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Editorial

One of the tasks of a journal such as ours is to collect individual papers. This means to select, develop and coordinate them, across countries and networks, traditions and languages, in terms of time, pages, and format. But it also means to somehow unite them under a heading that momentarily represents a common identity.

To prefigure Klemp et. al.'s take on jazz, learning, and human activity, we might say that the construction of such identity, like the music that emerges from an unexpected note, is a *save*. Each time anew, one must view the disparate contributions in the journal as events to be followed up, rather than as true or untrue renderings of a given set of positions. Even though each paper sets off from a point that is slightly askew, this does not entail any sudden or gradual dissolution of the journal's profile, since the production and consumption of a journal such as ours, like any other social practice, is one of creative reconfiguration as much as one of recurring patterns. Klemp & colleagues seek to align the jazz community to whom mis-*takes* are cherished as creative opportunities, with John Dewey's insistence that learning happens in the real time of social practices – forming that temporality as well as deeply submerged in it. To take the situated approach to learning as far as to celebrate mistakes appears contrary to the overwhelming knowledge-reproducing chores of today's mass universities[1], but read as an event it remodels the idea of critical social studies: Just as any participation should be approached as potential contributions to an emerging collective practice, so, any critique should be judged by what it creates, rather than only what it rejects and how rightly. At least, I am tempted to suggest this as one possible continuity with the idea of a "positive critique", which, as I argue in my own article, better facilitates a theoretical and historical reflexivity (including our reflection of ourselves as a community of critical social studies) than any purely negatively defined value such as transgression, change, or even reflexivity itself.

Like the temporal patterns of jazz, so the spatio-figural patterns of interior or mural decoration situate the subject as active in the real world. With Valsiner, the construction of meaning in a flow of activity, as mediated by and co-productive of abundantly ornamented patterns, is often unpredictable episodic syntheses of interpersonal and individual experience. Patterns preexist as "affectively oriented textures of cultural meanings" that may guide us in our pursuits, and suggest the tone of our engagement, but what is made of them can never be regulated. Thus, what if we regard the incessantly varied reiteration of the core ideas of an epistemology and psychology of

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1 Incidentally, in Denmark, a new marking system has recently been imposed on us, which explicitly instructs us to punish incorrectness rather than appreciate crea-

tivity: Such negative assessment matches better the idea of bureaucratically specifiable perfect knowledge. If I were not so confident that our management would never find the time to actually read a journal such as this (and so hopeful that our students sometimes do), I'd be too scared to suggest that it is an other thing altogether what we *really* do when we mark, in the likely event of some disturbing creativity…

practice, from Vygotsky and Dewey – and of course, from long before them – and on into the textual redundancies of this present journal, from an ecological perspective, as a way of guiding the direction of the open system of critical social studies?

If that question then leads on to the political problem of who is seen to guide whom – rather than to some kind of functionalism – the implied externalization of power in material-cultural environments would usefully remind us of the complex collectivity of governance as well as of its reflection. Thus, Postholm's bold statement that it is the teacher who forms the environment of pupils' learning should be read on the background of her anti-empiricism, her emphasis on context, and of her juxtaposing of activity theory with a Dewey'an notion of agency. Postholm is out to contribute to the discussion of the relations between the two theoretical traditions, which has been ongoing in this journal[2] and elsewhere, and her comparison of theoretical approaches is taken back to the classroom, so to speak, for what they offer anyone who would understand, for example, the introduction of computers in school teaching. The example helps us highlight the complexity of socio-cultural mediation beyond any simplistic educational modernism: Who would seriously think of the individual teacher as being in control of the abundantly ornamented textures of computer software, and through or with those, of the pupils? Here, the social distribution of agency is as evident as are the reasons for studying mind in the flow of social and individual change – just like in the case of our journal.

Nevertheless, the recurrence of pattern also carries the abstraction through which any of Valsiner's over-generalized affective fields may emerge, and from which any episodic

synthesis or creatively blue note can be noticed as diverging and / or innovative. Meaning is never only personally construed and never just situated – in the terms of Vygotsky and Leontiev, the objectivity of *meaning* is the dialectical counterpart of *sense*.

Of course, to learn is to make sense. Those baker apprentices, who, like "Peter" in Nielsen's study, see themselves as becoming journeymen in traditional craft-oriented bakeries, reconstrue meaning as sense across contexts of their everyday lives. When the dull routine skills of manual labor become a craftsman's pride, it is the pride of someone who, first of all, wants to make his job tally with his family life. This reintroduction of the meaningfulness of learning as aspect of a person's participation in changing social practices, and of "making a living" of it (thus: as sense), is Nielsen's main point, and it looks sound to me.

Still, if the mechanistic abstractness of industrial process carries on into the skills that realize it, and their representation, as an ideology of learning, that is a recurrence of pattern which could perhaps be also perceived, critically, in a person's own hyper-generalized view of his / her work as a labor that has value in terms of no too troublesome hours spent and money earned. As suggested in another of our back issues articles, estranged labor can be objectified as part of the same social practice as alienated learning (Lave & McDermott, 2002). Further, also the quite different sense-making of Nielsen's "Charlotte" who appropriates bakery as the future (childless) master of a technologically progressive bakery, could perhaps be construed as something typical, as a "staking of her life" to achieve recognition (Musaeus, 2006), or as the cultural life-mode of a self-employed (Højrup, 2003). Sense always returns to meaning when recognized, a meaning which is recreated in the process, – and our own work as scientists is part of that process – to which you are hereby invited.

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2 See, e.g., Elkjaer (2000), or Miettinen (2006). By the way, did you know that all back issues are now free to download at www.outlines.dk?

References

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