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*The Quarterly newsletter of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition 12 (1990) 1, S. 37-52*

Digitalisiert

Mitglied der

Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Valsiner, J. (1987). *Culture and the development of children's action.* New York: Wiley & Sons.

Valsiner, J. (1988a). *Culture is not an independent variable: A lesson from cross-cultural psychology research for mainstream pschology.* Paper presented at the 24th International Congress of Psychology, Sydney, Australia.

Valsiner, J. (1988b). *Habit and inference: On the use of statistical methodology in psychology.* 24th International Congress of Psychology, Sydney, Australia.

Valsiner, J. (1988c). Ontogeny of co-construction of culture within socially organized environmental settings. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *Child development within culturally structured environments,* Vol. 2. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

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# From Cross-Cultural Psychology to Cultural Psychology[1]

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## Introduction

I can well imagine that from the outside contemporary psychology looks like a consolidated science: There exists a tremendous network of Psychological Institutes in Universities and Academies in almost every nation around the globe; numerous national and international associations and journals were founded in the first half of this century, and their number is still increasing; and last but not least, psychology has a great influence on practical decisions in medicine, education, industry and even international affairs. All this is certainly true. And yet, it is also true that psychology from the very beginning has been struggling for its identity as a human science. Although psychology may seem to have successfully come of age, it is still an open question whether or not it can be further developed according to the principles of natural science, or whether it should have some unique features. Human beings, the way they think, feel and act, cannot easily be explained by "natural laws" alone; "cultural rules" have also to be taken into consideration. But these rules are

genuinely of another ontological status than natural laws because they are themselves human creations, and hence are not binding because human beings can change them.

This tension between natural laws and cultural rules as explanatory frameworks for human activities is evident in Wundt's first programmatic ideas (cf. Graumann, 1980); it is the basis of the famous "crisis of Psychology," which was, interestingly enough, diagnosed in the very same year, 1927, by Karl Buhler and Lev Vygotsky; it prompted "critical reflections on psychology" in the seventies (Schultz, 1970), and it can readily be seen in the most recent efforts to develop a variety of "new Psychologies" like Historical Psychology, Dialectical Psychology, Cultural Psychology and Indigenous Psychology to mention just a few (see also Krewer, this issue).

I am therefore convinced that in the long run what psychology really has to deal with is exactly the tension between biological laws and cultural rules — how they regulate each other by setting boundaries or by facilitating specific conditions for the developing organisms and how they interrelate in emergent developmental processes in terms of history, phylogeny, ontogeny as well as micro-processes (actualgenesis) of a single act (cf. Vogel & Eckensberger, 1988).

In the present article I will restrict my argument only to the "cultural side" of this problem. Although I am aware of the inadequacy of this decision (it is genuinely undia-lectical), I feel justified in restricting myself in this way, because it is more often culture which is neglected in modern psychology than the biological basis for human activities. It should be kept in mind, however, that the following argument should be taken only as the first step in a much longer theoretical discourse.

In developing my argument, I will choose the cross-cultural perspective. I have argued for ten years (Eckensberger, 1979) that this perspective is particularly fruitful and challenging since cross-cultural psychologists can detect certain limitations and/or deficiencies in methods and theories of mainstream psychology much more easily than their colleagues. Cross-cultural psychologists are compelled from the outset to take a hard, critical look at the scientific routines and frameworks they use. Cross-cultural experience makes them vividly aware of the limitations of pure experimental strategies, sampling tech-niques, as well as of the dangers and pitfalls of comparing data gleaned by formally identical methods. However, important in the present discussion is the need to consider the cultural context of data collection and interpretation;

and hence the importance of specifying the culture concept itself. Knowledge of cultural rules for the reconstruction of behavior is an essential part of this subbranch of Psychology.

In the present paper, I will not present a further description or enumeration of methodological and/or empirical results that cross-cultural psychology may contribute to mainstream psychology. Instead, I will explicitly take a normative stance. I will argue that if some trends in cross-cultural research and theorizing are taken seriously, then cross-cultural psychology as well as mainstream psychology, will move towards what one might call "cultural psychology," i.e., a psychology which ex-plicitly contains "culture" as a feature unique to human beings.

## Some Trends in Cross-Cultural Psychology Which Argue for a Rethinking of Psychological Methods and Theories

Without claiming to cover the entire field of cross-cultural psychology, I would like to point out three trends that I consider important. I shall focus primarily on cog-nitive development.

### Developmental Concepts as Key Ingredients in a Psychological Theory

There is increasing agreement in cross-cultural theo-rizing that developmental processes are necessary ingre-dients of any psychological theory because any interac-tion between cultural conditions and individuals takes place over a long period of time. This position is most explicitly formulated by Heron and Kroeger (1981) who claim that "any serious and systematic attempt to study human behavior and experience must, in the very nature of things, be both developmental in depth and cross-cultural in breadth" (p. 1).

Given the plausibility of this proposition it is aston-ishing that cross-cultural psychology is rarely develop-mentally oriented; and few theories or concepts of devel-opmental psychology have been expanded to include cross-cultural research (cf. Jahoda, 1986). The conclusion drawn by Heron and Kroeger (1981) is therefore a chal-lenge for cross-cultural as well as for mainstream psychol-ogy. The former explicitly has to turn to developmental theories, and the latter has to expand its research to consider cross-cultural contexts.

Fortunately, over the years cross-cultural psychology has become more developmentally oriented; a trend which

can be seen in such areas as motor development (Super & Harkness, 1981) and motivational development (Kornadt, Eckensberger & Emminghaus, 1981). The developmental approach is most prominent, however, in the field of cognitive development, where theories proposed by Piaget, Kohlberg, and Witkin have become very influential.

Owing to the influence of these theoretical frameworks, two basic assumptions have become discernible and can be understood as alternative conceptions of development. These assumptions replace those that dominated early cross-cultural psychology rooted in learning theory and/or ideas of cultural relativism. The first assumption is that development is a process actively produced by the subject. (Super & Harkness, 1981). The second is the claim that developmental stages or formal aspects of performance (like differentiation) are universal.[2]

## Contextualism: Universalism and Constructivism Under Attack

Although a general developmental orientation has been increasingly accepted in theorizing and in the research, at least in the domain of cognition, the notions of universalism and self-evolving constructivism have come under heavy attack. The universality claim has been questioned simply because there exist considerable empirical cross-cultural variations of most psychological processes. In addition, the assumption of the self-developing individual has been questioned because these variations turn out to be context specific; that is, they are at least co-determined by environmental conditions.

There are several excellent recent reviews on this issue (Jahoda, 1986; Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1983). For this reason, I will give here only a brief summary of some of the important aspects of this discussion.

What are the so-called facts?

- First, the data indicate that most context-specific variabilities are not general cross-cultural variations in performance, but tend to be rather fairly specific.

