

SUMMARIES IN ENGLISH

Alan Costall: Darwin, Ecological Psychology and the Principle of Animal-environment Mutuality

... traditional theories have separated life from nature, mind from organic life, and thereby created mysteries. ... Those who talk most of the organism, physiologists and psychologists, are often just those who display least sense of the intimate, delicate and subtle interdependence of all organic structures and processes with one another. The world seems mad in pre-occupation with what is specific, particular, disconnected in medicine, politics, science, industry, education. ... To see the organism in nature, the nervous system in the organism, the brain in the nervous system, the cortex in the brain is the answer to the problems which haunt philosophy. And when thus seen they will be seen to be in, not as marbles are in a box but as events are in history, in a moving, growing never finished process. (John Dewey, 1958, pp. 278 & 295.)

Johan Trettvik: An ecological approach to perception and activity

The theory of Gibson has formed the frame for the so-called ecological approach to perception and to psychology in general. There is, inside as well as outside this approach, a lot of theoretical discussion about various strengths and weaknesses in the theory of Gibson. This article takes as its starting point an understanding of this theory with a special interest in the concept of »affordance«, which is a core concept in the theory. This understanding is turned into a discussion about some of the weaknesses in the theory that especially arises when the theory is applied outside a very narrow theoretical field of perception. The main argument here is that the problems arising, when the ecological approach is used both inside its own frame of reference as well as in other areas than the ecological, is due to an implicit and undifferentiated concept of activity. An explicit and differentiated concept of activity is needed, and this is found in Activity Theory, as Leontjev, among others, presents it. At the end of this article an attempt to join Activity Theory with the ecological approach will be made in order to understand the qualitatively different levels of activity that exist within the concept of affordance. The conclusion here is that it is valid to discriminate at least two different levels of activity in affordances; the first being affordances referring to the motivational structure of the activity (affordance of agency), and the second being affordances referring to the condition set up by the surrounding environment (operational affordances).

Jytte Bang: On the necessity of syntheses in psychology.

How to develop an ecological founded conceptualisation of human thought? This paper provides arguments for the point of view that the handle of the inner contradiction between what is context-bound and what goes beyond context is a central turning point. The paper discusses to that point the insufficient determination in Leontjev's theory about thought and argues for a widening of the perspective that involves the synthesis of the specific (»Das Einzelne«) and the general (»Das Allgemeinen«) on the basis of Hegel. It is illustrated in which ways this synthesis can influence psychology.

Kurt Dauer Keller: The prejudices of environmental psychology and the bodily reason

This essay discusses the environmental psychology as a possible psychological paradigm, which is – however – limited by prejudices concerning inner-outer distinctions that even the most promising approaches to a new foundational psychological position

are not confronting. But that is the case in the phenomenological understanding of human existence as a transcendence. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty's uncovering of bodily reason and socio-cultural meaning in perceptual-expressive intentionality establishes an anthropological-ontological basis for a psychology that prefers to abandon prejudices rather than the human experience.

Jesper Mogensen: The Brain and the World – can and should the neurosciences become ecological?

While tendencies towards a higher degree of »ecological validity« flourishes within numerous areas of current psychology most neuroscientific and neuropsychological disciplines are still dominated by a reliance upon rather »non-ecological« experiments. The nervous system is too often (wrongly) assumed to be build according to rather simplistic principles, to operate in rather inflexible ways – and to be structurally inflexible in the adult individual. An incorrect (and often implicit) model of the brain as a rather »static« entity dominates too much of the neuroscientific thinking and experimentation. In numerous instances it has – in humans as well as in animal models – been demonstrated that even in the adult the brain is functionally as well as structurally highly plastic. The structure and operation of the brain is influenced by intrinsic as well as environmental, cultural, and »psychological« factors. Even when subjects are faced by apparently similar experimental tasks varying external circumstances (e.g., the environmental information offered to the individual) may dictate highly dissimilar cognitive operations as well as neural substrates of the task solution. It is emphasized that although valuable information can be obtained in experiments on simple neural preparations such results need to be supplemented and expanded via experiments utilizing more »ecological« approaches in which intact individuals are allowed to perform more realistic cognitive operations. Examples of both simplified and more complete models are presented in the context of studies scrutinizing synaptic plasticity related to learning and problem solving. It is concluded that even within the neuroscientific disciplines it is necessary to supplement simplistic experiments and concepts with more »ecological« studies.

