

Chapter 15

The Semiotic Subject of Cultural Psychology

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During the 1970s and 1980s, the "person" or the "subject" re-emerged as a prominent topic of investigation within anthropology, and as the core concept for a field of investigation known as "cultural psychology." Cultural psychology is the study of the way in which culture and consciousness make each other up. It is a basic tenet of cultural psychology that the processes of consciousness may not be uniform across the cultural regions of the world.

The "person" re-emerged in cultural psychology as a "semiotic subject," for whom the historically acquired meaning of a situation or stimulus event is the major constraint on his or her response to it, and for whom different situations elicit different responses because they activate differing locally rational response sets. In this chapter, we examine the semiotic subject of cultural psychology and contrast it with two other conceptions of the person, which have until recently dominated the intellectual landscape in psychology and anthropology. The first is the conception of the person as a central processing mechanism. The second is the conception of the person as a vessel for autonomous mental states. The semiotic person of cultural psychology is presented as an alternative to both.

THE RETURN OF THE "PERSON" IN ANTHROPOLOGY

To gain a general acquaintance with recent cross-cultural research on the "person," the reader might review, selectively, the volumes edited by Heelas and Lock (1981); Marsella and White (1982); Levy and Rosaldo (1983); Shweder and LeVine (1984); Kleinman and Good (1985); White and Kirkpatrick (1985); Holland and Quinn (1987); Stigler, Shweder, and Herdt (1990); D'Andrade (in press); and Shweder (in press). The reader might also wish to examine the review articles by Fogelson (1979) and Lutz and White (1986), as well as issues of the budding journals *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology and Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*.

The "person" or "subject" first returned to anthropology under the banner of person-centered ethnography, with its focus on the everyday experiences—in particular, the emotional feelings (anger, sadness, embarrassment) and the nonemotional feelings (chest pains, anxiety, depersonalization *cum* spirit possession)—of individuals in different cultures of the world (Csordas, 1983, 1988; Fiske, in press; Herdt, 1981; Kakar, 1982; Kleinman, 1986;

ℓ (in press)

LeVine, 1983; Levy, 1973, 1984; Myers, 1979, 1988; Obeyesekere, 1981; Rosaldo, 1980; Schepher-Hughes, 1985; Seymour, 1983; Spiro, 1983; Super & Haykness 1986; Weisner & Gallimore, 1977; Whiting & Edwards, 1985; Whiting & Whiting, 1975).

Then the "person" or "subject" resurfaced in the "ethnopsychological" study of regional variations in text-centered and discourse-centered conceptions of mind, self, body, motivation, and emotion (D'Andrade, 1965, 1974, 1987; Foucault, 1980; see Gaines, 1982; Geertz, 1973; Lakoff & Kovecses, 1987; Lutz, 1988; Mageo, 1989; Marriott, 1989; Myers, 1979; Rosaldo, 1984; Shweder, 1981; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Shweder & D'Andrade, 1980; Straus, 1977; Weiss et al., 1986; Weiss et al., 1988; Wierzbicka, 1986; Wikan, 1987, 1989a, 1989b).

For example, to select a recent study (Wikan, 1989a, 1989b), the Balinese have the idea that anger, sadness, and envy are "hot" emotions destructive of the vitality of the breast milk that a mother feeds to her infants. There is also among the Balinese a related idea, reminiscent of the views of some of our Hindu informants in Orissa, India, that "strong life forces" and bodily fluids are protective shields against sorcery. With regard to sorcery, Wikan reports that "on the evidence of the souls of the dead themselves" (1989b, p. 295), 50% of all deaths in Bali are thought to be caused by black magic or poison from an intimate other. It is noteworthy that in many parts of Southeast Asia, including Bali, interpersonal anxieties prevail in indigenous explanations of suffering. It is also noteworthy that in other regions of the world, other orders of reality (e.g., moral transgression, "stress," or sociopolitical exploitation) are far more salient in local accounts of the causes of illness, misery, and death. Such ethnopsychological findings suggest that, on a worldwide scale, meaning systems and the patterns of inferential reasoning they support may become differentiated, stabilized, and densely packed into a limited number of "ideological regions" (see Gaines, 1982; Kleinman, 1986; Murdock, 1980). For example, under circumstances of premature death, it is primarily in the circum-Mediterranean region of the world (which includes, of course, Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries and today) that the folk go hunting for a witch.

Or, to select a second example of ethnopsychological research (in this case, research on emotional functioning), there is that divide or

fault line made famous by Max Weber (1930) between those regions of the world (e.g., Northern Europe) where it is believed that "you are not going to be happy in life unless you are working hard on something," and those regions (e.g., Southern Europe or, as the stereotype goes, Southern California) where it is believed that "you are not going to be happy in life unless you are not working hard on something."

It should be noted that ethnopsychological research grants no privilege to academic social science conceptions of mind, self, and emotion. Ethnopsychologists believe in a spirit of fair play. Thus social science conceptions of things—for example, the idea that all feeling-states should be reduced to only two parameters, "pleasantness" and "arousal"; or the currently fashionable notion of personality dispositions as fixed forces that go around self-selecting their own environments, as if they were shoppers picking out consumer products in a marketplace—are viewed as extensions of (in this case, "Western" or "secular humanist" or "Protestant individualist") folk categories, values, and beliefs.

Most recently, the "person" or "subject" has also reappeared in various manifestos, programmatic essays, or demonstration studies calling explicitly or implicitly for a "cultural psychology" to examine regional and cultural differentiations of human nature, with special reference to the way in which person-based processes of consciousness (including reasoning processes, learning processes, self-maintenance processes, emotion processes, and nonemotional feeling processes) are altered by the meaning systems and conceptual frameworks within which they are embedded (Cole, 1989; D'Andrade, 1981, 1986; Howard, 1985; Kleinman, 1986; Marriott, 1989; Miller, 1984; Peacock, 1983; Rosaldo, 1984; Shweder, 1986, 1990).

Although many anthropologists continue to be quite pious about the "principle of psychic unity" (a "principle" that they often mistakenly believe to be an essential debating point in the battle against racism, thereby overlooking the fact that homogeneity is too great a price to pay for equality), it has today become thinkable that the processes of consciousness may not be uniform across the cultural regions of the world. After all, the idea of psychic pluralism is not really radical. For example, there are among learning theorists (see Bitterman, 1975) some who are willing to entertain the possibility that the "laws of learning" are not invariant across animal species. To cite one instance,

INTERFACE WITH OTHER FIELDS

LeVine, 1983; Levy, 1973, 1984; Myers, 1979, 1988; Obeyesekere, 1981; Rosaldo, 1980; Scheper-Hughes, 1985; Seymour, 1983; Spiro, 1983; Super & Haykness 1986; Weisner & Callimore, 1977; Whiting & Edwards, 1985; Whiting & Whiting, 1975).

