The semiotic construction of solitude:
Processes of internalization and externalization

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Abstract. Human beings create their private worlds of feelings and thoughts through immersion in the semiosphere created through situated activity contexts. Processes of internalization/externalization are at the center of development of human beings through the whole of their life courses. We consider the contexts of schooling as organized through Semiotic Demand Settings (SDS) for development of intrinsic motivation of the students. Intrinsic motivation is a process mechanism that operates as internalized and hyper-generalized feeling at the most central layer of internalization. It is a result of integration of social suggestions, hyper-generalized as an affective field, and turned into a value that directs future actions.

We are alone — even in the middle of the most crowded social settings. Or — maybe we become especially alone under the conditions of such social interaction overdose? At the same time — we can be alone only thanks to that social embedding. It is through semiotic self-regulatory mechanisms that persons can overcome their immersion in the field of social relations (Gertz *et al.* 2006), and develop their own private worlds in the middle of the public ones. As Georg Simmel has pointed out,

> […] historical development brings out the deeper real significance: that which in its nature is public, which in its content concerns all, becomes also externally, in its sociological form, more and more public; while that which in its inmost nature refers to the self alone — that is, the centripetal affairs of the individual — must also gain in sociological position a more and more private character, a more decisive possibility of remaining secret. (Simmel 1906: 469)

Education is a form of socializing the developing person into the semiotic texture of the given society — and to his or her private construction of personal subjectivity. As pointed out elsewhere (Valsiner 2003b) any educational situated activity context is inherently ambiguous. It constrains the learner — and by precisely that — enables to develop new ways of knowing. Thus we can think of creativity as an act of constructive destruction. In education, support for construction of novel forms of mental functioning (Luria 1974; Serpell 1993; Tulviste 1991) is intricately linked with destruction of old forms. Some of this destruction is total and pre-planned (e.g., boarding school education introduced to destroy the link of new generation with their parents' ways of being — Jones 1925). Aside from outright destruction of "the old", schooling also guarantees proliferation of ignorance. This is inevitable since concentration on the mastery of new knowledge leaves out of focus the mastery of many other everyday life skills.

The specific arena for this destruction and construction is the classroom — but not only that. It is the whole social setting that is localized in some geographical location (territory) with marked boundaries (and limits on who, when, and under what circumstances can cross those) that creates the unity of the process of educating. My goal here is to outline processes that are involved in the social act of guiding internalization (and externalization) in any social setting. Classroom may be a contemporary preferred place for it — yet it is a relatively new cultural place. Guidance of internalization has been taking place in situated activities in the streets, marketplaces, places for worship and war arenas. The general structure of such guidance is robust — *people are forced to act in the given context in socially prescribed directions* (cf. Milgram 1974) together with *socially suggested ways of creating meanings* — deeply "felt-through" personal senses — that provide personal and social stability through affective saturation of the actions (Valsiner 2005a). So both — *how to act* and *how to feel about* doing so — are socially guided (Capezza, Valsiner 2007). Personal uniqueness of internalized re-constructions of affective thinking is the result of social suggestions.

Semiotic demand settings (SDS)

Human life proceeds through negotiation between the perception and action that unite the actor and context, and the suggestions for feeling, thinking and acting that are proliferated through communication. Semiotic Demand Settings (SDS) are human-made structures of everyday life settings where the social boundaries of talk are set (Valsiner 2000: 125).

Figure 1 describes a case relation between the two opposing opinions within the field of promoted talking. By engaging persons within that sub-field — and encouraging opposing viewpoints — the SDS guarantees that through hyper-talk in this domain the attention is not taken to "side stories" (the maybe-talk zone) and is prevented from touching upon the "taboo zone". It is obvious that here the real differences between "open" and "closed" societies disappear — both kinds of societies disallow talking about "taboo zones", but the "open" ones guide people to hyper-talk in some area of meaning construction (while the "closed" ones have no promoted talking zones).
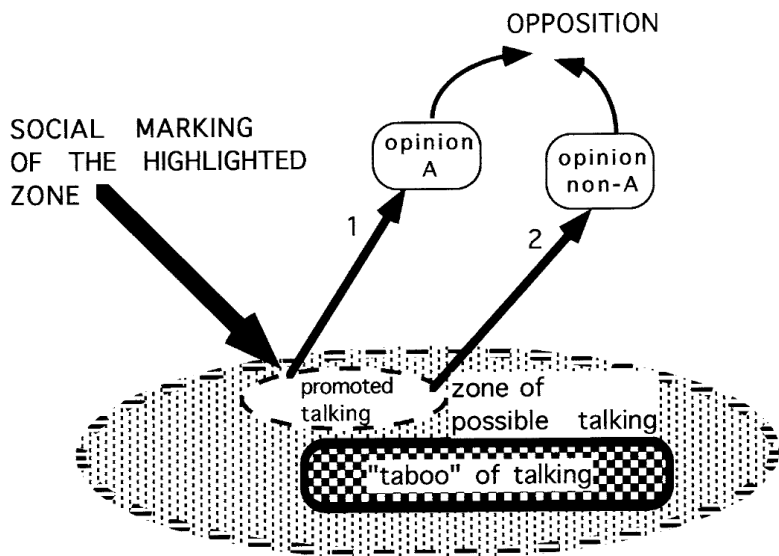

Figure 1. Semiotic Demand Setting (from Valsiner 2000: 125).

