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Editorial

The articles in this issue of the *Critical social Studies. Outlines* delve into questions about the unity of human life. The articles situate themselves in four distinct currents of thought: 1) Cultural Historical Psychology (Vygotsky, Leontiev, Elkonin), 2) Actor Network Theory (Latour, Callon, Law), 3) Rhetorical Psychology (Billet), and 4) Process Philosophy (Whitehead, Heidegger, Wittgenstein). Though distinct and different, all four currents of thought are committed to avoiding dualistic accounts of individual versus society, mind versus body, body versus tool etc. The arguments proposed in the articles concern the unity of cognitive-affective processes (González Rey), sociality and materiality (Sørensen), rhetoric and identity (Jönson and Nilsson) and the natural and the social (Stenner). It is possible to argue by inferring a commonality that the articles share a commitment to the excavation and crafting of dynamic and fluid epistemologies and ontologies of human life.

Critical Social Studies. Outlines and the articles in this edition attest to the interest, here in 2007, in invigorating Vygotsky's optimism in the 1930's for laying the foundation for a new, non-dualist, non-fragmented human science. According to Vygotsky (1997: 300) the divide between two "psychologies" situated in spiritualistic and materialistic lines of inquiry was as unfortunate as the tension between social science and natural science. Such divisions among other things attest to the failure to see science as part of social practice. A new human science is made possible to the extent that "the new society will create the new [hu]man" (Vygotsky, 1997: 342).

This requires that multiple practices must be cancelled out yet preserved at the same time not by any single scientific discipline or individual scientists but by a societal process. In this process or societal undertaking as it were, human science should be able to lay bare its foundations while acknowledging that this foundation is not made of neat, once and for all established building blocks but requires continuous reworking. Therefore the foundational stone is not the solid building block the builders rejected (to stay with Vygotsky's, 1997: 233 biblical pun) but a dynamic historically enmeshed, critically reflective and fluid reinvigoration of foundations, methods and analysis. The articles critically address the possibility of such a human science that is inhabited by agents of power participating in knowledge production and a moral economy in the context of our aging society and knowledge society. It is against this background that we present the following four contributions.

First González Rey makes a positive claim on explicating a reflexively critical foundation of psychology by addressing the notion of subjectivity. Vygotsky's notion of sense – one of the least explored and last developed of his notions – is investigated. Sense, it is argued, should be conceived as a fluid and constantly changing subjective configuration involving affective and symbolic processes that evoke each other in experience. This fluidity implies that one subjective configuration over time can develop into completely different emotions within a different subjective sense in new contexts. This view calls for a dialectical, non-deterministic notion of subjectivity, which

means that subjectivity does not automatically emerge when the subject is faced with a given external or internal condition but rather must be conceived as an emerging, constitutive event that can integrate at the moment when a new configuration surfaces.

Second Sørensen's contribution, which is an extended and revised summary of her Ph.D. thesis, on school children's learning, expands on an ethnographic field study of primary education practices. It explores the Actor-Network-Theoretical notion of materiality in studying the socio-material arrangements of primary education and in distinguishing between forms of *knowledge* and *presence* that are both performed as different patterns of relations.

Third Jönson and Nilsson's article analyses the rhetoric of the senior rights movement in Sweden, but the article raises a much larger issue of relevance to today's aging society: Does someone deserve respect from society, just by virtue of being elderly? The contribution delineates what such a rhetorical claim entails in terms of other implicit claims and the identity work of positioning yourself strategically as worthy of respect, care and money. To install such respect requires a double identification work: A) The elderly must be taken to have been young once and to be great contributors to (welfare) society and B) the young ones must acknowledge and identify with this contribution since the old are their future selves.

The last article by Stenner discusses the question of foundations in psychology: What grounds us? It is argued that foundations must be continuously maintained, and subsequently that Psychology viewed as an autopoietic system, is grounded in abstract conceptions of the world capable of perpetually inventing its own grounds and including and excluding its categories wisely. The article poses the foundational paradox of producing, maintaining and reproducing of self in the flux of time: How can a person (conceived as an autopoietic system) pull herself up by the bootstrap since there is no orderly foundation for psychology outside the flow of time and history?

The four articles engage the reader in debates about human science through critical and open investigations of logically, culturally meaningful and available constructs and their contentious consequences for human life. *Critical social Studies. Outlines* thank all those involved in making the articles meaningful – mostly authors but also reviewers, publishers and of course readers.

Reference

- Vygotsky, L. S. (1997). *Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky, Vol.3: Problems of the Theory and History of Psychology*. New York: Plenum Press