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partial or intermittent reward (in contrast to consistent reward) produces greater resistance to extinction in rats and pigeons, but not in certain species of turtles or fish. And even among "hard-nosed" cognitive psychologists, it is no longer bold or reckless to imagine that the processes of human category learning (e.g., feature frequency processes, exemplar comparison processes, prototype comparison processes) may be diverse, and may vary in response to task demands (see Estes, 1986). If the processes of digestion (e.g., lactose intolerance) and the causes of heart attacks (Marmot, Kogevinas, & Elston, 1987; McKeigue et al., 1988) can vary across human populations, why should anthropologists and psychologists be unwilling to entertain the possibility that across cultural traditions the processes of consciousness diverge and then settle into a stable yet distinctive equilibrium with the cultural meaning systems of which they are a part?

Far better data are needed than we currently have on the processes of consciousness in the different traditions of the world. The current lack of a rich corpus of relevant data on the topic suggests that the "principle of psychic unity" has been assumed more than it has been scrutinized. (However, among cross-cultural psychologists there does seem to exist a fair amount of skepticism about the universality of social psychological processes; see, e.g., Pepitone & Triandis, 1987.)

As we design more sophisticated studies of psychological functioning in other cultural traditions, there is reason enough to leave open the possibility that, for instance, within the terms of this or that meaning system anger is typically transformed into sadness, while in other meaning systems the opposite may be true (sadness may be transformed into anger); that drive arousal (e.g., fasting and sexual abstinence) rather than drive reduction may be rewarding; that the feelings that are differentiated as "emotional feelings" versus "nonemotional feelings" (e.g., for most Americans, anger, sadness, guilt, and disgust vs. cleanliness, boredom, tiredness, and horniness) are not the same around the world; and so forth.

CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY: A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME . . . ?

It should be noted at once that although there exists today within anthropology a flourishing discipline committed to the study of the "per-

son" or the "subject," there has yet to develop complete consensus about what it should be called. Throughout this chapter we use the expression "cultural psychology" to refer to the discipline, although it should be understood that other designations ("ethnopsychology," "folk psychology," "person-centered ethnography," "psychological anthropology") are in use as well.

There are several reasons why we prefer the expression "cultural psychology" to the others. First, the problem with the old standard expression "psychological anthropology," which replaced the even older expression "culture and personality," is its lingering association with certain forms of psychological reductionism (of culture to psychic universals) that are no longer dominant within anthropology (see Shweder, 1990).

Second, the problem with the expression "ethnopsychology" is that it suggests the study of understanding rather than of experience. Thus the expression "ethnopsychology" has come to suggest the study of received doctrines about consciousness rather than the study of consciousness itself. (How to characterize regional differentiations within human psychological nature still remains an open question, of course, and it is by no means apparent that regional variations in the organization of consciousness are the products of the subset of cultural doctrines concerned with psychological functioning per se.)

Third, the problem with the expression "folk psychology" is that, despite its continental roots reminiscent of Dilthey and Wundt (20th-century psychology has not been even-handed in its mythic treatment of Wundt's work, and most psychologists seem unaware of his extensive work on folk psychology), the expression connotes a false contrast between folk and scientific psychology. This carries with it the unfortunate and questionable implication that through social science one can be lifted out of tradition, custom, and folk belief. By means of the forms of systematic inquiry that we honor with the label "science," we may, of course, be lifted out of error, ignorance, and confusion. Yet "error," "ignorance," and "confusion" are not proper synonyms for "folk belief."

Finally, the expression "person-centered ethnography" is fine as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. "Person-centered ethnography" is only one item on our intellectual agenda, and there is some danger that the expression may direct our attention away from the

partial or intermittent reward (in contrast to consistent reward) produces greater resistance to extinction in rats and pigeons, but not in certain species of turtles or fish. And even among "hard-nosed" cognitive psychologists, it is no longer bold or reckless to imagine that the processes of human category learning (e.g., feature frequency processes, exemplar comparison processes, prototype comparison processes) may be diverse, and may vary in response to task demands (see Estes, 1986). If the processes of digestion (e.g., lactose intolerance) and the causes of heart attacks (Marmot, Kogevinas, & Elston, 1987; McKeigue et al., 1988) can vary across human populations, why should anthropologists and psychologists be unwilling to entertain the possibility that across cultural traditions the processes of consciousness diverge and then settle into a stable yet distinctive equilibrium with the cultural meaning systems of which they are a part?

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task of theory construction and of theory-driven empirical research. "Have no hypothesis, will travel" is a calling card that can take you only just so far.

That leaves us with "cultural psychology," which is itself not entirely free of excess connotative baggage. The expression "cultural psychology" is intended to designate the study of the way culture and consciousness make each other up (see Putnam, 1987, for a discussion of the way in which mind and world "make each other up"; see also Stigler et al., 1990). The problem with the expression is that it may adventitiously suggest a disciplinary location within psychology. The proper place for the study of "cultural psychology" is some kind of interdisciplinary location within anthropology and within psychology, with collaborative efforts stretching across the open borders of these two now very fragmented disciplines.

Nevertheless, the expression "cultural psychology" does have the advantage of provoking the right questions: Do the processes of consciousness vary in proportion to variations in the historically and culturally constituted stimulus environments of which the processes of consciousness are an essential part? How do these alterations in the processes of consciousness take place? Within what constraints or boundary conditions do the processes of consciousness operate, anyway?

Another reason why "cultural psychology" seems appropriate as a label for anthropology's person-centered research agenda goes to the heart of the present chapter: The person re-emerged within anthropology as a semiotic subject. This is hardly surprising. For some time, a personless anthropology of symbolic forms (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, 1966, 1969) stood in desperate theoretical need of a "subject" with the right psychological capacities to be the agent for those stored-up "symbols and meanings" that define a cultural tradition (see Geertz, 1973; Shweder & LeVine, 1984).

A semiotic subject is a person for whom the meaning of a situation is the major determinant of his or her response to it. Consequently, the intellectual agenda of cultural psychology is defined by the following four questions:

1. What is meaning such that a situation can have it?
2. What is a person such that what something means can determine his or her response to it?

3. What meanings or conceptions of things have been stored up (e.g., in texts and narratives) and institutionalized (e.g., in practices and everyday discourse) in various regions of the world?
4. What effect, if any, have those stored-up and institutionalized meanings had on the organization and operations of individual consciousness?

To date, the third of these questions has received the most explicit attention among anthropologists. There have been studies of the implications of displaying various emotions (anger, envy, sadness) in various cultural contexts (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Miller & Sperry, 1987; Wellencamp, 1988); of the difference between sociocentric and egocentric (or individualistic) conceptions of self (Dumont, 1970; Miller, 1984; Miller & Luthar, 1989; Mines, 1988; Noricks et al., 1987; Read, 1955; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Shweder & Miller, 1985; Triandis, 1989); and of similarities and differences in folk classifications of reality and subjective states (Coleman & Kay, 1981; D'Andrade, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; Luhrmann, 1989; Sweetser, 1987).