Any human life context — including that of school — becomes culturally guided by some socio-institutional focusing of the person's attention to it in three ways. First, there is the realm of *no-talk* — the sub-field of personal experiences that are excluded. The rest of the field is the *maybe-talk*. Experiences within that field can be talked about — but ordinarily are not, as long as there is no special goal that makes that talking necessary. Most of human experiences belong to *maybe-talk*. The third domain of talking — the *hyper-talk* — is the socially (and personally) highlighted part of *maybe-talk* that is turned from a state of "ordinary" talking to that of *obsessive* talking.

How is the *hyper-talk* domain created? It starts from the social marking of the highlighted zone. The suggested focus (see Fig. 1) can operate in two ways. First, it guides the person to reflect upon the focused experience — the zone of "promoted talking". Secondly, it provides the blueprint for talking in socially legitimized ways (Discourse ways marked by numbers 1 and 2, leading to Opinion *A* and Opinion non-*A*, respectively). The acceptability (or non-acceptability) of opposition is thus enabled. In our everyday life contexts, this is the key to multi-voiced discourses in the contexts we easily call "the civil society" (for further analysis, see Valsiner 2005b). In the educational contexts — such as classrooms — the promotion of talking for the sake of self-expressions may create a basis for both thinking and talking for the sake of talking. Creative acts may emerge in such discourse — or be completely dis-allowed by the intense repetitive use of existing social representations.

Furthermore, each of the three discursive domains — *no-talk*, *maybe-talk*, and *hyper-talk* — are in parallel either connected or disconnected with the action domain. The *no-talk* domain is most likely to remain connected with action domain even if the *maybe-talk* and *hyper-talk* are disconnected. An example of that case may be a society where individuals "step in" to "correct" — by action — anybody's violation of the *no-talk* zone boundaries. The state of disconnection from action makes these topics open for talk — as the reality of ordinary living is not threatened by it. Furthermore, the symbolic resources of the collective culture may guide persons to talk about one's affective domains (Zittoun 2006), or feel about the "taboo zones" as ruled out from the talking fields (Salvatore *et al*. 2006; Valsiner 2005b; 2006a)

Such socially guided feeling and talking (as well as non-feeling and not talking) leads the processes of internalization and externalization. In order to consider these processes as theoretically relevant we need to assume that there is basic difference between the person and the social context. We consider this difference to be *inclusively separating* the two — the person *is distinct from* the social context *while being a part of it*. This — separate-yet-nonseparate — state of affairs allows for any Subject-Object distinction to be made, which in its turn can lead to reflection upon the relationship of the two. Thus, a person completely immersed in the social context — be it by trance, dance, or complete devotion — cannot reflect upon oneself in that context. Likewise, a person completely (exclusively) separated from the context has no basis for viewing one's relationship with that context (e.g., consider the topic of "my life on the Moon") — other than through projecting imagined scenarios onto the issue, i.e., *creating a relationship in order to reflect upon it* (see Valsiner 1999, on how such relations are created).

The capacity to construct imaginary worlds proves the centrality of person in any social setting. The person is both part of the here-and-now setting (as it exists) and outside of that setting (as it is re-thought through importing imaginary scenarios, daydreams, new meanings). Creativity becomes possible thanks to such duality of contrast between the "as-is" and "as-if" fields that the person lives through in each setting. It is made possible by the openness of metaphoric construction (Johansen 2006). Metaphors

> […] are not based upon pre-existing similarities in reality: they *constitute* similarities where there were none. The meaning of a metaphor is not the sum of meanings of the related components: it is an untranslatable and irreducible surplus that exists *only* in relating, in the transference. (Vervaeck 1984: 49)

Such metaphoric synthesis is the result of human *psyche* as it operates at the intersection of the here-and-now and wherever-and-whenever fields of meaning construction. The opposition is filled with tension — the here-and-now may seem peaceful at the moment — but the person feels it can change any time. Or the most turbulent social settings can lead to the creation of idyllic images of idealized worlds — gardens, happy ways of life, beliefs in fairies, miracles, and in Harry Potter. The person-in-context is constantly internalizing and externalizing one's meaningful life experiences.

The process of internalization/externalization

There is no need to enter into the dispute that has been going on among socio-cultural researchers of whether the notion of internalization is usable as a viable human phenomenon. I take it for granted — as long as we take for granted that active, meaning-making human beings exist — that internalization is a useful concept to look at the person ⟡ social world relationships. It is here axiomatically assumed that all human meaning construction takes place within the internalization/externalization process that has a structure of layers (Valsiner 1997, ch. 9 — see Fig. 2). We do not need to prove the viability of this axiomatic stand. Instead, we need to elaborate the specific mechanisms of that process, and find empirical access routes to show the reality of such processes.
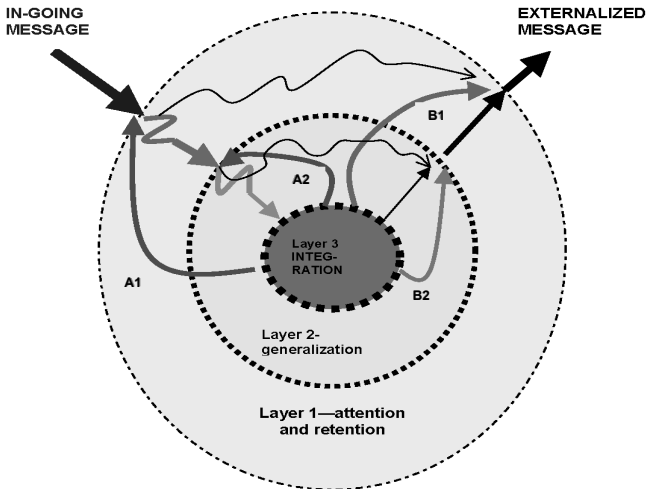