- Second, and even more important, a deficiency in one domain (as viewed from a western standard) often goes hand in hand with a superiority in another.

- Third, and most important, it is often possible to specify an interaction between advantages/deficiencies in psychological processes and specific cultural conditions.

This means that a systematic correspondence between cultural and psychological conditions can be determined, a fact of utmost importance for all of psychology.

- Fourth, context specific variability applies to almost every psychological process, domain or variable: Data exist on motor development, sleep/wake cycles, indicantors for attachment, perceptual skills, classification tasks, memory, and on motives like aggression and achievement. Hence, context specific variability applies to processes which traditionally have been interpreted as indicators of neurological maturity of the brain (e.g., sleep/wake cycles) as well as to domains which, by contrast, have traditionally been assumed to be determined primarily by experience.

As can be expected, the correct theoretical interpretation of these "facts" is highly disputed. In the field of cognitive development in particular, two divergent positions have been predominant: One interpreted the data in the constructivistic tradition with reference to some central processes, and the other placed the locus of development in cultural practices, i.e., in activities specifically demanded within a cultural context (LCHC, 1983). Recently, however, these positions seem to have been merged to some extent (cf. Jahoda, 1986). Rather than give a historical review of this 20-year-old discussion here, I shall confine myself to addressing some of the theoretical dimensions arising out of this debate, focussing on both their general theoretical aspects as well as their more specific dimensions.

General theoretical dimensions. Thirty two years ago, Boesch, one of the pioneers of cross-cultural psychology in Germany, pointed out that different cultures offer individuals different possibilities and constraints, thus enabling them to have specific experiences, which in turn can be interpreted as incitement or triggering conditions for an "active development." Furthermore, it was clear to Boesch that this process applies to the physical as well as to the social and symbolic environment (Boesch, 1958). These differences in availability of experiences in different cultures certainly may account for some of the culture-specific variance in cross-cultural data. It has to be borne in mind, however, that this first aspect does not challenge the idea of an active subject constructing his/her own development: It only leads to certain cultural or regional specifications of it. Therefore, recently, the term "local constructivism" (Dasen, 1980; Harris & Heelas, 1979) has been used, which in my opinion, should instead be generalized and given the label "contextualistic constructivism."

A second, somewhat more convoluted argument was recently developed by Glick (1985). He suggested that cultures not only offer different possibilities for experiences but that these possibilities also imply rules or laws which are "hidden" to varying degrees in different cultures. Especially in the case of technical (artificially created) cultural elements, e.g., a computer, one would probably need a "tutor" to discover its underlying structure or built-in rules. The same is not necessarily true for the comprehension of the larger part of natural processes; for example, comprehending that water conserves mass or weight when it is poured from one glass into another, no matter what the individual design or form of the glass may be. Glick's position emphasizes that this dimension is more difficult to cope with from a Piagetian constructivistic perspective, since basically a co-construction of an individual structure is called for. I will return to this issue soon.

At the same time, Glick's position draws attention to and clarifies the notion that most "constructions" or "co-constructions" of cognitive structures during development are in fact "re-constructions" of knowledge, because most of them are already inherent in the culture one grows up in. Furthermore, it is also implied in Glick's argument that cultural elements are initially produced by humans and not only reconstructed by them (as is the case with "natural" processes). Finally, from examples given and arguments set out by Boesch (1958), Glick (1985), Goodnow & Cashmore (1985), Super & Harkness (1981), Valsiner (1987) and others, it can be learned that cultures not only offer different amounts and types of experiences for subjects but also that different domains of experience are also differently evaluated in different cultures. They may be positively valued (considered to be appropriate, natural, good or useful, cf. Goodnow & Cashmore, 1985) or they may be negatively valued (considered to be inappropriate, unnatural, bad or just useless). It is therefore argued that in the first case, there will be a resulting "selective pressure of the culture," a pressure which may be low, moderate or strong, and may therefore reach from support of, to demands for, behavior. In the latter case, culture will produce "canalizing constraints" which may vary from simple disincentives to prohibitions to taboos.

These last "dimensions" clearly come close to the ideas proposed by Michael Cole and his associates at the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition because here the locus of development is seen primarily in the culture and not in the individual. In fairness, however, it must be stressed that the LCHC group has pointed out that co-operations, far from being excluded from Piagetian theory, have in fact played an important role in it. It is true that Piaget is often accused of having interpreted developmental processes in a rather idealistic or solipsistic manner, in that he focussed upon the developmental processes of the isolated subject. But this is certainly not the whole story. Even in one of his early and well-known books on the development of intelligence, Piaget (1943, Chapter 6) had explicitly underlined the necessity of action coordinations between subjects for the development of groupings. He even elaborated on the structural similarity between communication and thinking (or reflection), since the latter can be understood as communication with the self. Hence it becomes obvious that processes of cultural selection and canalisation serve not only to bring about the individual's own structures but also to promote some shared meaning of cultural elements amongst members of the same culture. To a certain extent, therefore even cognitive structures derived from interactions with physical objects can be perceived as being socially constructed.

**Specific theoretical concepts or perspectives.** The kind and number of empirically defined performance/context-interactions enumerated above also raise some doubts about the validity or usefulness of some explanatory concepts at the microlevel of developmental processes where the rather global concept of "constructivism" is broken down into specific mechanisms. Again the following arguments will be restricted to cognitive development.

**The assumption of a highest stage.** With reference to Piaget's theory, Davids (1983), Glick (1985) and Greenfield (1976) were the first to propose a clear distinction between the basic theoretical concepts underlying the general developmental theory and the stage theory itself. They argued that the latter is much closer to the operationalization of structures, therefore much more content-laden, and therefore also much more culturally biased. If this distinction is made carefully, however, it becomes evident that the general idea of a genetic epistemology leads neither to the specific choice of logical operations as being the highest stage of cognitive growth (Greenfield, 1976), nor to the acceptance of Kant's "categorical imperative" or of Rawl's "justice concept" as being of the highest stage in the domain of morality. Quite the contrary. The basic idea of a genetic epistemology only assumes that cognitive systems have to be analyzed via developmental processes because they are themselves developmentally constructed.

So this position would in fact only lead to a strategy that initially focuses on a search for structurally complex

(or most complex) notions of logical and ethical thinking in different cultures. A developmental reconstruction of these structures would then be the next task (cf. Davids, 1983). This approach would smooth out some of the difficulties encountered in, for example, scoring answers to moral dilemmas from different cultures. These difficulties arose from the fact that certain answers in moral dilemma interviews were highly structured, but they either referred to criterion judgements in Kohlberg's manuals which dominate lower stages, or they did not match existing criterion judgements at all. Such difficulties have been reported for verbal material on higher stages of moral judgement from Tibetan monks, Israeli kibbutniks or Indian subjects. These populations referred to contents like collective happiness or nonviolence (Snarey, 1985), which are not central parts of any western ethic, but which reflect principles central to ethical systems of the respective cultures.