Answers to the first two questions, concerning meaning and personhood, are usually implicit in the anthropological and psychological literature and are sometimes explicitly offered there (e.g., D'Andrade, 1984), although they have been more central concerns in the literatures of linguistics, literary criticism, and philosophy (e.g., Fish, 1980; Labov & Fanshchel, 1977; Parfit, 1986; Rescher, 1988; Scruton, 1986; Searle, 1979; Taylor, 1989). The fourth question, concerning regional variations in the processes of consciousness, defines an empirical agenda for the next decade and points to an inviting terrain for collaborative investigation between anthropologists and psychologists.

In this chapter, we focus on the conception of the person (the second question above) most suitable for a cultural psychology. Along the way we consider briefly some answers to the third question, with special attention to conceptions of personal identity in Bali as described by Geertz (1973), and problems in the cross-cultural study of affective functioning. The distinction between "emotional feelings" and "nonemotional feelings" figures centrally in various person-centered ethnographic accounts, especially in those person-centered eth-

nographies where the native informant's experience of headaches, chest pains, tiredness, dizziness, and loss of appetite is interpreted as the somatization of sadness, or where his or her experience of ancestral spirit attack or other possessive states is interpreted as a transformation of hostility (see Levy, 1973; Kleinman, 1986; Obeyesekere, 1981; Shweder, 1987, 1988). The cognitive and cultural basis of the distinction between emotional and nonemotional feelings, and some problematic aspects of interpreting subjective states, are briefly addressed.

We discuss some of the assumptions about meaning (the first question) and personhood (the second question) that answers to the third question presuppose. We leave for another occasion a more detailed consideration of the effects on the organization and functioning of individual consciousness that one might expect if it is indeed true that one cannot be indifferent to cultural meaning systems and still understand how consciousness works (the fourth question).

Each of those topics is enormous; within the limits of a single chapter, we can treat them in only the most cursory fashion.

THE SEMIOTIC SUBJECT

As a first step, let us define the notion of "meaning" broadly, as all the implications and probable inferences that are gotten across to a "person" when a "text" or "symbol" is lit up by a "conceptual scheme." Let us define a "text" or "symbol" as anything (an object, an experience, an event, a sound pattern, a setting, a visual sensation) that is a vehicle for meaning. Let us define a "conceptual scheme" as the intellectual apparatus that explains how this or that person, a member of this or that interpretive community, draws this or that implication or probable inference from this or that text.

Our definition of a "conceptual scheme" is broad enough to include both so-called "concepts" or "propositions" (semantic meanings that are "necessary" and cannot be "canceled" without contradiction—e.g., a "dog" is an "animal"), as well as so-called "conceptions" or "beliefs" (pragmatic meanings, which are non-criterial even though they may be deeply entrenched in one community or another—e.g., the idea that a "dog" makes a suitable "pet").

Two peoples can have different "conceptions" of things (e.g., one but not the other may believe that dogs are "polluted" animals that are cursed to mate in public). Two peoples can differ in the "concepts" that are important in their lives (e.g., in one culture but not another, whole sections of the economy may be given over to the breeding, grooming, feeding, maintenance, and display of dogs). Nevertheless, there is one way in which two peoples cannot differ: Two peoples cannot have a different concept of the same idea. This is merely a logical (and perhaps trivial) point, yet it is still worth making. A "dog that is not an animal" is not a dog. It is not a different concept of a dog; it is not a concept of a dog at all. Our definition of a "conceptual scheme" is meant to include more than just those necessary or incorrigible truths that are (semantically) definitive of concepts; it includes all the causal knowledge, presuppositions, and beliefs that justify and explain an inference from a text.

For example, the verbal utterance or sound pattern "Roger is so lonely" is a "text" or "symbol." In some interpretive communities (between spouses in our own subculture), said under the right circumstances, this text will invite the inference "Let's set him up with one of our single female friends"; the intellectual apparatus or conceptual scheme supporting that inference will include ideas about the institution of dating, about feeling states and the projects they motivate, about interpersonal attraction, about "middlemen" and "matchmaking," and so on.

Or, to cite a somewhat more exotic example, the event "the death of a husband" is a "text." In some interpretive communities (rural Hindu communities in India), this will invite the inference "I must now absolve myself of sin"; the conceptual scheme supporting that inference is a vast network of propositions, presuppositions, and beliefs definitive of traditional Hinduism's moral world. Indeed, many widows in India do spend the balance of their lives cleansing and unburdening themselves of sin by fasting, praying, avoiding all "hot foods" (meat, fish, onions, garlic, spices of all kinds), withdrawing from the world, reading scriptural texts, feeding Brahman priests, and so on.

The conceptual scheme lending rational support to these activities of traditional Hindu widows includes the ideas that the material world and its natural processes are imbued with divinity; that a divine world is a just world

governed by laws of retributive causation for past transgressions; that while souls are immortal, they are reincarnated into the material world in forms (animal vs. human, female vs. male, deformed vs. well-formed, widowed vs. unwidowed) that are proportionate to the quality of the souls' previous moral career; that in a just world, widowhood is punishment for past transgressions; and that the obdurate fact that a woman's husband died before she did is an undeniable sign indicating that the woman should now undertake to absolve herself of guilt, for the sake of her next reincarnation on earth. (See Shweder, in press, for an expansion of these notions as they might be used to provide a reasoned moral defense of the practice of *suttee*—the immolation of a widow on her deceased husband's funeral pyre.)

There are two defining features of the semiotic person: intentional consciousness and rationality. Another way to say this is that because the activities of semiotic persons are the activities of intentional beings using conceptual schemes to draw inferences from texts, those activities invite rational reconstruction in a language of intentional consciousness. The idea of a semiotic person is a rather ancient idea (Aristotle had much to say about it), even though the locution "semiotic" is rather new. The semiotic person is an agent endowed with the powers of intentional consciousness, for whom rational self-regulation is a *telos*.

The power of "intentional" consciousness is a god-like endowment, which, just like the idea of "God," is difficult to define and easy to misunderstand. Persons endowed with intentionality have the following faculty: Their actions and reactions are directed at and responsive to what texts or symbols mean or imply, as defined above. Texts are always "about" (aimed at, responsive to, depicting of) something else, and this is so even in those special (and astonishing) cases when texts are "about" themselves—for example, when language is used to talk about language.

Here is another way to put the point: Texts or symbols are vehicles for the acts of consciousness of intentional beings, who create, take an interest in, and understand texts by virtue of their own god-like (or "magical") capacity to "see through" the textual or symbolic object (the print on the page, the shape of the letter or of the sound, etc.) to what it signifies or represents. It is the power of intentional consciousness that makes it pos-

sible for the semiotic subject to react to any and every situation or object as a text or a symbol.