Figure 2. A multilayer model of internalization/externalization (modified, after Valsiner 1997: 305).

Figure 2 outlines a hypothetical model of the internalization/ externalization process where reconstruction of the in-coming (and in-taken) message becomes modified at each of the boundary crossings between

layers. Many (most) socially input messages become attenuated in Layer 1 — there, the attention processes sieve out non-noticed suggestions, and forgetting mechanisms eliminate the ones that fail to penetrate through the Layer 1/Layer 2 boundary. The regulation of incoming messages takes place through boundary buffering signals that emanate from Layer 3 (A1, A2). Similar boundary buffering signals are assumed to operate at the output (externalization) — B1 and B2. (Lawrence, Valsiner 2003), aside from the direct links within each layer to the externalization line.

It is theoretically irrelevant to discuss how many layers there may exist in the multi-layer model — the critical point in this construction is that this number is greater than one. In other terms — the boundary field of the "inside" and "outside" of the human psychological system is extended (i.e., not assumed to be unitary, all-or-none — phenomenon) and resistant to incoming social suggestions at each boundary.

Focus on the boundaries

The model of internalization/externalization focuses our attention at the *boundary crossings* between layers. The boundaries of each of the layers are *selectively buffered* against occasional passing through of extra-psychological symbolic material (Lawrence, Valsiner 1993; 2003). So we have a depiction of a process where, on the one hand, the incoming social suggestions have to "fight for entrance" through a complex semi-permeable boundary system. On the other hand — the person sets the conditions under which the message can succeed from one layer to the next (Fig. 3).

The boundary is structured — some parts of it are permeable, others — not. The inner core of the boundary contains a landscape of obstacles that the two vectors encounter, and "bounce off" from. These are kind of "semiotic fortifications" — outposts to protect the inner core of the self against the "assaults" of the messages from the outer layers. They are "deposited" on the boundary — maintain themselves at the boundary itself. These are examples of localized up-conscious (see Valsiner 2003a) semiotic organizers — in place without the intentional efforts by the person. In contrast — the intentional boundary regulating signs (A2) are counter-signs to the "invading" message. They are set up to "meet" the incoming message with special

function of linking with it and acting accordingly — neutralizing, repulsing, or letting these pass as given, or amplifying them. The laminal model of internalization/externalization is based on the assumption that the processes become observable at the "bottlenecks" of semi-permeable boundary transitions, rather than within the fields of affective ideation that constitutes the "stream of consciousness" within each layer.
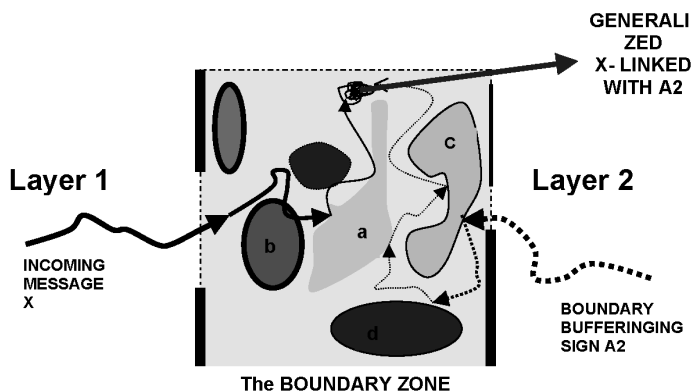

Figure 3. What happens at the boundary of internalization layers?

If the structure of the obstacles affords it, the two vectors do meet (and create a new synthetic meaning that traverses further in Layer 2. But that is not a taken-for-granted result — in most of our meaning construction efforts we may "get stuck". Most of our meaning-making efforts are failures — only some become consolidated and arrive at a clear final form in Layer 3. It can be said that the human mind functions "wastefully" — it produces many versions of subjective reflections in (and in-between) the layers of internalization. Only some of them survive the sequential selection and reconstruction system.

What is the empirical evidence for such claims? The hyperproductivity of the "stream of consciousness" has been described already by William James. Such hyper-productivity of human mental ideation has been demonstrated well in the microgenetic studies of thinking.[1]

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[1]   For overview — Valsiner, Veer (2000: ch. 7).

In settings of constant uncertainty of the impending future, the best adaptation strategy is abundant production of generative materials under the established expectation that the overwhelming manifold of those is shared by biological evolution and psychological development.