Annette Løw Aboulaflia: Cognitive and social aspects of computer-mediated work: Toward a framework for understanding working life

Much IT research and practice attempts to understand and design for the interaction between human beings and computers. This paper focus on the two most well-known approaches in this area, namely Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)². I argue that HCI and CSCW reflect different aspects of human activity, which can be characterized as the cognitive and the social aspects of systems design. This paper examines these two approaches from a (meta)-theoretical point of view focusing on their 'unit of analysis', as well as their underlying philosophical assumptions. It is argued that the two approaches draw on distinct and somewhat contradictory philosophical ideas and theories, and consequently suggest different solutions to the design of computer systems. Much HCI work adapts a cognitive psychological perspective, focusing on the cognitive aspect of systems design, whereas CSCW work takes on a sociological perspective dealing with social and organisational aspects of systems design. In order to achieve a more 'coherent' understanding of systems design and computer-mediated work we need to 'integrate' the cognitive perspective (internal thought processes) and the social perspective (external social behaviour). Based on a dialectical-materialistic philosophy and the psychological approach developed from such principles, that of Activity Theory, I situate cognitive and the social activity within a broader framework for working life.

Kristine Jensen de López: Contributions and Limitations of the Ecological Approach to Developmental Psychology

Development takes place within a heterogeneous social environment, which implies that the dyadic mother-child relationship no longer can be viewed as the only adequate model for explaining development. Ecological approaches, on the other hand, take into account the aspect of the environment, and allow for the possibility of approaching development from a more contextual point of view. But because researchers within classical ecological approaches are characterized by a collective resistance against accepting mental entities, they neglect the importance of explaining the causes of psychological changes within the individual.

This paper takes its point of departure in Gibson's and Bronfenbrenner's classical ecological models, followed by the presentation of related aspects from Vygotsky's theory on the child and its' environment and from the theory of Cultural Learning. In continuation of this, the paper illustrates the empirical application of an ecosystemic approach in interpreting play activity by Mexican indigenous children.

The second part of this paper introduces the sociogenetic approach to contextual developmental mechanisms, and points to some conceptual disagreements within the approach concerning the ontology of these mechanisms. Oliveiras' observation of Brazilian children's role-play is then applied to illustrate the role of situated semiotic mediation as a developmental mechanism.

Finally, the paper discusses some of the methodological problems involved in the ecological approach to development, and the necessity of achieving a thesis between an ecological approach and the notion of social mediation. This thesis is deemed useful if developmental psychology is to sustain its' increasing recognition of the benefits gained by cross-cultural research in acknowledging that most developmental research and theories are relative in terms of characteristic.

Ivy Schousboe: Children's everyday life seen through local and global lenses

It has been stated that psychology's theoretical and empirical topics are often without much ecological relevance and validity. Developmental psychology has been criticised for producing universalistic theories of the development of an abstract child. Theories whose fixed norms about development function as constraints for western children and, when exported to other cultures, function as tools for ethnocentric hegemony. One way to try to solve this problem is to recommend that we turn our backs on general theories and concentrate on local phenomena. I think that this way of dealing with the problem might create a new problem. If we focus only on local phenomena and perspectives, we are at risk of excluding some sources of knowledge that offer us the opportunity to revise our concepts and understanding of children. This might in the worst scenario lead to just another way of producing fixed norms and provincial thinking.

To illustrate directions of research that can be helpful to keep our perspectives open to change a dialogue between an empirical investigation within a local Danish context and an analytical model with a global perspective is presented. This dialogue purports to deepen the understanding of the local issues and at the same time invites to discussion of conceptual items. Finally the traditional assumption that culture produces systems of meanings is discussed.

Peter Krøjgaard: Ecological Validity and Experimental Infancy Research

The concept of ecological validity is important within ecological psychology. Within the field of infancy research – the author's own field of research – the concept does not receive the same attention. The present article thus investigates to what extent the con-

cept of ecological validity does contribute to infancy research. First, different definitions of the concept are presented. Second, the concept of ecological validity is discussed in relation to a series of selected pieces of experimental infancy research. It is concluded that ecological validity is an important concept, but that it needs to be specified further. However, the author seeks to illustrate that such a specification is a difficult task to accomplish.

Malin G. Wiking & Peter Berliner: Psychological Trauma – an Ecological Approach: The article gives an overall view of ecological community psychology theory and intervention in relation to psychological trauma and trauma recovery. Introducing its viewpoints with help of viewing the frames and factors seen as important within this approach, i.e. person, community, intervention, »ecological fit«, psychological trauma and trauma recovery. To do this we describe the framing of the concepts »person in context« and »a balanced view of health«, which are cardinal to the ecological model. Based on this we go through today's clinical praxis approach to psychological trauma and trauma recovery to position the ecological perspective as an alternative and a supplement. This leads to a conclusion stating that the ecological perspective increases our understanding of individual and community wellbeing. We suggest further research in an ecological psychology framework, including research on current psychological treatment of traumatic stress.