In the context of the present argument, these answers can be understood to represent the core of higher moral stages that are specific to the respective cultures. This does not mean, however, that their developmental paths cannot be refracted through universal structures.

**The assimilation/accommodation equilibrium.** One could argue, that Piaget's central idea of an equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation is also challenged by the various cultural sources of development (availability, selective pressure, canalizing constraints) mentioned above. However, the LCHC group (1983) argues convincingly that the "digestion analogy" implied in the process of equilibration can indeed be maintained in spite of these complications. They elaborate: "Just as parents prepare the food that children will consume, so, too, parents (and others in the child's environment) prepare and constrain the type of intellectual experiences to which the child will be exposed" (p. 346).

**Reflective abstraction.** Whereas the above example is focused more on the assimilation aspect of the assimilation-accommodation equilibrium, it is again Glick (1985), who draws attention to the principle of reflective abstraction, which is used by Piaget especially as an explanatory concept for the constructivistic part of cognitive development, and which can be understood as a system that operates as "reflections upon actions." Glick (1985) underlines the ingenuity of this concept because it represents a non- innate, yet universal basis for the progression of knowledge. Glick criticizes it because it is "firmly fixed on the organism side" and is "fundamentally acultural" (p. 106). Therefore, he calls for "multiple theories of the

growth of mind" after having demonstrated that some constructions via cultural contexts are, in fact, "co-constructions" (see above).

**Optimization of development.** Beyond these points of criticism in discussions about "cognition and culture," rises the idea of an "optimization of development." It is assumed that cognitive conflicts are especially productive for a subject, if they are produced by items of information slightly higher than the developmental stage of that subject. This idea is sometimes referred to as the "n+1"-condition," or as "dosed discrepancies" and it is formulated in the somewhat more advanced concept of the "zone of proximal development, ZPD" (LCHC, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978), which is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level of an individual, as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development, as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86, quoted after Valsiner, 1987, 107).

A very similar concept which is, however, formulated more radically, can be seen in what Fuerestein (1989) calls "mediated learning." Like the "zone of proximal development" this concept also refers to processes which represent co- constructions of a child and a "tutor." Fuerestein, however, even goes as far as to claim that this type of learning is constitutive for humans and forms the essence of culture.

## Individualism/Collectivism

A third trend in modern cross-cultural psychology involves the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism. There are various indicators from cross-cultural research that challenge the individualistic orientation of the western "model of man," and are in direct contrast to the collectivistic orientation of other cultures. However, neither the content, dimensionality, or the logical status, nor the evaluative implications of the concept of collectiveness have been agreed upon (Kagitcibasi, 1987). In the present context it is especially striking that the dichotomy is primarily defined within a non-developmental social-psychological context. Apart from these weak points, which may be considered as quite natural in an emerging field, the topic itself is highly relevant today. In my opinion, however, it is not so much the dichotomy itself which is important here but the fact that the individualistic orientation of western mainstream psychology is, in itself, a quite tacit and unreflected assumption, rather than an explicitly formulated parameter in western psychologi-

cal theories. It is true that considerable effort is made in research to control beliefs, self concepts and some related constructs (cf. Harter, 1983). It is also true that autonomy is accepted in most developmental theories of the self as the feature of a mature stage, but the basic potential capacity of human self-reflexivity is, in fact, rarely an explicit part of psychological theories (cf. Eckensberger, 1979). Once again, it is cross-cultural evidence which has initiated reflections on assumptions made by our western theories.

## A Call for a Cultural Psychology

A conclusion that can be drawn from the foregoing discussion is that both future theorizing and research (even in cross-cultural psychology) do not necessarily have to focus upon comparisons between measurements collected in different cultural groups, but rather upon the cultural context of psychological dimensions or qualities.

This conclusion is a clear contradiction of the perspective of some reputable colleagues in the cross-cultural field such as Poortinga and his associates. On the contrary their intention is to decontextualize psychological variables to reveal underlying universal human characteristics by "peeling the onion called culture" layer after layer until the culture concept itself has vanished (Poortinga, van de Vijver, Joe & van de Koppel, 1987). Others, however, have drawn a similar conclusion to the one advanced in this paper. In 1980, Price-Williams argued in line with my own point of view and that of my colleagues that "the radical thesis is that any psychological variable cannot be taken apart from its association with the cultural medium in which it is embedded" (p. 81). First, he proposed the use of the name "cultural psychology" instead of cross-cultural psychology, and second, he argued "that the fundamental unit for a cultural psychology has to be organism-environment interactions" (p. 84).

Although I clearly agree with the underlying idea, I would prefer to define the "fundamental units" of a cultural psychology as "individual culture-interactions." I assert this for the sake of systematizing the approach as well as for historical reasons. On the one hand, in the past decades the claim of "organism-environment-interactions" has been successfully substantiated outside cross-cultural circles (as in the "ecological psychology" and "environmental psychology movements" of the sixties and seventies). On the other hand, the term "culture" is much more tied to the species "homo sapiens" than the term "environment."

Having said so much and so little at the same time, I should like to move towards specifying the term "cultural psychology" by enumerating at least the most basic questions of concern which this discipline should try to answer. Obviously, I will do so by drawing some implications from the foregoing discussion. It goes without saying that these conclusions can be formulated only very broadly in the present context, which also means that they may look a bit hybrid.

First, broadly speaking, cultural psychology should aim at an integration of the cultural and the individual level. Both cultural and individual changes should not only be interrelated (descriptively or systematically), but should be constructed within the same theoretical framework.

Second, cultural psychology should aim at an integration of individual and collective (cultural) meaning systems, as well as their development and interrelationship. Not the least important task of any such theory should be to determine the limits of agency in the sense of potential self-reflexivity.

Third, cultural psychology should try to bridge the gap between objectivism and subjectivism. The meaning of the context for individuals is obviously of central importance in reconstructing the way they think, feel, and act. Objective cultural and historical conditions, no less than the subjective meaning of these conditions for individuals have to be incorporated in any adequate theory of "cultural psychology."

## A Typology of Action-Fields: An Opening for an Adequate Theory of Cultural Psychology?

There are many reasons why a "cultural psychology" is not unanimously agreed upon in the cross-cultural scientific community. There are, of course, methodological objections[3] based on the fear of a lowering of standards and a drop in prestige, but there is also doubt as to whether a theory of the required integrative power is even possible. In any event, there is a lack of consensus—regarding the definition of "individual-culture-interactions."

Although a detailed discussion of all aspects of a theory suited for a cultural psychology is clearly beyond the scope of this paper, some comments may be helpful to delineate the theoretical framework my colleagues and I are trying to develop.