What follows from the laminal internalization model is the imperative for social control — the social immersion of persons in interaction contexts (such as classrooms) works with "surplus". It is to be irrationally hyperproductive in its creation of social suggestions — varied by different forms of iconicity of signs and by intensity of their entrance into the internalization system[2]. The developing child lives in the environment of episodic "symbolic attacks" on the internalization system of the self. These "attacks" are highly redundant in space and time (cf. Obeyesekere 1990 — on human over-determination by meaning), and basically successful (Hess, Torney 1967; Singh 1981). That success, however, is an integrative result of a myriad of small and highly varied encounters with the culturally organized world. In our contemporary social lives of children many of these encounters take place in the school context — and are set up particularly standardized ways in the classroom.

Social interaction — What kind of reality is it?

We take the phenomenon of social interaction for granted — and attribute causal powers to its role in human development. Yet we rarely stop to think what the reality of social interaction is like. A person navigates through enormous variety of social settings — school classrooms, cocktail parties, political rallies, intimate candlelight dinners, discussion groups ("koosolekud"), occasional interactions with strangers at bus-stops, and so on. Each episode of interaction produces a hyper-rich variety of different socially suggestive symbolic forms. However, the selecting agent who makes these "semiotic inputs" available to the internalization/externalization system is the person him or herself. What we call "the role of social interaction" is a

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[2]   Cf. Valsiner, Hill (1989) — social suggestions to toddlers to "say by-bye" to a departing visitor were found to be varied over time by intensity. At the limited "time window" of the departure setting the intensity grew instantly, and to heightened level of social pressure.

actually person's boundary-regulatory semiotic act (Valsiner 1999; 2004). The person opens (and closes) oneself to the varied forms of "social influence" — through semiotic self-regulation.

Such episodic and self-regulated openness of the person to social input sets the task for educators and other agents with goals of social guidance of persons up in a complex way. It is not that of transfer of social suggestions and knowledge, or even as persuasion — but rather as a strategic process of locating the moments of relative openness of the person. Different rituals in schooling practices and in public conduct (e.,g., public political or religious manifestations, or executions) have historically been aimed at overcoming the resistance by the person to social suggestions. Most of these borrow from the history of religious practices — of which prayer is an appropriate example. Schools may include rituals akin to prayer in recurrent efforts to enhance the identity formation (e.g., "pledge of allegiance" in U.S. schools, or "sunset ceremony" in Krishnamurti schools — Thapan 1986). Such rituals can creatively combine seemingly opposite general social representation fields (Valsiner 2003c; 2003d) such as competition and caring (Lesko 1986: 31–33). Opposites are constantly present in seemingly univocal meanings (Gupta, Valsiner 2003), hence the role of ritualization of school practices is to establish a desired relationship between them. The second curriculum is set up to work out a socially fitting set of relations between the opposites — it is the relation between them (Sinha, Tripathi 2001), rather than dominance of one over the other — that enables human psychological functioning.

Educational practitioners often complain about the apparent downfall of intrinsic motivation of pupils in classrooms. At the same time, it is exactly school-aged youngsters who can be found spending their time in "cracking the codes" of sophisticated computer systems, establishing new music bands, and falling in love with film stars. Maybe the locus of where intrinsic motivation develops is moving out of regular schooling contexts. Surely that worries the adults who are the makers of such contexts. Promotion of the establishment of intrinsic motivation is the goal of most social systems that attempt to captivate the minds of human beings, and school institutions may be reluctant to lose control over that function to MTV or commercial promotions at shopping malls.

Intrinsic motivation

[…] comprises both behavioral and psychological activities that do not require external prompts or reinforcement contingencies. These are activities that people do freely and for which the only "rewards" are the inherent satisfactions that accompany them. (Grolnick *et al*. 1997: 137)

I here consider intrinsic motivation to be a state of hyper-generalized feeling — that becomes describable as value — which is orienting the person to move ahead towards the future. Such state is a result[3] of the ontogenetic internalization/externalization processes and cannot develop outside of semiotic pre-orientation (by promoter signs — Valsiner 2004).

Yet the crucial creator of the state of being 'intrinsically motivated' is the person. It is the person's internalization process — resulting in Layer 3 integration and hyper-generalization of the affective meanings — that makes the establishment of such motivation possible (or, alternatively, blocks it). The whole educational system is in a precarious state, trying to guide that process — yet being buffered and altered in that effort by the person's counter-actions and selective mechanisms at the boundary crossings (refer back to Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

Thus, children are not "taught" prejudices by their parental environments where such prejudices exist, but it is the children themselves who create their novel prejudices observing the conduct of adults in different real-life settings, and building it in children's own peer group interaction. Even if the family environment is free of promoted prejudices, the wider social world beyond the family is filled with them. Even as teachers may be treating all pupils in an egalitarian way, the children themselves establish their socially differentiated "class societies" in the school classroom, creating prejudices to establish and maintain the group boundaries.

The complex task for any educational system is the *coordination* of external (to the pupils) action limitations and the promotion of their internalizing of socially desired symbolic materials. If an educational system relies only on one of these two mechanisms — limiting <u>or</u> (*exclusive* 'or' here) promotion — it necessarily fails. Gordon Allport years ago expressed his criticism of the U.S. educational system:

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[3] This perspective differs from the Self-Determination Theory (that considers internalization unnecessary for intrinsic motivation — Grolnick *et al*. 1997: 137). Intrinsic motivation is here viewed as the ultimate result of socialization processes (internalization/externalization) that has lost the link with the personal-cultural history of its emergence. Even if intrinsic motivation may look ontologically individual-focused, it is ontogenetically socio-cultural.

