenomena *as I experience them* are all qualitative" is weakened, or blocked (Brower, 1949, p. 326, emphasis added). The person stops trusting his or her own introspection about psychological matters—and adopts the authoritative discourse from a (translated) introductory textbook! How is that possible?

Science—as a category—is a new invention: The word *scientist* in the English language (in contrast with *artist*) was introduced as late as in 1834 by William Whewell (Yeo, 1986, p. 273). By differentiating the words the nature of the socially constructed activity also changed—introducing the "subjectivity" (of art) versus "objectivity" (of science) dichotomy. That dichotomy is of course very unrealistic in the lives of persons who work in science, and is not present in other languages in similar strict form (e.g., German *Wissenschaft*—knowing—does not entail such strict dichotomy). Thus, through English becoming the medium of international communication in science, the discourses about science are guided in directions that mask the actual deeply human ways of acting in the knowledge construction process (Knorr Cetina, 1999). The three components—the utopia of creating "better, cumulative knowledge," the meanings of knowledge for persons,

and the critical (deconstructive) look at their relations (Teo, 1999)—have created a discourse style about science that may bring out the current impasses—yet without constructive innovation. However, a whole range of our contemporary scientific acts are on their way to reconstructing psychology. A major break is slowly moving into contemporary psychology—abandoning the assumption that scientific evidence in psychology is necessarily (and automatically) quantitative:

> There are many spheres of human behavior concerned with the production of cultural products in which any investigation that sidesteps the content of these products neglects an important (if not the most important) feature of the behavior. The most glaring example, of course, is the phenomenon of meaning, not just linguistic meaning, but meaning in all forms of symbolism. (Michell, 2004, p. 316)

Since meaning-making is the most central human psychological process, we find ourselves in a situation where quantification is an operation the use of which in the psychological science needs to be first proven—rather than accepted automatically, without doubt, as a scientific given.

What is becoming very clear is that psychology needs first to resolve the metatheoretical issues of what kind of generalized knowledge is adequate for its *Wissenschaft*. How would that happen? We can currently observe increased interest in qualitative methodology (for closest overview, see Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung, n.d.). The "qualitative turn" is to be expected, since psychology deals with structured wholes—and their dynamic transformation (Valsiner, 2005c). There is a search for new formal models for complex processes—like that of the developmental logic ("genetic logic") of James Mark Baldwin from years 1906–1915 (Valsiner, 2009) is a new challenge for the field—first of all within the traditions of developmental science (Cairns, Elder, & Costello, 1996). The issue at stake is the parts<>whole relationship (as a unified structure) and its transformation—developing further the notion of Gestalt levels that Christian von Ehrenfels introduced to psychology from the 1890s onwards (von Ehrenfels, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c). New horizons—which are sometimes new ways of returning to selected previously used ideas—are currently in the making.

## Horizon One: Future in Hierarchically Structured and Dynamic Views

A new era in psychology is opened by return to the issues that had remained unsolved by the first independent (from philosophy and physiology)

psychologists—Wilhelm Wundt, Franz Brentano, Moritz Lazarus, Heyman Steinthal, William James, James Mark Baldwin, and others. All of them—in their distinctly individual ways—tried to make sense of various levels of human psychological functions—lower, and higher (volitional)—and their embeddedness in their cultural environments. These efforts largely stopped around the time of World War I, as the reduction of complex human phenomena to the behavior of restricted range of animal species (rats) in limited unnatural environments (laboratories) became popular. Now, about a hundred years later, psychology is attempting to address issues of complexity again (Bradley, 2005).

In these efforts, the movement for developmental science (Cairns et al., 1996) has taken the lead. By its focus on development—including the emergence of hierarchical order in ontogeny (Fischer & Bidell, 1998), developmental science is necessarily holistic and individual-centered:

> The point of departure for a holistic analysis of individual functioning is that an individual functions as a totality that each aspect of the structures and processes (perceptions, cognitions, plans, values, goals, motives, biological factors, conduct, and other aspects) takes on meaning from the role it plays in the total functioning of the individual. (Magnusson & Törestad, 1993, p. 436)

Empirically elegant work on such holistic processes cannot be reductionist—if theoretically we claim "the person is a whole," then it is the features of that whole that the empirical work needs to reveal.