Benny Karpatschof: Being treated in a decent way or just being treated – about user-administrated contact in social psychiatry and about psychopathological reductionism. Based on an qualitative evaluation of user impression of the social psychiatric support-contact system in the municipality of Copenhagen City a social ecological portrait is sketched of how the support-contact-person enter into the life world of the users. The main result is that the success of this social psychiatric arrangement is determined by the ability and intention of the support-contact-person to maintain a subtle balance between on the one hand closeness and openness and on the other hand an amount of professional distance in the relation. In analyzing the difference between the users' impression of the therapists in genuine psychiatry and the support-contact persons a key to understanding seem to be the psychopathological reductionism of the former category.

Charlotte Mathiassen: Ecology and Tales of Destiny

A »social-ecological« or »contextual-ecological« approach provides a resource for going beyond an individualizing, stigmatizing, and static treatment of the person. This article argues that such an approach needs to be complemented by the use of a phenomenologically inspired first person perspective. This claim will be demonstrated by a study of acts and conducts in and towards existence (life), as it appears to a small section of a Danish prison population. Intentionality and »directedness« are central concepts in my analysis. Because the study is exploratory and longitudinal it has been possible to follow the perspectives of the prisoners concerning themselves and their existence while they are serving their sentence, during the time when they are accommodating to a more independent life and, optimally, when they are living without any control from the Prison Service. Two cases studies will be used to illustrate how existence is experienced across different contexts, thereby extending the ecological approach to the mutuality of subject and environment (Gibson, 1979) beyond a single, closed setting. We will see not only how a certain closed setting and the prisoners in question

influence each other, but how these prisoners experience the sudden transition between their very restricted and closed life in prison and their less restrictive life outside.

Mathias Blob: The insufferable easiness of the Self

In this article I will discuss the concept of the self from a somewhat renewed perspective. By focusing on the individual ecological situation and position, the forthcoming discussion around the self will be developing around a social interaction theory. I will argue that the self should be comprehended as a state of mind, where the individual existence, being, communicates with the surrounding environment. This argumentation is based on a socio psychological perspective, viewed from an existential point. With this in mind, the practice of socio psychological intervention or prevention, must consider the individual self (re)presentations, to be a plausible practice. Further, this self (re)presentation is created, recreated and sustained in an ecological environment. The self (re)presentation is not only an individual construct, or an ontological reality, the self is an existential communication with the intention to be seen and to see.

Karen Albertsen & Helle Andersen: Action Competence as a Concept in Health Education and Research

The concept of action competence has been widely used in recent years of pedagogical praxis and research in Denmark. The concept has been used in the increased focus on the capability of individual and collective action as a central feature in the environmental and health education in schools and other pedagogical settings. The concept has been rather closely tied to the school sector. But it has also gained status as a concept, that has very broad perspectives within applied areas of psychology and social psychology as such. In this article we want to contribute to the discussion of the concept of action competence in a broader context, being well aware that one of the major problems refers to the concepts implicit definitions. The interest in promoting action competence relates to enhanced reflexivity of individuals within a »risk-society«. The concept is discussed in order to enlighten: 1) if the criteria for assessing what is competent, should or should not be included in the definition, 2) which actions should actually count as competent, 3) and to what degree should action competence be understood as a personal capacity or as a relation between the individual and his societal context. An attempt is made to define the concept as the individuals' realisation of valued goals in specific but somewhat unpredictable situations. The assumptions for the unfolding of action competence are proposed to be: necessary personal knowledge and capacities, necessary possibilities and resources in the context and motivation.

Ole Andkjær Olsen: Language and the unconscious. Some reflexions regarding the connection between linguistics and psychoanalysis

The article deals with a periodically recurring discussion in psychoanalytic theory, namely whether linguistics can contribute models for understanding the unconscious, and whether the unconscious has a linguistic structure. The discussion is presented through four highlights: (1) the point of departure in Freud's writings, (2) Klein's and Bion's object relations theory, (3) the hermeneutic understanding with special focus on Alfred Lorenzer, and (4) the structuralist understanding with special focus on Jacques Lacan.

Morten From: »The liar« and the Self.