> The problem, as I see it, is one of interiorizing motivation. To put it in a student's words: "I am fed up with having everybody else cheer me on. I want to work to please myself rather than others, but I don't know how to do it". [...] In school, the child is rewarded and punished by good grades and bad grades. Even in college, As and Bs are pats on the back, Ds and Fs are punishments. To gain love, the student must read books and toe the academic line. Finally he obtains his degree (which is a symbol of academic love) and is freed from his external form of motivation. What then happens?
>
> We know that a shockingly high percentage of college graduates rarely or never read another book after receiving their bachelor's degree. Why should they? Their love now comes from their employer, their wife, their children, not from the approval of parents and teachers. For them, intellectual curiosity never became a motive in its own right. External rewards are appropriate props in early childhood. But we educators, being limited by our current inadequate theories of learning, do not know how to help the student free himself from the props of reward and develop a functionally autonomous zeal for learning. With our slavish dependence on reinforcement theory, I think it surprising that we arouse as much internal motivation as we do. (Allport 1968: 177–178)

Writing on education surely brings out the necessary recognition of the role of the socio-cultural guidance of human development. Education is our contemporary version of a social institution that has been the greatest controller of human minds (Luria 1974). It has historically grown out of ideologically framed contexts — mostly religious ones. It has thus features of both religious and secular worlds — as it stays in between these, organizing the migration of young people between the home and non-home territories.

Socio-cultural activity settings in place: Confession and prayer

Lives of people in any social institutional framework are organized by sets of local everyday rituals. These are regular — sometimes barely noticeable — activities that nevertheless act as cultural organizers of the self. Different religions of the World have been prolific in establishing such events — yet these have remained out of focus of study for the social sciences, despite clear historical and cross-religions' proof (see Río, Alvarez 1995) that socio-cultural sciences have much to learn from them.

Confession in context

Social institutions attempt to predict the unpredictable — person's conduct in the future — through the control of the uncontrollable — person's conduct here-and-now. Religious institutions have created (and used) settings that socio-cultural researchers have nicely labeled *situated activity settings* for their ideological purposes over centuries. The form for such settings can be encoded in specific design of functional furniture (see Fig. 4).

The use of such furniture is clearly circumscribed — Catholic confession entails the positioning of the body in a sub-dominant (kneeling) position (although on the right hand side of Figure 4 it is possible to see a seating option). Setting the body up in particular position is a powerful antecedent condition for feeling in a certain way (Laird 2006). The anonymity of the priest is guaranteed by the curtain that only he can remove. The identity of the confessor is quasi-private — facing the priest (behind the wall), yet visible for others in the church.

Figure 4. Furniture as cultural guidance: A confessional (Sierck-les-Bains; author's photo).

What kinds of functions do confessions perform? They can be viewed as historical antecedents of psychotherapy — albeit one on client-*un*centered kind. The religious institution within which the confession takes place retains the power control over its outcomes (forgiving the person the "confessed sins"). Different aspects of everyday reality may be fitted differently into the definition of what is forgiven or punished. While mediaeval inquisition in Europe was hunting down the worried women who had had dreams of intercourse with the Devil (Stephens 2002: ch. 4), its counterpart in colonial Mexico was by far more realistically lenient (Behar 1987). The confessional in the Middle Ages operated as an analogue to our contemporary psycho-analysts' couch (see Flandrin 1985) — yet with less comfort and unwavering demand for full submission of the self to the authority. What happens in this specifically furnished situated activity context was put into place in year 1215 by the Fourth Lateran Council that re-directed the act of persons' relating with the deity from performing publicly visible acts of penace to the verbal act of confession (and its corresponding speech act of absolution — Brooks 2000: 90–96). The focus on acting out was replaced by acting-out-while turning inwards in the confessional. The reforms brought in by the Fourth Lateran Council were aimed at maintaining social control — the local church institutions were strengthened (by giving the local priests the role of absolving the parishioners' sins in the confession) while the local priests themselves were brought under further control by the church (by way of requiring their own regular confessions — Tambling 1990: 38). Not surprisingly the focus on intra-psychological "sin-searching" proliferated in the European societies after the 13th Century — guided by the social institution of the Inquisition to evaluate different kinds of "sins" and punish them.

Negotiating private and
public domains: sermon and prayer

Religions invent contexts in which the ultimate fears of the person about future happenings are consoled through luring the person's affective domain into the social influence sphere of the social institution. The mechanism here is creating either a context for the *direct submission* of the person to the institution (e.g., as is well

known from European Catholic traditions of pre-Reformation times, paralleled by Muslim traditions over time until ours), or its parallel form of *indirect submission*. The latter was brought into European cultural history by the Protestant reformation in the 16th century, and proliferated through its secularization in conjunction with the invention of the representation of the 'civil society' (Valsiner 2005b). The indirect form of submission relies on the delegation of the feeling of control into the individual psyche — together with mechanisms that would bind the person to the given belief system through one's internalized and hyper-generalized feeling systems. Thus, the person is expected to act in ways expected by the institution believing one does it on one's own 'free will' — yet in ways expected by the institution.