To prevent any misunderstanding, it must be emphasized first that a contextualistic orientation does not rule out comparisons. Price-Williams (1980) agrees in saying, "Contexts are not necessarily unique, they can be compared" (p. 82). And, in fact, Michael Cole's work in the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition is an excellent example of this kind of comparison—hardly surprising as his approach was originally called "Experimental Anthropology." Unfortunately, however, there are also objections to this position, such as the practical doubts Jahoda (1980) formulated some years ago, when he wrote that, "This approach appears to require extremely exhaustive, and in practice, almost endless explorations of quite different pieces of behavior with no guarantee of a decisive outcome" (p. 126). On the other hand, Jahoda also points toward a solution when he adds, "this might not be necessary if there were a workable 'theory of situations' at our disposal (...) what is lacking in the context specific approach are global theoretical constructs relating to cognitive processes of the kind Piaget provides, and which save the researcher from becoming submerged in a mass of unmanageable material" (1980, p. 126).

Our own theoretical and empirical efforts are aimed precisely at the development of such "global theoretical constructs." In fact, this effort has very much in common with the view advanced by Michael Cole and his group. However, our approach is rooted in different origins. While Cole and his associates are heavily influenced by Soviet psychology, especially by the work of Vygotsky, Luria and Leontiev, our work is primarily influenced by Boesch, who over the last thirty years has argued in support of a theory which comprises a cultural perspective, although it is still a genuinely psychological theory. Boesch's own system is built upon (a) Piagetian constructivism, (b) Janet's dynamic theory, (c) Lewinian field-theory, and d) depth-psychological symbolism (cf. Eckensberger, 1989).[4]

Although we differ from Boesch's approach in several respects, and have proposed some systematizations which are beyond his own intentions, we consider his theoretical framework as a fertile ground for the unfolding of our own work. As will be seen, however, we also make use of some distinctions proposed by Habermas (1981).

The first basic orientation in our work is the idea that the concept of culture not only gives rise to some of the problems enumerated above in the context of cross-cultural psychology, but that it also provides some solutions. As early as 1958, at a meeting of UNESCO experts on cross-cultural research in child psychology, Boesch pro-

posed beginning with some main dimensions of culture to theorize about their "psychological relevance" — or their implications for the ontogeny of psychological processes. He distinguished forty cultural variables or groups of variables, which are compatible with later taxonomic approaches of concrete cultural groups (Textor, 1967) as well as with theoretical discussions of the culture concept in anthropology (cf. Renner, 1980; Geertz, 1965). Table 1 gives a summary of Boesch's (1958) cultural and psychological aspects, some of which have been used in cross-cultural research while others have not. They all demonstrate, however, that at least some of the implications of the global culture dimensions are of the utmost attractiveness for psychological research and theory, in general, and would in fact help to determine, clarify, and systematize the specific "cultural contents" that a psychological theory should make use of (see Table 1, next page).

Although these earlier writings still suggest that cultural dimensions should logically be treated as independent variables, a second orientation, which can be gleaned from Boesch's general approach (especially in later publications, Boesch, 1976; 1980; 1983; 1987) is that one should use "actions in cultural contexts" as the unit of analysis. This decision implies that neither a taxonomy of subjects, nor one of situations, is intended. Instead, we are working on a "typology" of actions in action contexts. Interestingly enough, the LCHC group's reaction to Jahoda's (1980) critique, mentioned above, implies a similar solution, in that they propose a taxonomy of situations based upon "domains of activities" LCHC, 1983, p. 299, and 245 ff.). Such a typology also follows from Piaget's basic theory as expounded by Davids (1983). Finally, the indissolvable bond between context and action is also underlined in present-day discussions of contextualism as a general epistemological orientation. To cite Rosnow & Georgoudid (1986) "...an act or event cannot be said to have an identity apart from the context that constitutes it; neither can a context be said to exist independently of the act or event to which it refers" (p. 6).

It is quite evident that it is impossible to expound or elaborate an entire psychology" solely on the basis of the theoretical orientation discussed here. However we will summarize at least four of its main features (cf. also Figure 1, see page 46).

First, although actions are executed by subjects in real life situations, we suggest that the action itself can be understood as the dynamic interface between the individual and the situational context. And as can be seen in Figure 1, the action forms the overlap between internal

# Table 1. Cultural Variables and their Psychological Relevance (after BOESCH, 1958)

| Cultural Variables | Psychological Relevance |
|---|---|
| **a) Climate and Nature** | |
| a-1. Geographical situation | Influence on physical conditions (health, metabolism, endocrine situation. etc.); |
| 2. Variations of temperature, humidity and atmospheric pressure | effort and fatigue; |
| 3. Soil and possibilities of cultivation | anxiety and security; |
| 4. Closed or open area (possibilities of transportation | broadness or narrowness of experience and human contacts |
| 5. Animals and vegetation | religious and superstitious ideas, etc. |
| **b) Population** | |
| b-1. Density of population | Individual communication; |
| 2. Racial groups and mixture of races | various degrees of privacy; |
| 3. Migrations of stability of population | nationalism and racial prejudice, similarity or opposition of attitudes; |
| 4. Languages | attitudes towards propriety; |
| | forms of thought, trends of communication (e.g. two language groups may always use only one or both of their languages for communication). |
| **c) Society** | |
| c-1. Dwellings | Family-size and family life; |
| 2. Size of communities | participation in public life; |
| 3. Structure of communities | attitudes of obedience or of individual initiative; |
| 4. Forms of community participation | interests; |
| 5. Occupational characteristics | possibilities of increasing personal economic status |
| 6. Economic characteristics | |
| **d) Institutions** | |
| d-1. School or other educational institutions | Forms of initiation into social and occupational life; |
| 2. Church or other religious institutions | religious constraints and ideas, formation of anxiety and feelings of security; |
| 3. Administration and government bodies | political interests and activities; |
| 4. Societies, groups, clans | interests in group and forms of group manifestations. |
| **e) Customs and habits** | |
| e-1. Rhythms of life | Valuation of time; |
| Time consciousness and value of time, individual life rhythms, social life rhythms | rhythm of work; |
| | expectations connected with time |
| | attitude towards age; |

# Table 1. continued:

| Cultural Variables | Psychological Relevance |
|---|---|
| 2. Food and eating (kind of food, preparation, habits connected with eating, including social habits) | Value of enjoyment, of physical fitness, of social gathering; |
| 3. Verbal and non-verbal communication (forms of greeting, speaking, gestures | spontaneity or formalism of social approach; |
| 4. Rituals for special occasions, like birth, initiation ceremonies, marriage occupational initiation, death, house building, war-fare. | attitudes of submission and command; repression of emotional reactions; anxiety formation and anxiety prevention; |
| 5. Clothing and nakedness | separation between age-groups; |
| 6. Health practices | attitudes towards sex and love; |
| 7. Educational customs at home and in the group | |