»*The liar*«: The novel »The liar« by Martin A. Hansen describes the conditions of modern man and the search for meaning. In the novel a man's identity crisis is exposed. The need to find the meaning of life takes place in a field of tension, between on the one hand modern man's search for identity and on the other hand the need to be part of a mutually binding relationship. In this way the main character in »The liar« can be regarded as an image of the modern man, then and today. »The liar« emanates from another time, but it still suggests how people today can create a meaning and an awareness of life (as a requirement) and that identity is created as an interplay in life. With »The liar«, Martin A. Hansen shows how a modern man lives through an identity crisis and conquer the gap between the self and the human community.

Martin A. Hansen has with his description of the main character tried to give an answer to how man can create meaning in life and find a way out of isolation and back into life.

»*The liar*« and individuation: C.G. Jung worked with the concept »individuation« in order to characterize those processes of development a human being goes through, seeking to make his true Self conscious. Jung's use of the concept »individuation« therefore characterizes the personal development of the main character.

Individualism versus community: To Jung the human being is a living unit which is constructed from universal elements which make the human being fundamentally part of a community. Individuation plays an important role at this point because individuation aspires to cooperate with all the elements. So the community is essential in the realization of individuation because of the incorporation of the collective in the human being. It is therefore very important for the main character in his individuation process that he is aware of himself being part of a community. For Jung, man is by nature a social creature whose existence implies collective relations. The individuation process does not lead to isolation but to more social engagement. This is a central issue in »The liar« in order to characterize modern man within the individual and the community.

Individuation as an experience of the religious: Jung states the religious experience is psychologically very essential. Only through the experience of God or another transcendent authority can man reach independence and freedom – and thereby a successful individuation. Reflections towards the religious begin in midlife and it is the subconscious that is most able to understand the religious experience. This makes it possible for the individual to achieve a conscious experience of God by confronting the subconscious in an individuation process. The main character is in his midlife and the religious experience plays an important role in his life.

»*The liar*« – an individuation process: I have tried to interpret »The liar« through the idea of individuation being a central issue in the novel. Johannes Vig is partly successful in his individuation process. The process begins at that moment when the Self is being divided, leading to the early awareness that something is wrong, to the painful consciousness of the repressed in ones past one has to confront, to the end when one has to understand that one is a small part of something much bigger.

Psyke & Logos afholder
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Anindita Balslev, »Philosophical Refelections on Subjectivity:

From the Naturalistic to the Upanisadic Tradition«

Konferencens oplæg:

I det 20. århundrede bliver spørgsmålet om subjektivitet et helt centralt tema for såvel filosofiske, psykologiske som humanvidenskabelige teoridannelser. På den ene side understreges subjektiviteten/subjektet som en fundamental ontologisk og fænomenologisk størrelse – og på den anden side gøres der op med essentialistiske bestemmelser af mennesket som et subjekt. Men det er et opgør, der påkalder sig selvsamme subjekt: Mennesket er, hvad det gør sig selv til (f.eks. Sartre). Heroverfor står teorier, hvor det menneskelige subjekt de-centreres (som f.eks. i psykoanalysen).

Ifølge Freud udspillede den menneskelig historie på en andens scene – det ubevidste med dets syntese af drifter og samfundsmæssige kulturelle strukturer og mekanismer – som det bevidste subjekts handlinger, tale og tænkning er en (blot og bar) reaktion på. Især op igennem 80'ernes postmodernismens bølge problematiseres subjektets centrale status enten ved ligefrem at erklære subjektet dødt, eller ved at opfatte det som fragmenteret og konstitueret i forskellige situerede praksis'er og gennem forskellige diskurser. Samtidig fremhæver sociologiske modernitetsteorier, som har haft omfattende indflydelse også i psykologi og humanvidenskaberne, at det moderne liv er kendetegnet ved en social mobilitet, refleksivitet og kulturel frisættelse, som ikke kan begribes med grundlag i essentialistiske subjektbegreber. På den anden side understøtter den selvsamme udvikling en modsat bevægelse i retning af anerkendelse af subjektet i mangfoldige praksisformer som autonom og selvansvarlig – som bruger, som forbruger, som (livslangt) lærende, som (omstillingsparat) kompetenceudøver osv. Selvet er måske nok et mere kontingent og refleksivt projekt, men heri underforstås ofte netop, at det er projektet for et så meget desto mere autonomt subjekt. I det sidste årti har Subjektivitet fået en bemærkelsesværdig aktualitet, som viser sig direkte i stærkt intensiverede studier af bevidsthed, selv, kropslighed/kropserfaring og sproglighed/selvforståelse, men også i den centrale rolle begreber som identitetsdannelse og identitetskonstruktion spiller for humanvidenskabelige og psykologiske teorier. Konferencens foredragsholdere vil fra hvert deres ståsted inden for filosofi, psykologi, teologi og psykiatri give deres bud på denne udvikling.

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