Yet the semiotic person not only constructs meanings by drawing inferences from symbols and texts; the semiotic person also monitors the inferences that he or she draws, constrained by the terms of some conceptual scheme and by his or her own powers of rationality. So, along with the powers of intentional consciousness, rationality is the other quality definitive of the semiotic subject. Persons for whom rationality is a *telos* strive to control or regulate their own involvement with meanings in three primary ways: by optimizing the fit or seeking proportionality (1) between their desires and their real interests; (2) between their means and their ends; and (3) between their responses to reality and the descriptions under which reality has been put by them.

In other words, the successful semiotic person, conceptualized as an intentional rational agent, is moral, practical, and scientific. In a constructed world made up of meanings, he or she tries to *pursue worthy ends, and to do so efficiently and with an accurate grasp of things.* (For a discussion of the three aspects of rationality—moral, practical, and scientific—see Rescher, 1988.)

The anthropological literature offers many semiotic accounts of the meaning and rationality of the stable, local, repetitive, and (to outsiders) "apparently" bizarre behavior of members of different cultural communities. For example, Spiro (1966) provides us with an account of Burmese religious spending. He begins with the observation that the Burmese spend a very large proportion of their income on such expensive and (from a Western observer's point of view) inconsequential religious activities as the feeding of monks, the financing of pagodas, the ordination of a son into a monastic order, and the like. In other words, to many Western observers, Burmese religious spending appears to be a wasteful and irrational squandering of family income.

Spiro's semiotic strategy in rationalizing those activities is to represent for us the Burmese behavioral environment or life space as a historically constructed stimulus situation, which includes a specification of the moral, practical, and scientific aspects of the Burmese life space. According to the Burmese, "the duration of 'life' is not confined to the mere 60 or 70 years of this existence, but extends over

an incalculable duration of tens of thousands of years" (Spiro, 1966, pp. 1166-1167). Rebirth as a wealthy man is a worthy end in life, and the most effective and realistic means to achieve that end is through the accumulation of "merit" through acts of "charity."

Many anthropologists have been guided in their research by the idea of a historically constructed stimulus situation. Their tenet is that stimulus situations do not exist independently of our involvements with them and interpretations of them, and that behavior cannot be properly understood without a conception of the way in which historically constructed stimulus situations and semiotic persons make each other up. Full-blooded semiotic researchers refuse to separate their descriptions of the stimulus situation from the meanings and conceptions of things that have been stored up and institutionalized in this or that region of the world.

During the past 20 years, perhaps the most full-blooded, widely discussed and hotly debated (see Shweder & LeVine, 1984, pp. 12-17; Williams, 1987, 1989a,b) description of a historically constructed stimulus environment has been Geertz's (1973) semiotic analysis of the ways in which the Balinese grasp and socially construct the relevant facts of personal identity. In Bali, according to Geertz, the inventory of culturally available labels by which an individual may be uniquely identified consists of the following: (1) personal names; (2) birth order names; (3) kinship terms; (4) *teknonyms* ("father of ___" "grandmother of ___"); (5) status designators; and (6) public titles. These various symbol systems for labeling persons represent different orders of self-conception; they highlight and they obscure different aspects of the self.

It is noteworthy that personal names are for the Balinese the least important order among the symbolic orders of names. Personal names exist, but they are arbitrarily coined nonsense syllables that convey no information at all about family or group membership. Moreover, a person's personal name is considered intensely private. It is seldom used to address another person, nor is it used as a means of self-reference. Indeed, one's personal name is known by increasingly fewer people throughout one's lifetime. According to Geertz, this cultural dwarfing of a symbolic code for personal naming reflects (and dialectically helps create) the fact that for the Balinese personal, idio-

syncratic, or biographic truths about person-ality are muted, devalued, and kept out of sight.

In contrast, the symbolic codes for expressing the generic and enduring aspects of human community and one's place in it (e.g., status designators and public titles) are highly elaborated in Bali and receive cultural emphasis. (See also Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987; Shweder & Miller, 1985; and Shweder, Much, Pool & Dixon, 1990 for a detailed discussion of cross-cultural variations in egocentric rights-based vs. socio-centric duty-based conceptions of the person.)

According to Geertz, the Balinese preference (in representations of the person) for status designators and public titles has the effect of keeping personal individualistic qualities out of consciousness and of hiding the transitory and impermanent material and biographical aspect of the self. Balinese status designators are inherited caste names, which derive from the Indian Hindu *varna* system. They designate relative degrees of prestige in a hierarchical ordering of groups stratified by distance from divinity. Such caste names are blind to individual talent; they function instead to prescribe appropriate forms of decorum among people of disparate rank.

Similarly, public titles have the effect of focusing consciousness on a person's eligibility for occupying public roles. In many settings people are addressed by public title, which emphasizes their community station or social position as the essence of their personal identity. As a result, not only is everyday social interaction highly ceremonialized; individual character is systematically relegated to a secondary position or kept backstage.

The symbolic life of the Balinese has affective consequences. One consequence is that with the symbolic muting of the personal, the idiosyncratic, and the individual, "stage fright" (*lek*, a variant of "shame") has become a salient emotion in Balinese life. As Geertz suggests, in a culture that stresses the role-based or station-based presentation of self, each time a man plays *Hamlet* he worries that there may be a failure in representation and of aesthetic distance. He is anxious ^{lest} that his audience may perceive his idiosyncratic personality through the role, and apprehend him as an ego struggling to stage the part properly.

It is tempting in the context of summarizing Geertz's brief discussion of *lek* to develop a

full-blown semiotic theory of the emotions. Although space limitations do not permit this, we would argue for the fruitfulness of a conception of the "emotions" as a subclass of the intentional states of rational human beings.

As intentional states, the different emotions can be identified by their aims or projects (e.g., the aim of fear is "to flee," of shame "to hide," of happiness "to celebrate," of remorse "to undo and redo," and of sadness "to die"). Moreover, as intentional states, each emotion can be rationally evaluated or justified by reference to some set of validity conditions (e.g., danger, insult, loss, transgression, etc.). A distinctive feature of "emotional" states as a subclass of intentional states is that they are *experienced by the body* (e.g., as pleasant or unpleasant, as arousing or calming, as tightening or relaxing, etc.) in ways that may serve to motivate the aim. Not *all* intentional states (e.g., knowing that Billings is a city in Montana) implicate the phenomenological qualities of somatic experience as a motivational system, but the "emotions" do.

Emotions can also be viewed, conversely, as a subset of feelings: Just as not all intentional states are emotional states, not all feeling states are emotional feeling states, which means that not all feeling states are intentional states. There are nonemotional feelings (e.g., cleanliness, thirst, tiredness, horniness, numbness, an itch), which may motivate human behavior but are not symbolic of or about anything.