The contrast between the two forms of submission have been clearly demonstrated in different studies conducted in educational settings. While Western middle-class children in "open classrooms" are queried about which class task they *want* to do (Smollett 1975), the children in a Moroccan (Qur'anic) classroom are set up to act in unison in relation to tasks that *must be* done (Miller 1977).

The whole issue of different forms of submission is worked out on the basis of bodily actions. Different traditions of voluntary bodily mutilations in order to gain 'salvation' have been documented in Mediaeval Europe (flagellants) and elsewhere (Obeyesekere 1981). All of the process of participation in a context of sermons, prayers, and confessions is carefully regulated through normative bodily activity.

What is prayer?

Prayer is a form of petition — by the person to an imaginary interlocutor. It is an ancient cultural creation, as it

> […] began probably with the man himself. It is perhaps the only common trait of all religions, their very heart, and the most universal expression of piety. It is always optative or expressive of some wish, either to obtain some good or avoid some evil. It is often accompanied by rites and ceremonies, or reinforced by magic spells, or perhaps by the mimetic acts suggestive or symbolic of the desire, while the speech forms are often stereotyped, and potent phrases or incantations. (Hall 1917: 488–489)

The petitions of prayer may be embedded in the social framework of sermons. Different symbolic objects — including written resources — may be present in the context of sermons. Consider a glimpse into the hinterland of the Islamic schooling (Comoro Islands), where

> The concept of the sacred text presupposes a particular notion of "reading". […] For the most sacred texts signifiers and signified are one, and thus, in a sense, not "writing" at all. "Reading" is then merely the following of the written lines in order to produce the texts in sound — that is, recitation. Each reading is actually a reproduction. This effect is heightened by the fact that most villagers do not understand Arabic, but in fact the Western concept of "translation" has no meaning here — texts must be enunciated in their original dialect — and decoding is largely beside the point. (Lambek 1990: 26)

Precisely similar was the setting of sermons in Mediaeval Catholicism — where the performative side of the ritual — including the sequential task of Bible reading — was meaningful for the followers precisely because it was meaningless as to its contents. Instead, the very act of recital of long sequences of non-understandable text by the priest guaranteed the desired social effect. That effect entailed two components — the external publicly visible ritual (performed by the priest) and internal private devotional dialogue. Thus, it is not surprising that a Catholic English bishop from mid-16th century suggested that

> […] it is much better for them [the participants] not to understand the common service of the church *because when they hear others praying in a loud voice, in the language they understand*, they are *letted from prayer themselves*, and so come they to such a sickness and negligence in praying, that at length as we have well seen in these late days, in manner pray not at all. (Quoted via Targoff 2001: 15, added emphasis)

Obviously, knowledge of contents — as well as social comparison — was seen as an obstacle to the control of the souls through the sermon. The Catholic rituals were based on the dramatization of the whole context of sermon — so it was imperative that all the congregation maintained their full attention on the performance (including the reading of non-understandable texts). The full attention was supposed to lead to internalized attachment to the teaching through the collective social contagion. Hence the persons were kept "in the field" through the dramatic events of the sermon.

The Reformation changed the modality — from the primacy of visual attention (with the additional hearing of melodic and foreign incantations) to that of auditory attention — the participants now were expected to hear – and actively listen[4] to — the meanings of the words in their native tongue. Priests who previously could "mumble and tumble" Latin sermons without devotion, were now — in the Protestant mode of mid-16th century — to read sermons in English with "due and distinct pronunciation, whereby all the people may have true knowledge" (Targoff 2001: 23).

The change in the strategies of the Church was of course not meant for the benefit of the people. This was evident from prohibitions against participants who gave up listening (and hearing) in favor of their own individual reading of the newly introduced Prayer Book (in English in 1549). The congregation was led by the new kinds of priests to become submissive through their meaning-making activity under the guidance of the "more knowledgeable other"[5] — the priest. The persons were expected to be submissive through their own will. Yet there were limits to the use of that individual will — numerous cases of punishments in late 16th century[6] indicated that the next step of creative reading of the texts — solely by oneself and for oneself — was not socially tolerable.

Interestingly, the move from foreign language (Latin) to local languages did not diminish the role of Latin as a symbolic marker of

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[4]   The Protestant Reformation did not liberate the persons from their religious affiliations (as we know, secular ideologies developed slowly in Europe and in some countries in the Western hemisphere have failed to develop in full up to today — see Mernissi 2002: 101–103. In the 16th century one form of religious "capture of the mind" was replaced by a new one — that worked on the directly opposite psychological basis — that of understanding of meanings and their internalized re-organization. Yet that understanding was meant to be affectively hyper-generalized to capture the whole of the person.

[5]   I use this terminology pointedly — to show a parallel with our contemporary use of Vygotsky's notion of "zone of proximal development" in very similar ways — in blatant overlook of the person-centered notion of teaching<>learning (*obuchenie*) that Vygotsky had in mind — Valsiner, Veer 1993; Veer, Valsiner 1991.)