## The Elegance of Complex Processes

The elegance of complexity requires a basic change in the axiomatic basis—well expressed by the critique by Magoroh Maruyama of psychology's reliance on the notion of normal distribution:

> The uncritical use of the assumption of normal distribution—the bell-shaped curve—dominated psychology and social sciences. But in this assumption, something important was overlooked. Researchers tended to forget or never learned how the bell-shaped curve had been mathematically derived and defined. The normal distribution occurs when both the following conditions are satisfied: (1) The fluctuations are *random*; (2) they are *independent* of one another. But psychological and social events are neither random nor independent. Therefore it is *illogical* to assume a normal distribution. (Maruyama, 1999, p. 53, emphasis in original)

By this singular look at the misfit of the axiomatic basis of the statistical method and the nature of psychological phenomena, Maruyama has

elegantly cleaned the base for building new methodological perspectives—by introducing into science the notion of deviation-amplifying processes (which are working in coordination with deviation-counteracting, i.e., equilibrating, processes—Maruyama, 1963). Open systems not merely are characterized by their variability, but they generate increasing variability—as well as constraints to keep that variability within manageable bounds.

## Horizon Two: Focus on Emerging Structures—Multiple Trajectories

The perspective of psychology becomes reversed—as the deviating moves in human conduct are not "deviations" but acts of persistent imitation (to use James Mark Baldwin's terms). The centrality of the system—the person—who creates such novelty is restored as the legitimate target for science:

> Clearly human beings should not be considered "an error." Single cases that contradict group data should not be thrown away but be described and understood. It is the "true value mythology" that should be given up in psychology as a science of human being's life experience. (Sato, Watanabe, & Omi, 2007, p. 53)

This simple, basic understanding of the central role of variability has had a very hard time becoming understood in psychology (Valsiner, 1986). It is inherent in any developmental process (Maruyama, 1963, 1999; Siegler, 1996). In the case of all open systems, deviations are amplified in order to bring them—by some constraining conditions—to a particular limited range. Since that range unfolds in irreversible time, we can talk of trajectories—ranges of variation qualitatively different from one another that diverge from one and converge in another bifurcation point (Figure 2.2).

In Figure 2.2 you can observe the system exiting from one steady state (BF1—bifurcation point 1) through deviation amplification. The variability in the process is enhanced—exaggerated—until the amplifying deviation creates its opposite—a constraint that starts to limit that deviation. The result is the formation of different potential trajectories. The move of the actual developing system into one (or the other) may depend on coincidental factors—yet by either trajectory, the next point (BF2) is reached. Figure 2.2 creates the link between Maruyama's basic breakthrough in understanding how development works in the late 1950s and our contemporary work half-a-century later on the trajectory equifinality model (TEM—Sato, Yasuda, Kido, Takada, & Valsiner, 2006; Sato, Yasuda, et al., 2007)—which was elaborated on the basis of parallel ideas (nonindependence of human

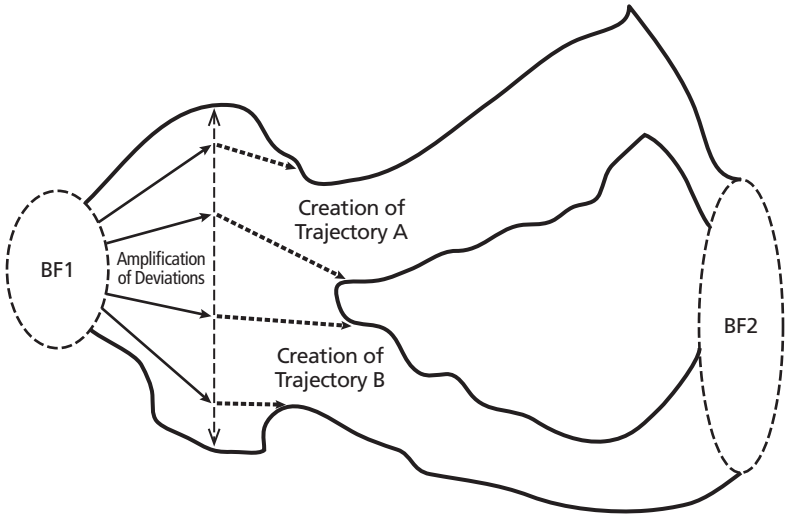



**Figure 2.2** The making of trajectories through deviation amplification.

phenomena, nonrandomness of distributions) when discussing the issues of sampling.

Variability is canalized over time—this is the core of the trajectory equifinality model (TEM), which emphasized the relationship between the emerging future trajectories (right-hand side of Figure 2.2)—all of which in the present are just potential (not yet constructed) futures.