Someone who feels guilty, afraid, or angry feels it *about, of, or at* something. Because those particular emotional feelings are acts of intentional consciousness directed at an intentional object, they can be justified or criticized in rational terms. It is not quite the same with nonemotional feelings. Thirst, tiredness, and other nonemotional feelings are certainly experienced and motivating, and they can even be explained (they may be highly correlated with other events). Nevertheless, even when we are baffled by such feelings (e.g., someone is tired all the time, even after much sleep), there is no rational warrant for criticizing a person for being tired on grounds that his or her exhaustion is unjustified by some set of eliciting conditions. Nonemotional feelings lack an intentional object (they are mere somatic events); emotional feelings, being both feelings and intentions, are precisely designed to symbolically bridge the gaps among psyche, soma, and the world, and to be topics for evaluation, approbation, and rational debate. It is wrong

for someone to be angry at or to wish to attack people who intend him or her no harm. It is not reprehensible for someone to feel hungry after feasting for hours, even though it may be bizarre (unless his hunger is itself constructed as an act of intentional consciousness.)

One of the relatively well-documented observations in the cross-cultural study of experience is the observation that loss, insult, and abuse are experienced with emotional feelings (sadness or anger) by some peoples of the world and with nonemotional feelings (chest pains, tiredness, headaches) by others (see, e.g., Kleinman, 1986; Levy, 1973; Shweder, 1985). A typical observation might concern the experiences of an infertile woman who is abandoned by her husband. For those who imagine that they would react to this validity condition (abandonment because of infertility) with an emotional feeling (e.g., anger or sadness), it is quite surprising to note that such an abandoned woman may express no emotional feelings whatsoever, but rather complains of aches, pains, and exhaustion and seeks the help of a medium or exorcist to help her get rid of an invading demonic spirit. As surprising as it may seem, on a worldwide scale this woman's response to abandonment appears to be a common one.

At the moment it is difficult to know what to make of such cases. One interpretation is that the cunning of intentionality should never be underestimated. To the very extent that nonemotional feelings such as headaches, chest pains, and exhaustion are not proper topics for criticism and moral evaluation, a nonemotional response to insult, loss, and rejection may serve an intentional aim—namely, to avoid the appraisal process. A second interpretation is that the supposed headaches, chest pains, and tiredness are really just indigenous somatic metaphors (e.g., "my heart is breaking") for true emotional feelings (e.g., sadness). A third interpretation, perhaps the most provocative, is that there are cross-cultural variations in the construction of emotional feelings. In other words, in our cultural tradition headaches, chest pains, and tiredness (along with honor, purity, solemnity, loyalty, and many other candidate "emotions") have not been constructed as emotional feelings; however, perhaps in other traditions they have been constructed as emotional feelings that are responsive to and directed at intentional objects, and this construction makes those feelings in those traditions proper topics of criticism and debate.

Other interpretations are possible. Because research on the cultural psychology of the semiotic person is still in its infancy, almost everything interesting has yet to be done.

THE PERSON AS A CENTRAL PROCESSING MECHANISM

Our foregoing account of the person as a rational intentional agent (a semiotic subject) differs considerably from two other conceptions of the person that have dominated the intellectual scene in psychology and anthropology for many years: (1) the idea of the person as a central processing mechanism; and (2) the idea of the person as a vessel for autonomous mental states. The first idea is a rather ancient one, but it was revived during the "cognitive revolution" of the 1960s. The second idea is also ancient, but is well known as a product of classical culture and personality theory and of contemporary nomothetic and idiographic, psychometric and so-called interactionist approaches to the subject in personality psychology (e.g., as described by Cattell, 1957, and Child, 1968). (For a "deconstruction" of autonomous mental states, see Mischel, 1968, 1973; see also Shweder, 1979a, 1979b, 1980). For a full discussion of the person as a central processing mechanism, see Shweder, 1990; the present discussion recapitulates aspects of that essay.)

The "cognitive revolution" of the 1960s was initially welcomed by many scholars (Shweder counts himself as one of them) as the obvious corrective to the radical behaviorism that preceded it. The revolution seemed to address a serious limitation in psychology—in particular, the absence of a notion of meaning, symbolism, and intentional consciousness in theories of the person. A look back over general psychology of the past 30 years now suggests that, unfortunately, the "cognitive revolution" turned out to be far less than a rediscovery of intentional consciousness and far more than the displacement of behaviorism. Along with "cognitivism" came a spirit of Platonism, which aroused an ancient fascination (perhaps even an obsession) with formal or structural models, with abstract criteria, and with the bewitching idea of a central processing mechanism of the mental life.

The basic idea of a central processing mechanism is that deep within all human beings is an inherent processing device, which enables

us to think (classify, remember, infer, imagine), experience (feel, need, desire), act (strive, choose, evaluate), and learn. Not only is the central processing mechanism presumed to be an abstract, fixed, and universal property of human mental life; it is also presumed that this abstract, fixed, and universal form transcends and is sealed off from all the concrete, variable, and particular stuff, substance, or content upon which it operates.

For those who conceive of the person as a central processing mechanism, it is a necessary step to draw a fundamental distinction between intrinsic (internal) psychological structures and processes (assumed to be abstract, fixed, and universal) and extrinsic (external) environmental content (assumed to be concrete, variable, and task-specific); to analytically withdraw the knower from what he or she knows and the person from what he or she pursues; and to insist on a basic division between the central processing mechanism of the person and his or her personal or group history, context, stimulus environment, institutional setting, resources, beliefs, values, knowledge, or any other kinds of extrinsic stuff. All this stuff—historically constructed stimuli, resources, values, meanings, knowledge, language, technologies, institutions (including, e.g., everything that makes up the intentional consciousness of traditional Hindu widows or Balinese "actors," as described above)—is conceived to be external to or outside of the central processing mechanism.

The idea of the person as a central processing mechanism has had an enormous impact on "mainstream" psychology. Under its influence during the 1960s and 1970s, high-status research in psychology came to be guided by a small set of research heuristics, which had the effect of directing research away from the study of the intentional consciousness of rational agents. Those heuristics have been discussed on other occasions (Shweder, 1984, 1990; see also Fiske & Shweder, 1986); four of them are listed below.

Heuristic 1. Search for a central processing mechanism and represent it as an abstract structure or pure mathematical form; mere "content" should play no part in psychological explanation.

Heuristic 2. Language meanings (semantics) and language use (pragmatics) are epiphenomenal to the true causes of behavior; what people mean by their words and do with their words in specific situations can be ignored.

(Syntax and phonology, of course, remain legitimate topics of investigation within the central processing mechanism framework, for they are thought to be abstract and structural and perhaps even deep; see Heuristic 1.)

Heuristic 3. What is really real (the central processing mechanism) is interior and exists sealed off inside the skin of individuals. The exterior stimulus situation and historically constructed sociocultural environment are extrinsic to the person and must be controlled or avoided—by moving into the lab, by using meaning-free stimulus materials, by standardizing the context, and so on.