[6]   For example, a blacksmith in Durham was persecuted by court in 1570 "[…] for reading of an English book, or primer, while as the priest was saying of his service, not minding what the priest read, but tending his own book and prayer" (Targoff 2001: 26).

the elite classes. It turns out it found its way from the church to school classroom:

> One consequence of this was that schooling came to be separated even further from life in general, because there were no other contexts in which this language could be used for communicative purposes. Learning Latin, even more clearly than before, became an end in itself and an important element in the career of the chosen few who went on to study. But what was said and done during these lessons had very little relevance to the younger boys of the time. Students read texts in Latin over and over again during lessons, and they practiced grammar and regurgitated quotations and long excerpts. But, very likely, they were not able to connect this activity to their social life in general; the ritual was itself means and ends. (Säljö 2004: 182)

There is some social role that means which become ends-in-them-selves play in any society. Obviously one of the major functions is the making of social class distinctions. The learned people from the Middle Ages up to almost end of 20th Century needed to have learned Latin to distinguish themselves from the common people. In the 19th century, Russian aristocracy learned French before mastering Russian for the same purpose. In our contemporary psychology we hear complaints by non-native English speakers that their papers are ruthlessly rejected by native English speaking reviewers for "poor language". Even if this power-negotiation arena were to be reversed now and all psychology become published in Latin, the competitive class distinction making would remain the same[7]. Socio-cultural researchers have naively assumed that elimination of barriers between people, social groups, communities, and societies leads to the blissful and openly democratic communion with others. But at the demise of any "Berlin wall" in between divided cities, countries, or people are new walls that are in the process of construction. The assumption of "boundaries-free sharing" is appealing — yet unrealistic — human beings live on the basis of distinctions they constantly make (and re-make).

   This process of re-making boundaries is well visible in the 16th century Europe where the Protestant Reformation took place. European societies were undergoing political and social changes that forced the religious institutions to undergo change. As any social

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[7]   In the beginning of the 20th century efforts were made to establish Esperanto as the standard international language of psychology.

change it entailed bouts of violence — directed at the symbolic religious objects of central relevance for the sermons. Crowds of iconoclasts raided churches to destroy sculpted and painted images, and altars — or at least verbally dishonor them (Wandel 1995). The submission context had given rise to its opposition — revolt against the symbols used to regulate people's conduct before.

A Meadian look at prayer

Prayer has features that are similar to psychotherapeutic techniques (Valsil'yuk 2005). From a researcher's perspective, prayer is a form of self-dialogue that is oriented upon the opening of the resistance boundaries of internalization/externalization through dynamic rituals, thus constituting a situated activity setting that directs the develop-ment of hyper-generalized affective fields of meaning. Such fields guide all of human conduct (Valsiner 2005a). The act of prayer can be analyzed as a special case of a Meadian scheme of double function of the self-generated message (see Fig. 5).
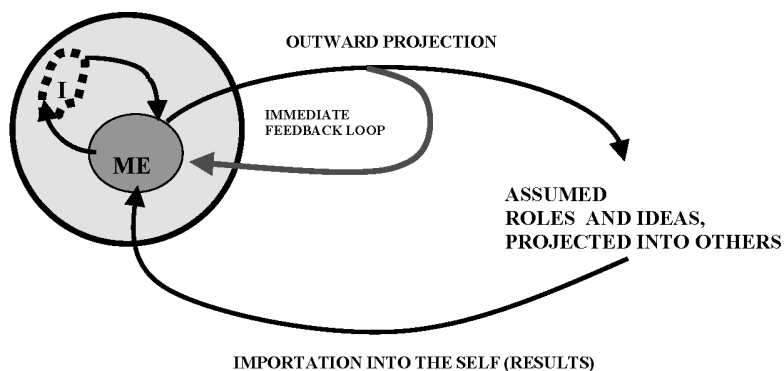

Figure 5. Microgenesis of the future: two feedback loops (after G. H. Mead).

The making of the future entails inherent and inevitable duality. This is captured in Fig. 5 that represents the basic notion of "self's otherness" that G. H. Mead formulated in early 20th century (Mead

1912; 1913). Mead's idea is very parallel to the person<>setting duality notion that is the root of this exposition. In order to create oneself one has to create "the other" — both inside the self (*I*<>*me* linked opposition) and extra-personally (*myself*<>*others* linked opposition). Mead's perspective is based on the recognition that feedback from one's own outward actions to the intra-self system is inevitable. A person says something to another and in the process of doing so hears oneself doing it before the other responds. So — the first response to the self's efforts to express oneself is by the self (the *immediate feedback loop* in Fig. 5), and it is only after that that the other may respond.

It becomes evident from Figure 5 that two primary alterity relations — *I* <>*me* and *outward projection* <> *immediate feedback* — constitute the domains where the person's Self <> Other relations are being worked out in the course of everyday living. In some sense, the self contains one's own "other" — a point made axiomatically by Dialogical Self theorists (Salgado 2006). Thus, the person is social through treating one's own self as "the other", in addition to the obvious importation of the social input from other human beings, in the communicative act. If we add to this one's own assuming social roles and its feed-forward onto the *I*<>*me* system we can see the redundancy of communication and action in Mead's scheme. The other important feature in Mead's scheme is its open-endedness in both internal (*I*<>*me* relations) and external (person <> "other") loops. The latter of course guarantees uncertainty of living, yet the former is the key for innovation in case the external loop becomes "fixed" or stable. Hence the self-system is inherently novelty-constructive on both sides.