## f) Beliefs

| | |
|---|---|
| f- 1. In connection with nature | Superstitions, related to anxiety; |
| 2. In connection with human fate | |
| 3. In connection with education | ideas of destiny and attempts to act on destiny; |
| 4. In connection with religion (including any kind of supernatural belief. Here the separation between theoretical or theological formulations and popular beliefs and attitudes is important; it is important, too, to look at religious models and their influence on non-religious forms of life, e.g. to consider the "existential example" of Christ or of Buddha for instance detached from their religious teaching) | formation of guilt, ideas of punishment and purification, spirtual ideals; value formation and interiorisation, etc. |

## g) Crisis

| | |
|---|---|
| g- 1. Types of crisis occuring in the group (war, epidemies, revolutions, etc.) | Security or insecurity of forms of life; |
| 2. Frequency of crisis | social value of aggressive or of dominant behavior; |
| 3. Ways of dealing with crisis | consciousness of crisis; |
| 4. Prophylaxis of crisis | correspondence between ideals and reality; planning of social life. |

## h) Material

| | |
|---|---|
| h- 1. Materials for use | Values attached to tools and materials; |
| 2. Materials for protection | |
| 3. Materials for embellishment | forms and levels of skill; |
| 4. Materials for cults | importance of industrial forms of life. |
| 5. Tools for manufacturing and working | |

internal actionfield ↑  external actionfield ↑

| INDIVIDUAL | | execution → → | ACTION | production ⇒ ⇒ | CULTURE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SUBJECTIVATION | OBJECTIVIZATION | | LEVELS | | OBJECTIFICATION | SYMBOLIZATION |
| functional potentiality | goal-systems: basic motives; | structuration | first-level actions <br><br> - world-oriented (own body/ environment) | structuration | nature | - functional |
| attachment to <br> - spaces <br> - materials <br> - people <br> - languages <br> - events | personal concerns; <br><br> figurative schemata <br><br> simple affects <br><br><br> problems/barriers conflicts | | Types: instrumental (effect-oriented) <br> social (empathy-oriented) | | material culture (tools, dwellings, etc.) <br><br> social culture (styles of communication; customs; institutions; social structure, population) <br><br> crisis | - situational <br><br> - social |
| FANTASMS (control security | operative schemata rule-systems (logical technical, aesthetic, ethical, conventional) enduring motive-systems <br><br> complex affects (guilt; shame; envy) | construct. co-constr. re-constr. <br><br> ⇐ ⇐ <br><br> primary | second-level actions <br> - action-oriented <br> •own actions <br>  reflections/regulations <br> •other's actions <br> •understanding/coregulations conventions) | availability selection canalization <br><br> ⇐ ⇐ <br><br> primary | ideational culture knowledge-systems/ normative frameworks; rule-systems (science, technology art, law, | MYTHS <br><br><br> - ideological |
| identity anchors | self concept self-other-relation religious beliefs | | third-level actions <br> - agency-oriented (boundary: ind./group) <br><br> self-reflexivity <br>     dramaturgy | | roles <br><br> role-systems | - biographical <br> - religious |

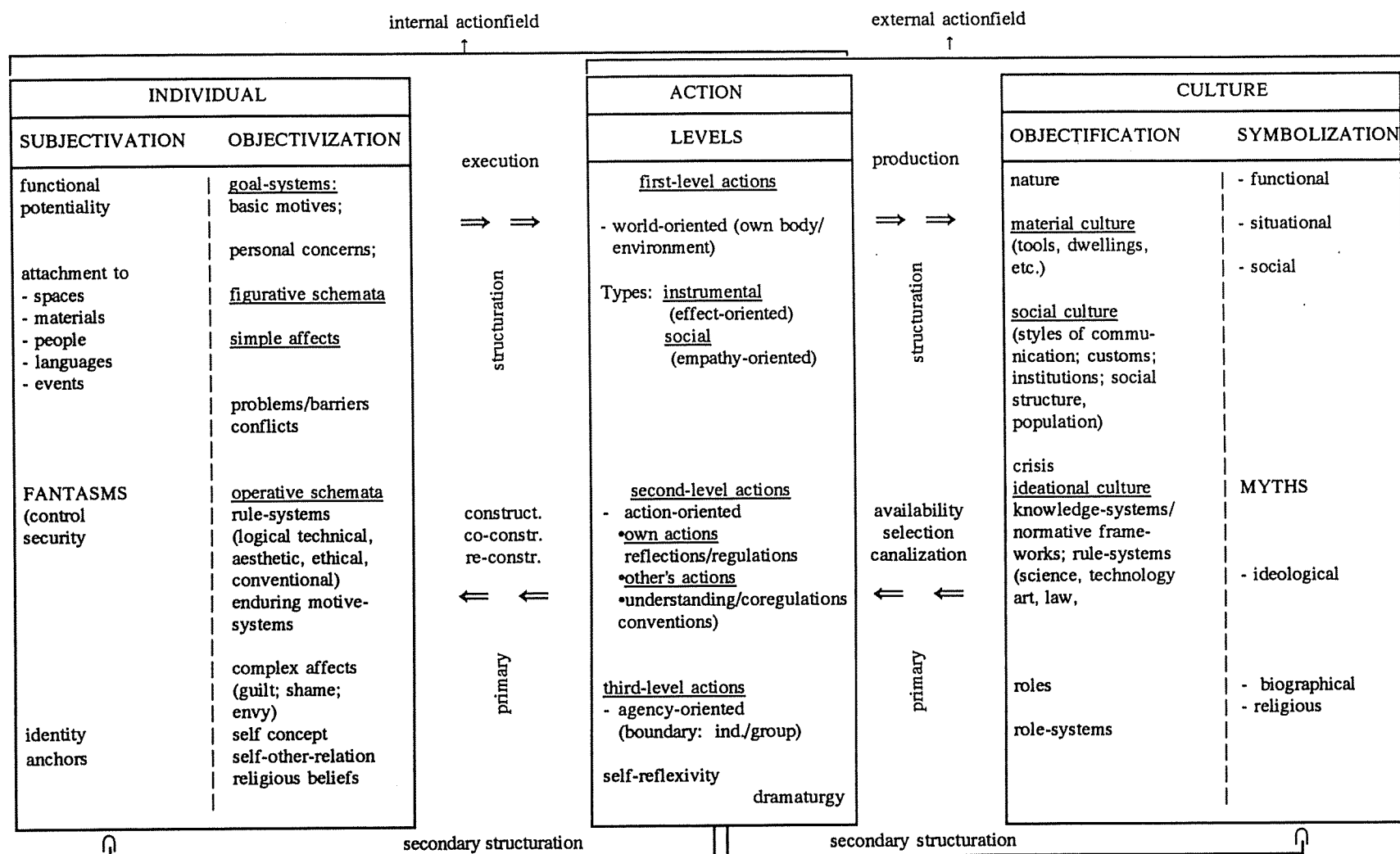secondary structuration        secondary structuration

**Figure 1. A framework of a "cultural psychology"—A summary of action-theory terms.**

and external "action fields." Hence we claim that *this* unit of analysis allows both individual development (ontogeny) and socio-historical changes to be incorporated within the same theoretical framework. Individuals structure their own actions and are, in turn, transformed by these actions (in the Piagetian sense), while objective changes in the culture are likewise products of actions. Both individual and cultural processes are part of what can be called "primary structuration."