Heuristic 4. Search for timeless and spaceless laws of nature. The organization of knowledge in 19th-century Newtonian physics is the ideal form for all true understanding.

One quick and dirty (and striking) indicator of the influence of those heuristics on personality research is the strong inclination among social-psychological researchers to move very quickly—indeed, to rush—from the discovery of some local, context-specific, meaning-saturated regularity (e.g., an audience facilitation effect or a dissonance reduction effect) to the representation of it in the literature as a fundamental law or basic process. We suspect that this “presumption of basic process” is so commonplace because of the hegemony of the central processing mechanism as an idea. For those who think of the person as a central processing mechanism, the whole point of personality research is to get behind the “superficial” and local content of things, to isolate the presumed mechanism of the mental life, and to describe the invariant laws of its operation. It then takes about a decade for the latest “fundamental” or “basic” process to be unmasked as a “mere” local regularity. It is a measure of the influence of the central processing mechanism idea on the field of psychology that the discovery of a fascinating, stable, replicable, but “mere” local regularity is usually associated with feelings of despair!

THE PERSON AS A VESSEL FOR AUTONOMOUS MENTAL STATES

The second conception of the person that has dominated the intellectual scene is the idea of the person as a vessel for enduring mental states acting from within (“endogenously”) as autonomous causal forces. It should be noted that from the point of view of those who advocate

this conception of the person, the mental states contained within the vessel can be either global and general (e.g., “anxiety”) or specific and conditionalized (e.g., a “fear of flying”), as long as they are enduring and autonomous.

The idea of the person as a vessel for autonomous mental states has prevailed in trait psychology (Cattell, 1957). Yet it is also pervasive among scholars who have come to terms with the so-called “consistency” debate of the 1970s and 1980s (Magnusson & Endler, 1977) and have gone beyond it in very creative ways (e.g., Caspi, 1987). These days one of the “hot” and exciting areas of personality research is concerned with documenting the disposition-guided selection of real-world environments (e.g., early marriage for dependent females) and with tracing lines of continuity over the lifespan in other people’s reactions to noteworthy mental states (e.g., downward mobility for hostile males). Nevertheless, some of the very best researchers in the field (even some of our admired friends) continue to talk about persons as though they were vessels for autonomous mental states, such as shyness, hostility, or dependency (e.g., Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1987).

Because the cultural psychology of the semiotic subject rests on the complete rejection of autonomous mental states as the basic causal entities of personality, and because mental state language plays a part in personal descriptions in everyday life, it is important for us to examine this presemiotic concept in some detail and to be clear about the hazards of appropriating the mental state concepts of everyday life as a causal theory of action. What people are disposed to do as viewed from the outside (e.g., to be honest, to seek attention from members of the opposite sex) is not a causal explanation for why they do it.

To speak from the vantage point of cultural psychology, there are two good reasons for rejecting the presemiotic idea of the person as a vessel for autonomous mental states acting as causal forces: (1) the doubtful dualistic assumption presupposed by the idea; and (2) the bizarre empirical findings that result when the world is studied in the terms suggested by that idea. First, however, we describe the idea in somewhat more detail.

The Idea of Autonomous Mental States

Relatively enduring, autonomous, and individuating mental states are the basic constitu-

concl

tive elements used in personality psychology for constructing a representation of a person. In the English language, those mental states are labeled with everyday locutions such as "hostility," "self-confidence," "dependency," "fearfulness," or "timidity." Many psychologists believe that the thousands of mental states lexicalized in the English language are ultimately reducible to a simple pentad of psychometrically constructed traits, the "Big Five": surgency (or extraversion), agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability (or neuroticism), and culturedness (or intelligence). (See Digman & Inouye, 1986; John, Chapter 3, this volume; Norman, 1963; for an analysis of the "Big Five" as a conceptual structure, see D'Andrade, 1985.)

In this imaginative construction of the subject, enduring mental states are said to be autonomous in the following sense: They possess "the capacity of directing responses to stimuli into characteristic channels" (Allport, 1960, p. 132). As Allport notes in his presemiotic rendition of a person, "the stimulus is not the crucial determinant in behavior that expresses personality; the trait itself is decisive" (p. 132).

It is important to notice that (with all due respect to the "consistency" debate of the past 20 years), Allport's idea of his subject is utterly neutral with respect to the issue of the causal breadth of autonomous mental states. In constructing a presemiotic account of personality it matters not at all whether the attributed mental state is broad ("anger-prone") or narrow ("tends to get angry when contradicted by an 'alpha' male in an argument at a scientific meeting"), qualified or unqualified, general or specific, dynamic or static, libidinous or otherwise. It matters not at all whether the locution used to characterize or symbolize the mental state is an adjective ("friendly"), a noun ("an extravert") or a verb phrase ("likes to party a lot"). What does matter for a presemiotic reading of the subject is that his or her activities in the world (i.e., his or her "responses" or "reactions" or "behaviors") are interpreted as products of the autonomous influence of some set of (narrow or broad, qualified or unqualified) mental states.

The First Problem: The Doubtful Dualistic Presupposition

Presupposed by the idea of autonomous mental states as causes of behavior is the assumption of an untroubled division of all things into two

categories: "things of the subjective world" (mental states) and "things of the objective world" (stimulus situations). The assumption is that these two categories (subject vs. object) and their analogues (inside vs. outside, trait vs. stimulus, mind vs. matter, person vs. world, gene vs. environment, etc.) are mutually exclusive of each other, and jointly exhaustive of all causes. In other words, it is assumed that every causal force is either inside the person in the mental state or outside the person in the stimulus situation, and that there is no cause that has the property of being simultaneously both inside the person and in the stimulus situation, or of being neither subjective nor objective.

The presemiotic assumption of subject-object, inside-outside, person-situation, mind-world dualism—that there are only two fundamental kinds of causes (subjective mental states and objective stimulus situations), and that they are mutually exclusive and exhaustive causes—has had major implications for the definition of personality, for the definition of a stimulus situation, and for the measurement of both.

Here is how things went from bad to worse. First, researchers interested in personality-expressive behavior presupposed the validity of the dualistic assumption. Then, reasoning from that (dubious) assumption, they drew the impeccable deductive conclusion that if one could only standardize or control for the influence of outside ("exogenous") stimulus variables, then all variations in behavior must be due to the influence of autonomous ("endogenous") mental states. Finally, a certain (misleading) methodological warning was institutionalized in the discipline: At all costs, one must avoid observing different persons in different stimulus situations (the so-called hazard of "noncomparable" stimulus events). Why? Because if one observes different persons in different stimulus situations, then all one can infer is that different stimulus situations elicit different responses, which (given the dubious dualistic assumption) leaves nothing to say about the autonomous mental states of the person per se. (Of course, from the semiotic point of view of cultural psychology, that is precisely the point—to deconstruct autonomous mental states into the intentional activities of rational agents.)