If we were to apply the Meadian scheme of Fig. 5 to the context of prayer we find a self-organized experimental situation where the external feedback loop is temporarily eliminated (i.e., the object of the prayers actually does not respond — *and in fact is not expected to respond* — see Fig. 6). The regular process of prayer is an act of externalization that is feeding back into the internalization line as soon as it is being created.

ONLINE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION OF SINS

In this section, you are given the opportunity to receive forgiveness for your sins, if this concept is in your belief system.

You can be certain that we are sincere in this offer and that you are worthy to receive it.

If you do believe this concept, you can receive forgiveness for your sins immediately. Doing this here online is a way of relieving yourself of your burden in a private, yet significant way. You can tell everything that is troubling your mind, get it out of your system and ask God for help.

Through this action, you are inviting God into your heart to lift your burden from you and give you peace. You are putting your request out into the universe where you can receive the love and guidance you are seeking.

This act of confession is not required by the Universal Life Church, or its Seminary, but we are offering it here for those to whom it can bring some peace of mind. **You can confess your sins in writing below or you can do it in your own mind and just press the button.**

Please know that we don't read those emails. They are destroyed as soon as they arrive because we feel that your confession is between yourself and your God. By destroying them, we set them free to travel the universe and find their destination.

ABSOLUTION OF SINS APPLICATION FORM

By filling out this form to confess your sin, you are requesting absolution - forgiveness of sin - and you acknowledge that you have considered your actions, are sorry for what you have done and sincerely desire to improve in the future.

All fields are required

Your Name:

Optional Text:

ABSOLUTION   clear

Please click "ABSOLUTION" only once

Figure 6. A contemporary web-based confession system (added emphasis by underlining and boldface — *J.V.*; from http://www.ulcseminary.org/absolutionofsins.php).

General conclusions

Human subjectivity is socially guided by promoter signs (Valsiner 2004) — semiotic fields if forward-oriented function to guide the person towards socially desirable outcomes. Yet the history of how such outcomes themselves are socially constructed as desirable remains outside of consideration. By inventing hyper-generalized signs like "creativity", or "justice", or "sin" — human beings set up a guidance for their own actions and feelings (Valsiner 1999).

Different interaction settings feed into the internalization processes — yet they cannot determine the latter. There are many public places — classrooms, public rituals, cinemas, etc. — where over-production of meanings (Obeyesekere 1990) is given a socially oriented structure. People's activities in such settings lead to new forms of "boundary action". Persons who participate in social settings become separate from the settings through that very participation. While being embedded in the "here-and-now" setting, their semiotic construction leads them to create an ideational, "there-and-then" setting. The two worlds of meanings — "here-and-now" and "there-and-then" — constitute the partners of the constant internal dialogue of the person. The human *psyche* is constantly in tension about the internal movement from "here and now" to somewhere else — not specifying, most of the time, where that "somewhere else" is and what it entails (Boesch 1997; Valsiner 2006b).

All social development is based on the united opposition of *Self <> Other*, acted out in constant relating by the Self with the Other. The profoundly social experience — made possible through semiotic mediation — becomes deeply private one, as

> Man is the only being who knows he is alone, and the only one who seeks out another. His nature — if that word can be used in reference to man, who has "invented" himself by saying "No" to the nature — consists of his longing to realize himself in another. Man is nostalgia and a search for communion. Therefore, when he is aware of himself he is aware of his lack of another, that is, of his solitude. (Paz 1985: 195)

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Семиотическое образование одиночества: процессы интернализации и экстернализации

Люди создают себе личное окружение, где чувства и мысли проявляются через семиосферу, созданную ситуационными контекстами действий. Центральным звеном человеческого развития являются интернализация и экстернализация — процессы, которые действуют в течении всей жизни. Контексты обучения организованы посредством *семиотических ситуаций запроса* (*Semiotic Demand Setting*) и направляют развитие внутренней мотивации обучаемых.

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[9] Available at http://www.semioticon.com/virtuals/risk/distrust.pdf.

Внутренная мотивация является процессом, который действует через обобщенные семиотические поля эмоций в наиболее центральных слоях интернализации. Это результат социального внушения — внушение обозначено как аффективное семиотическое поле, которое становится ценностью и начинает направлять последующие действия.

Üksilduse semiootiline kujunemine: internalisatsiooni ja eksternalisatsiooni protsessid

Inimesed loovad endale isikliku keskkonna, kus tunded ja mõtted tekivad läbi tegevuslikult seostatud semiosfääri. Inimese arengu keskprotsessiks on internaliseerumine ja eksternaliseerumine, mis kestavad läbi kogu elu. Koolituskontekstid on organiseeritud *semiootiliste nõudetingimuste kontekstide* (*Semiotic Demand Setting*) poolt ning nad suunavad õpilaste sisemise motivatsiooni arengut. Sisemine motivatsioon on protsess, mis toimib läbi internaliseerunud üldistatud semiootiliste tundeväljade — just nimelt internaliseerumise keskseimas kihis. See on sotsiaalse sugereerimise tulemus — sugestioon on üldistatud kui afektiivne väli, mis muutub väärtuseks ning hakkab tegutsema kui järgnevate tegevuste suunaja.