Second, in following Habermas (1981) rather loosely, we distinguish at least two basic types of actions: one which is instrumental, in that it is effect-oriented and covers the material and physical world; and another which is oriented towards empathy and understanding and therefore covers the social world.

Third, we propose to distinguish analytically between three levels of activity which apply equally to both types of actions, and which, in addition, relate psychological concepts to cultural ones. To illustrate these levels, we will make use of some of the cultural dimensions, summarized in Table 1. It will be seen that the descriptive taxonomic status of these aspects is to some extent transformed in favor of a new significance within the terms of the theory.

(a) On the first level, actions are oriented towards "the world," which is represented by natural conditions such as climate and nature (geographical situation, temperature, humidity, kind of soil, openness of the terrain, animals, vegetation); by "phenomenal aspects of culture" (materials for use and protection, embellishment, artifacts); by other concrete individuals (relatives, peers, representatives of authority); by aspects of population (density, ethnic groups, migration-stability, language); by societal characteristics (dwellings, size and structure of communities, forms of participation, occupational characteristics); by institutions (schools, education, church, administrative bodies); by customs and habits (rhythms of life, food and eating; by types of communication, special rituals) and finally by the individual's own body (clothing and nakedness, health practices) (cf. Table 1). These types of action originate from personal concerns (goal structures) and basic motivations and are accompanied by simple emotions (e.g. rage, joy, fear, cf. Campos, et al, 1983). From the cognitive point of view, they lead primarily to a figurative schemata in the Piagetian sense. We assume, however, that although these actions share some basic features, as in the case of "effect-oriented" and "communication-
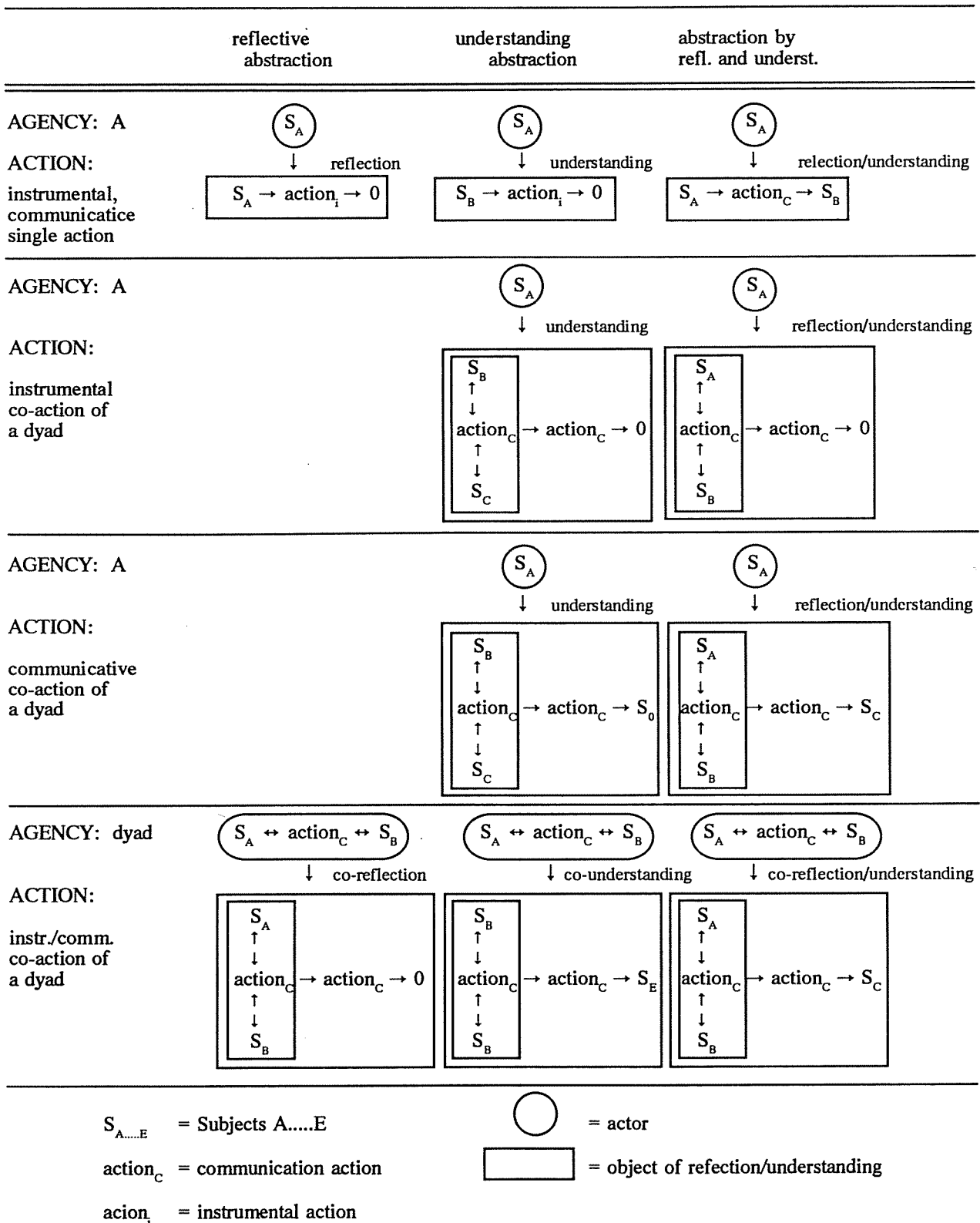
oriented" actions, they are also markedly different with respect to specific properties.

(b) On the second level, actions are action-oriented and subject to regulations and reflections. Regulations are threefold: structural, affective or ergonomic; and they primarily are used to reconstruct the actual genesis (microprocess) of the single act. Instead, reflective processes are most important to reconstruct ontogeny, in the sense of reflected abstraction formulated by Piaget. Some important types of reflections are illustrated in Figure 2 (see next page).