In practice, the stricture that one must standardize or control for exogenous or stimulus-based influences on behavior was achieved by taking note of differences in the way different

persons responded (e.g., anxiously vs. calmly) to the same stimulus situation (e.g., "standing in a crowded elevator") or to an identical set of stimulus situations (e.g., "standing in a crowded elevator," "sitting in a dentist's chair," "preparing for an examination," "landing at an airport"). Ultimately, in line with Allport's ideas, the presemiotic subject came to be defined as the residual variance left over after one had controlled for the (rational or normative) demands of exogenous stimulus variables. In other words, the person was defined in terms of postulated subjective, mental, or internal states that were supposed to cause one person's responses to the world to be different from the responses others would manifest in the same or comparable stimulus situations (see Child, 1968, p. 83.)

There was yet another conclusion that seemed logical enough, given the dubious dualistic presupposition of presemiotic personality research. This conclusion was that stimulus situations ought to be defined, described, or specified (and judgments of "sameness" or "comparability" made) independently of the subject's interpretation of them. It was reasoned that if stimulus situations are objective things outside the person then they cannot be subjective things inside the person too. Stimulus situations, it was argued, should be described in a "third-person" language.

In principle, the demand for an objective or "third-person" specification of the stimulus situation meant that stimulus situations ought to be defined using a language uncontaminated with "first-person" subjective predicates; the stimulus situation should ideally be described only in language of time, spatial location, mass, and volume. In practice, this "in-principle" demand was impossible to believe in, because objective "third-person" specifications of relevant stimulus situations seemed so ludicrous when achieved; for example, just try "objectively" specifying the stimulus situation "preparing for an examination," without any reference to human purposes and institutions. "Preparing for an examination" cannot be translated into pure objective predicates. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, trying to do so is like searching for the real anchitchoke by divesting it of its leaves.

Since pure objectivity was impossible to achieve, the "in-principle" demand for an objective or "third-person" specification of the stimulus situation was assimilated to a far weaker criterion—namely, that stimulus situations

should be defined from the socialized perspective of the researcher, using setting and event descriptors (e.g., "crowded," an "elevator," an "examination") assumed to have a common or shared meaning for all the subjects in the study (which, of course, is not quite the same thing as translating all stimulus situations into pure objective predicates such as time, location, mass, and volume, or into predicates with a *de facto* "universal" meaning). This weaker demand, that the stimulus situation must be described from the socialized perspective of the researcher using predicates whose meanings were shared with one's subjects, was introduced for two reasons: (1) to create a unitary frame of reference (the "comparable" stimulus situation) as the background against which to figure individual variations in response; and (2) to create a standard frame of reference (the "commensurate" stimulus situation) so as to be able to attribute all variations in behavioral outcome to the causal influences of subjective or endogenous mental states.

Within the constraints of the dubious dualistic framework of presemiotic personality theory the subject's "interpretation" of the stimulus situation (which plays such a central part in semiotic research) was split up into two parts. The part of the subject's interpretation that was not shared with the experimenter or with all other subjects (e.g., "My parents stop speaking to me when I do not do well on exams") was simply classified as yet one more autonomous mental state. It was treated as an "inside-the-head" or subjective variable, as a cognitive scheme mediating the relationship between the "objective" stimulus situation and the subject's response. The part of the subject's interpretation that was shared with other subjects (e.g., "Examinations are used as measures of success") was treated as a property of the "objective" stimulus situation (where "objective" now meant little more than the stimulus situation as represented from the socialized point of view of the researcher, on the presumption of observer-subject and subject-subject intersubjectivity). The distinction between subject and object, person and situation was transformed into the difference between interpretations that varied from person to person and those that did not.

Despite this surreptitious collapse of a real distinction between subject and object or person and situation, it nevertheless continued to be assumed by presemiotic researchers that somehow the stimulus situation existed prior to

and independently of the "interpretations" that subjects "imposed" on it. It continued to be assumed that interpretations were subjective autonomous things and that situations were not.

Almost no one seemed prepared to entertain a semiotic point of view, such as the one advocated by Fish (1980), from which it might be argued that any representation of a stimulus situation (whether it is the subject's or observer's, whether it is shared with all, with some or with none) is "an interpretive act performed at so deep a level that it is indistinguishable from consciousness itself" (1980, p. 272; however, see Gergen, 1986). Almost no one seemed prepared to argue, as did Fish (fighting other battles), that the very idea of cognitive "mediation" or "interpretation" is quite wrong "because it suggests an imposition upon raw data of a meaning not inherent in them" (1980, p. 270). No one seemed prepared to adopt the following semiotic point of view: Precisely because there is no such thing as a raw stimulus situation that exists independently of someone's interpretive assumptions, it is not Allport's trait but rather Fish's stimulus situation—a stimulus situation *already* saturated with our consciousness—"that is the crucial determinant in behavior that expresses personality" (Allport, 1960, p. 132).

The dualistic (subjective vs. objective, inside vs. outside, person vs. stimulus situation) supposition of presemiotic personality research was quite convenient for constructing a world in which individual differences in personality could be conceived in terms of autonomous mental states; however, it was also quite hazardous. For what if it is not possible to divide the world up into two mutually exclusive and exhaustive things (subjective mental states vs. objective stimulus situations)? What if the stimulus situation does not exist independently of some person's definition of it, and mental states do not exist autonomously, independently of the intentional objects (the constructed situations) that engage them? Mischel's (1968) famous critique of personality trait psychology made everyone aware of the hazards.

Mischel's Critique of Autonomous Mental States

The presemiotic conception of the subject, as a selection of autonomous enduring mental

states, nearly collapsed in the late 1960s. In 1968 Walter Mischel published his provocative volume *Personality and Assessment*, which suggested that the abstract locutions of personality language are not labels for autonomous or free-floating causal forces. Mischel's book was preceded and followed by several analysis-of-variance studies supportive of the same point (e.g., Endler, 1969; Endler & Hunt, 1966; Moos, 1969; see also D'Andrade, 1965). Although it can be argued that Mischel's position in 1968 was somewhat ambiguous (did he reject autonomous mental states or did he just reject abstract ones?), it still seems to us when we look back on the consistency debates initiated by Mischel's book that the conception of the subject in presemiotic personality research is especially vulnerable ^{on} _^ to one fundamental point—the assumption of subject-object dualism.