The history of the two methodological trajectories, outlined by Toomela (2007), can itself be taken as an example of TEM application. The "American trajectory" emerged after the turmoils of rapid industrialization and World War I—yet on the basis of prescientific social uses of numbers (Donnelly, 1998). What emerged (by the 1940s) is a socialized, hypergeneralized feeling of objectivity through the use of numbers (Brower, 1949). This feeling is the delimiter of the range of possibilities—ruling out alternatives within the researcher's own mind. The "ideological support structure" that Michell (2004) described (above) starts from the intrapsychological life philosophy of a researcher. While the "urge for numbers" that has been latent in the Anglo-Saxon world since times before psychology has created one of the two trajectories, the "feeling for phenomenology" within the continental European tradition has led to the establishment of the holistic trajectory—with prioritizing qualitative (Gestalt) perspectives. What we encounter in our present time is BF2—where both trajectories come together in a new dialogue—the "American trajectory" having failed to capture dynamically complex phenomena, and the "continental trajectory" that has

failed to develop formal generalizing methods for capturing the nature of qualitative phenomena. In the present time, the dialogue between the two trajectories in BF2 uses "old" (BF1 time) arguments, attempting to develop a novel synthesis in the future.

### *TEM and Processes of Development*

In its minimalistic form, the TEM is depicted in Figure 2.3. It is obvious that it requires the analysis of complex phenomena—as these unfold in time—into units that cross the time barrier of future and past—including memories of past dialogues between the then-actualized (A) versus then-potential (not eventually actualized—B) trajectories. The relation {A<>B} becomes coordinated with the potential opposition {C<>D} (Figure 2.3). The TEM model is not merely a description of unfolded trajectories, but a mechanism that generates future actualized trajectories on the basis of past contrasts of the actual and the potential directions.

The TEM structure in Figure 2.3 relates to the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) that has gained prominence in developmental psychology as a specific notion from the theoretical heritage of Lev Vygotsky (Valsiner & van der Veer, 1993). While the ZPD entails consideration of how new functions emerge (the {C<>D} relation in Figure 2.3), TEM adds to Vygotsky's concept the nonlinear reliance on life-course history. It also links psychology's formal modeling of time-related processes with the probabilistic version of attractor theory in the dynamic systems framework—particularly the notion of *attractor ruins* (Tsuda, 2001) as domains of the dynamic processes where the move to new structure starts.

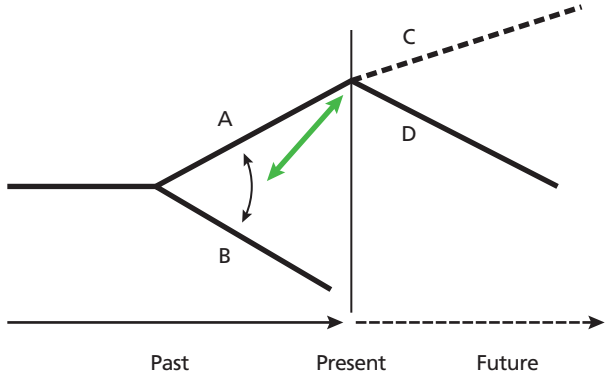



**Figure 2.3** The locus of coverage by the TEM of the coordination of the past and the future.

## Horizon Three: Movement Towards the Idiographic Focus in Psychology

We are witnessing a quickly developing trend towards the centrality of qualitative and single-case based methodological interests worldwide—even in parts of the social sciences (e.g., education) in the United States. Gordon Allport's clear vision about the centrality of the single case (Allport, 1967) is finally—with some historical time-lag—about to become true. Peter Molenaar has made it very explicit:

> Psychology as an idiographic science restores the balance by focusing on the neglected time-dependent variation within a single individual (*IAV*). It brings back into scientific psychology the dedicated study of the individual, prior to pooling across other individuals. Each person is initially conceived of as a possibly unique system of interacting dynamic processes, the unfolding of which gives rise to an individual life trajectory in a high-dimensional psychological space. Bringing thus back the person into scientific psychology, it can be proven that her return is definitive this time. Classical theorems in ergodic theory, a branch of mathematical statistics and probability theory, show that most psychological processes will have to be considered to be nonergodic. (Molenaar, 2004, p. 202)

Molenaar's revolutionary claim renders most of the work done in psychology over the past half-century inconsequential. Nonergodicity means that treating interindividual variability (which we usually label indistinctively as "variance" or "individual differences") as if it adequately reflected intraindividual (temporal) variability is not possible. By rejection of the axiom of ergodicity in psychology we invalidate the interpretations of group-based data that are applied to individuals. Implications for both empirical research practices and practical applications of psychology are profound.

Psychology has been exploring important topics—yet with methods that were inadequate to these topics. Methodological alternatives exist (Molenaar, 2007; Rudolph, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c)—yet they are outside of the consensually set ways of generalization in psychology. The poetic and dynamic nature of psychological phenomena (Abbey & Valsiner, 2005; Bibace, Laird, Noller, & Valsiner, 2005; Buller, 2006) call for the use of new kinds of abstract tools (Rudolph & Valsiner, 2009; van Geert, 2003). The proliferation of the focus on narrative and conversational analyses in contemporary psychology is an empirical proof of the science in its transition to a focus on the qualitative ways of knowledge construction.