As can be seen in this figure, we first distinguish between two types of abstractions. We speak of a "reflective abstraction" if the actors own actions are reflected upon. We speak of "understanding abstraction," however, if actions of one or more other actors are taken as the object of thought (cf. Eckensberger, 1987). If we also add the distinction between instrumental and communicative actions, it becomes evident that in any communicative action reflective and understanding processes are simultaneously present. If we finally complement these cases by taking Glick's (1985) discussion on co-actions into account, we then can even develop abstraction processes of "co-reflections" and "co-understanding," which are, however, intrinsically communicative processes. It may be noteworthy to mention that we do not claim that any reflection of "co-actions" by necessity has to be either abstraction by co-reflection or by co-understanding. So, while I agree that the notion of "co-constructions" is a more complicated matter than "pure" or "spontaneous constructions," I do not think that the acknowledgment of such processes destroys the idea of reflective abstraction in principle. We agree, however, that reflective processes upon co-actions or co-operations should get more attention in future theory and research, and we hope that some of the distinctions we make may serve a heuristic function in this endeavor.

Finally, we consider all types of reflections and regulations as being provoked by action barriers (problems in the case of effect-oriented actions; conflicts in the case of communication-oriented actions) as perceived by the subject or by crises as produced by the culture.[5]

Again, if one tries to link specific cultural aspects of Table 1 to the second level of actions, then it becomes evident that with regard to culture these secondary actions lead to those aspects of culture

|  | reflective abstraction | understanding abstraction | abstraction by refl. and underst. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **AGENCY: A** **ACTION:** instrumental, communicatice single action | $S_A$ ↓ reflection $\boxed{S_A \to action_i \to 0}$ | $S_A$ ↓ understanding $\boxed{S_B \to action_i \to 0}$ | $S_A$ ↓ relection/understanding $\boxed{S_A \to action_C \to S_B}$ |
| **AGENCY: A** **ACTION:** instrumental co-action of a dyad |  | $S_A$ ↓ understanding $\boxed{\begin{array}{c} S_B \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ action_C \to action_C \to 0 \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ S_C \end{array}}$ | $S_A$ ↓ reflection/understanding $\boxed{\begin{array}{c} S_A \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ action_C \to action_C \to 0 \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ S_B \end{array}}$ |
| **AGENCY: A** **ACTION:** communicative co-action of a dyad |  | $S_A$ ↓ understanding $\boxed{\begin{array}{c} S_B \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ action_C \to action_C \to S_0 \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ S_C \end{array}}$ | $S_A$ ↓ reflection/understanding $\boxed{\begin{array}{c} S_A \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ action_C \to action_C \to S_C \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ S_B \end{array}}$ |
| **AGENCY: dyad** **ACTION:** instr./comm. co-action of a dyad | $(S_A \leftrightarrow action_C \leftrightarrow S_B)$ ↓ co-reflection $\boxed{\begin{array}{c} S_A \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ action_C \to action_C \to 0 \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ S_B \end{array}}$ | $(S_A \leftrightarrow action_C \leftrightarrow S_B)$ ↓ co-understanding $\boxed{\begin{array}{c} S_B \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ action_C \to action_C \to S_E \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ S_B \end{array}}$ | $(S_A \leftrightarrow action_C \leftrightarrow S_B)$ ↓ co-reflection/understanding $\boxed{\begin{array}{c} S_A \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ action_C \to action_C \to S_C \\ \uparrow \\ \downarrow \\ S_B \end{array}}$ |

$S_{A....E}$ = Subjects A.....E

$action_C$ = communication action

$acion_i$ = instrumental action

◯ = actor

▭ = object of refection/understanding

**Figure 2. Types of reflective/understanding abstraction**

which are known as "ideational" (Renner, 1980), and which represent beliefs and normative frameworks. That is, they relate to knowledge and rule-systems which refer to nature as well as to culture itself (like laws, ethics, esthetics, science, technology). In regard to the subject, parallel logical motivational and evaluative frameworks are constructed and reconstructed. Here precisely is the (theoretically located) dynamic interface between individual and cultural rule-systems which Shweder points to (1980).

(c) The third level of actions, finally, is agency-oriented. Although I have some conceptual difficulties with the concept of indigenous psychology as well as with earlier applications of individual constructs to groups (like the "conscience of the clan" or "ego of the group," cf. Parin, 1978) we do not want to exclude these concepts from our theoretical approach on a priori grounds. What is important, however, is the claim that there is an agency per se which acts and to which acts are related, whether the boundaries of the agency are restricted to a single individual or not. In any case, we assume the existence of a potential agency-oriented reflection-process, which has two aspects: One directed towards the agency, which we call "self-reflexivity," and another oriented towards "culture," which we identify as "dramaturgic aspects" of action, a term we again borrow from Habermas (1981) although we realize that he derives this concept within a somewhat different systematic framework.
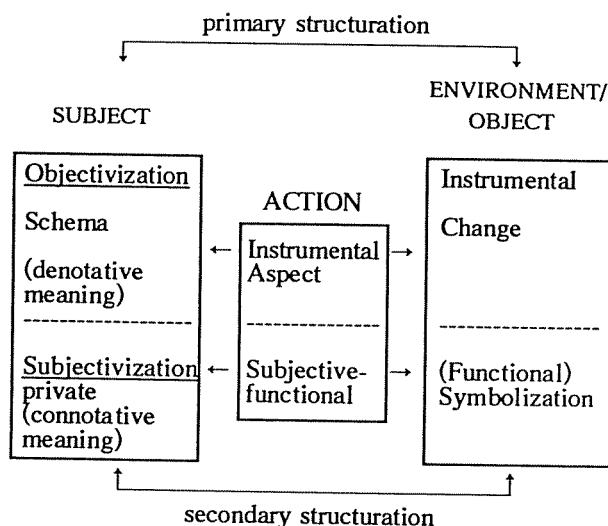
With regard to culture (see Table 1), these third-order actions relate to roles and role-systems, while they lead to self-concepts or the notion of identity in the individual. While all three levels are differentiated analytically, they are (or can be) simultaneously present in a single act.

Fourth, we follow Boesch (1987) in accepting a further process, which we consider highly fruitful although it is still formulated rather speculatively. This is called the process of "secondary structuration." Although it is as yet mainly conceived with reference only to the primary level of actions, and although the implications of these processes for socially oriented actions have not yet been elaborated in any great detail, secondary structurations are conceptualized by Boesch (cf. 1987) on the basis of the notion that any action and any goal has two dimensions or aspects. One, which is usually considered, is the instrumental aspect i.e., an action is carried out instrumentally in order to reach a goal (e.g., taking a hammer to drive a nail into the wall). There is, a second aspect in any action,

which Boesch calls the subjective-functional aspect. Here the driving of the nail into the wall may have the meaning that one feels proud of being able to do so; one may also enjoy it, or it may relate to feelings of rage. In any case, the action of nailing acquires a meaning beyond its instrumental purpose, and which is not necessarily conscious.

The distinction between the two aspects of secondary structurations leads to several very stimulating consequences: Although these aspects can be distinguished analytically, they are always simultaneously present within the very same action. This is the reason why Boesch claims that actions are always polyvalent. He says "only in conjunction do both components constitute an action: without the one it would have no reality, without the other no meaning" (Boesch, 1987).

The meaning derived from the subjective-functional aspect of actions has, however, two aspects: First, the subject realizes his or her potential to act in a certain way. This leads to the subjective "results" of what Boesch calls "subjective functionality." Second, the situation, or an object which is used in an action (the hammer for instance), now represents this subjective meaning. In other words: It symbolizes the functional potentiality of the actor for him or herself.[6]



primary structuration

SUBJECT

ENVIRONMENT/ OBJECT

| Objectivization Schema (denotative meaning) | ACTION Instrumental Aspect | Instrumental Change |
| Subjectivization private (connotative meaning) | Subjective-functional | (Functional) Symbolization |

secondary structuration

- FANTASMS: private regulators of actions
- MYTHS: collective regulators of actions

Figure 3. Processes of primary and secondary structuration in Boesch's action theory

This general idea is elaborated by Boesch in many directions, which can only be briefly mentioned in the present context. Boesch distinguishes different kinds of symbolic representations and applies the idea of subjective-functional aspect of actions to higher order rule systems or regulatory systems of actions at the individual and cultural level.

In the case of the individual level, he uses the term *"fantasm"* for private higher order regulatory systems, which can be rather basic or general. These symbolic representations are general ideas through which one tries to structure and lead one's life in relation to the world. Examples of these include private ideas of happiness, success, love, the "good life," of the person one wants to be, and the like.

On the cultural level, Boesch identifies "myths" as collective rule-systems which, are "general, ideological guidelines of thought which regulate the specifications of social rules and provide systems of justification and conduct, as well as of explanations of events" (Boesch, 1987). This last aspect, in particular, could pave the way to a theoretical interpretation of the existence of and the relationships between individual and collective meaning systems.

There is a final important aspect to the theory of cultural psychology which we have not yet elaborated and can be only be named here. The logical status and structure of time: Time not only structures the single act (actual-genesis) but also forms part of ontogeny and cultural change. Beyond this, time also acquires a specific contextual meaning in terms of the biography of an individual and of the history of a culture (cf. Krewer & Eckensberger, 1988).

Last but not least, it is important to realize that time is handled differently by different individuals and within different cultures. Rhythms of daily activities of work or of the seasons of the year—anything that offers a framework, or sets constraints, by means of customs and habits or through the individual's own body, also has a physical relevance for the structure of time for the individual (cf. Super & Harkness, 1985). These actions originate from personal concerns (goal structures) and basic motivations. They are accompanied by simple affects/emotions (e.g., rage, joy, fear) and they lead primarily to figurative schemata in the Piagetian sense.

## Closing Remarks

I hope that the foregoing discussion has adequately expressed my view that cross-cultural psychology provides a wealth of reasons for thoroughly reviewing the basic tenets of psychology; and that these very reasons, moreover, point the way to some of the solutions needed for the problems which have arisen in the discipline of psychology. This is so because the culture concept, despite its long and controversial history in human sciences, can nevertheless be used as a productive practical and theoretical guideline to determine specific individual-environment relations in our terms of "actions in cultural contexts."

## Notes

[1]The following contribution is to a large extent based upon an invited paper read at the IACCP symposium, "The contributions of cross-cultural psychology to mainstream psychological theory" (convened by Walter J. Lonner) at the XXIV International Congress of Psychology, Sydney, Australia, Sept. 2, 1988. I would like to thank Doris Fritzsche and Lucille Dunn for improving the style of an earlier version of this paper.

[2]To preclude any misunderstanding which might occur especially in the framework of the tension between biology and culture referred to in the introduction, it is important to realize that the universality claim in cognitive theories does not imply that the transformations of cognitive performances are based on genetic or maturational processes. Instead, it rests upon the fundamental assumption that there is a universal potential of the growing individual to construe his/her own cognitive schemata. Vogel & Eckensberger (1988) propose therefore not only to distinguish homologies based upon genetics and traditions, but to introduce a third type which is based upon logical constraints (p. 605).

[3]It is certainly true that basic changes in paradigms also imply methodological changes (cf. Eckensberger & Burgard, 1983). But a discussion of these changes is, not possible in the present context.

[4]It may be interesting to note that the similarities in the approach of Cole's and of our own work can probably be traced back to the common origins of Boesch's and Vygotsky's ideas. Valsiner (1988) enumerates various "European roots" of Vygotsky's ideas which overlap remarkably with the "bilding bricks" of Boesch's theory (Piaget, Janet, Lewin). Valsiner (1988) even calls Vygotsky a "European thinker" (p. 123).

[5]Some examples may be helpful of how we both identify and distinguish psychological processes within the two major action types. First, the designation of action barriers as problems or

conflicts implies that the subject interprets events and processes differentially. We propose (Eckensberger & Emminghaus, 1982) to speak of a problem, in those cases when a barrier is interpreted by the subject in terms of a material or causal process. This is the reason why these barriers can be removed only on the basis of the same (causal) principle. We speak of a barrier in terms of a conflict, however, in those cases when a barrier is interpreted by the subject as being produced intentionally by another agent (person or group). Consequently in this case, intentional and not causal processes have to be taken into consideration if this barrier is to be "removed," i.e., some type of conflict resolution has to be brought about. Second, with reference to both types of barriers negative or "uncomfortable" emotions "occur" in the subject who experiences the barrier (cf. Campos, et al., 1983). Despite this similarity, however, the basic emotions differ in each action type because of the different psychological quality each displays. We try to convey this difference by using quite different terms for the same type of emotion. In effect-oriented actions barrier (problem)-related emotions are named "rage." However, in communication oriented actions barrier(conflict)-related emotions are named "anger." Similarly, like Campos, et al, (1983) and others, we also assume some "positive feelings" if an act is successfully brought to a conclusion. Again, however, we propose to differentiate emotional "colours" within these positive emotions depending on the type of action in which they are experienced. A successful communicative action (a process of mutual understanding), refers to some kind of emotional sharing. It is obvious that the attribution of the particular terms to the respective emotional conditions is a rather arbitrary one. What is important, however, is that we try to distinguish subtypes of emotional states or modes, which are produced by the kind of action within which they occur.

⁶Clearly, equivalent processes can be assumed within communicative actions. The goal here is to understand another person, and to co-ordinate interactions. Therefore the emotional states of happiness, referred to above (see Footnote 2), represent self-oriented feelings of a "communicative success" equivalent to the "functional potentiality" that Boesch is talking about. In the case of communicative actions one may also argue that these feelings become associated with specific communicative partners, even with situations or places etc. Some interpretations and data from research on the development of attachment and early fear-reactions in children (cf. Bower, 1979) are at least compatible with this notion. Obviously, however, much more research is needed before these concepts can be fully accepted within an action theory. But as yet they are clearly stimulating guidelines.

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