All the fun began, for those for whom it was fun, when Mischel and others started advertising the following pattern of effects, which seemed to hold true across a broad range of mental states (anxiety, hostility, dependency, etc.): The person who felt, for example, more anxious than others while sitting in the dentist's chair was not *typically* the person who felt more anxious than others while standing in a crowded elevator or while preparing for an exam. In other words, the stimulus situations that were most anxiety-provoking for some persons were not *typically* the most anxiety-provoking stimulus situations for other persons. Or, to put it another way, *neither* the mental states (e.g., anxiety) lexicalized as abstract terms in the English language, *nor* the stimulus situations (e.g., sitting in a dentist's chair), *as described or constructed from the socialized point of view of the researcher*, were generally decisive as determinants of behavior. The answer to the "causal" modeler's question "How much of each?" (autonomous mental states vs. objective stimulus situations) was "Not much of either" (see Lachman, 1989). Something else—something more, something less, something neither purely subjective nor purely objective—seemed to be going on.

It is not our aim to review the various reactions among personality researchers to Mischel's critique of the presemiotic subject or to write about personality research from the perspective of the history of ideas (see Alston, 1975; Bem, 1974; Shweder, 1979a, 1979b, 1981; Shweder & D'Andrade, 1980; see also Cronbach, 1975, 1986, on the problems of a

world without main effects). We would simply note that although Mischel's critique arrived with great force, the presemiotic conception of the person as a vessel for autonomous mental states still seems to live on happily among many taxonomically oriented personality psychologists.

In some circles the presemiotic subject has been preserved by reconceptualizing the subject as a psychometric person, by reducing the goals of science to actuarial prediction, and by avoiding explanatory worries about what else might be going on. The presemiotic subject became a statistical aggregate, an average across occasions, a place holder for some set of dispositions or inclinations (expressed in probabilistic terms) to respond in certain ways in certain situations (e.g., Buss & Craik, 1983; Epstein, 1979). (This position is defensible within its own very narrow limits, because it merely acknowledges those stabilities that exist in a subject's patterns of involvement with the world, without trying to understand or explain them; advocates of this position recognize that a disposition is not a causal agent.)

Even those personality researchers who worried a lot about what else might be going on were not prepared to radically revise their conception of the subject. There was a time in the early 1970s when the slogan "interactionism" was the rage (see, e.g., Magnusson & Endler, 1977; see also Magnusson, Chapter 8, this volume). "Interactionism," properly used, referred to the massive statistical interaction effects discovered in person \times situation \times response mode analysis-of-variance designs; it meant that a great deal of the variance in human behavior was yet to be explained.

Yet "interactionism" offered no fundamentally new explanations for behavior, and it went nowhere. Interactionists continued to presuppose that all causes could be classified as either subjective or objective, as either mental or stimulus-bound. They then drew the "radical" conclusion that, somehow, subjective states and objective conditions were both decisive for behavior. This is quite different from drawing the conclusion that *neither* autonomous mental states *nor* objective stimulus conditions are determinants of behavior, and it falls far short of rejecting the presemiotic presupposition that all causes of behavior must be analytically separable into subjective causes (autonomous mental states) and objective causes (external stimulus situations). (See

Mischel, 1973, for a noble and insufficiently appreciated attempt to spell out various ways to develop such a conclusion.)

The Second Problem: When "Findings" Start to Seem Bizarre

In order to ^{make} a rhetorical point, let us divide research scholars into two types: Type 1, those scholars who believe in the reality of any findings generated within the terms of some conceptual framework that is assumed to be secure; and Type 2, those scholars who become insecure about their conceptual framework because of the irreality of the findings that it generates. We believe that there is something "irreal" about some of the findings generated within the framework of the presemiotic idea of the person.

In particular, let us consider the following robust finding, repeatedly generated within the terms of the presemiotic personality research paradigm: If one presupposes that the person is a vessel for autonomous mental states and then studies the distribution of those mental states, *within-unit variance overwhelms between-unit variance, whatever the unit—individual, family, or culture*. It is almost as if the full range of human diversity reproduces itself at every level of organization. Thus, if one presupposes a presemiotic conception of the person, one discovers that within-culture variation in individual mental states is greater than between-culture variation (see, e.g., Kaplan, 1954). At a different level of analysis, one discovers that within-family variation in individual mental states is comparable to between-family variation (Plomin & Daniels, 1987). And finally, as Mischel has made us so well aware, one even discovers that within-individual variation in mental states across situations or response modes keeps pace with between-individual variation (Mischel, 1968, 1973; Mischel & Peake, 1982).

Consider, for example, recent findings of massive within-family variations in individual mental states (see Plomin & Daniels, 1987). It has been discovered that identical twins reared together (in other words, subjects with identical "insides" who are exposed to apparently similar "outside" stimulus conditions) are often quite different from each other in their reactions to the world (e.g., one but not the other becomes depressed), and that full siblings who grow up in the same family (in other words, subjects

with similar "insides" who are exposed to apparently similar "outside" stimulus conditions) are not much more like each other in mental dispositions than are random pairs of people from the general population.

As Type 2 scholars, we think that these findings are bizarre. Because we do not believe the world is *that* strange and noisy, we believe there is something wrong with the paradigm (the conception of the person as a vessel for autonomous mental states and the presemiotic division of things into autonomous mental states and objective stimulus conditions) that produces a methodology resulting in such findings. We think that this is one of those times in the history of a science when the "facts" are what we should doubt, for the sake of progress in our field.

The standard presemiotic interpretation of these findings in terms of "nonshared environmental effects" is that the mental dispositions of children in a typical family are so different because the children do not really share the same history of exposure to objective (read "observer-defined") stimulus situations. The interpretation is that different stimulus situations produce different responses; that stimulus conditions are not always the same, or even similar, for different members of the family; and that through differential exposure to decisively different stimulus situations, different members of the same family become vessels for different autonomous mental states. This interpretation is presemiotic because it does not challenge the assumption of subject-object, inside-outside, mind-world dualism. Instead, it presupposes a fundamental division of things into autonomous interior states and exterior stimulus conditions, and then tries to derive autonomous interior states from an idiosyncratic or unique history of exposure to exterior stimulus conditions. It assumes that what is common in the exposure histories and genetic inheritance of members of the same family is overwhelmed by what is idiosyncratic. The interpretation is inventive, yet it seems *ad hoc*.

An entirely different approach is suggested by the semiotic conception of the person. What members of the same family, community, or culture share are not autonomous mental states, but rather the conceptual schemes that are the instruments of their intentional consciousness. The various stimulus situations in a life space possess their evocative potentials by virtue of the way in which persons with in-

tentional consciousness get involved with them—define them, classify them, tell stories about them, hold beliefs about them, reason about them, evaluate them, and appropriate them to some purpose—which is what the rationality of the semiotic subject is all about. What members of localized subgroups share are those definitions, classifications, stories, reasons, and evaluations. Those are the theoretical terms in which functioning in a life space should be understood. Those are the terms in which unsurprising family-specific, community-specific, culture-specific, or ideological-region-specific patterns of within-unit sharing ought to be discovered.

Thus, we conclude this chapter with a semiotic interpretation of the Plomin and Daniels (1987) findings. From a semiotic perspective those findings represent a *reductio ad absurdum* of the presemiotic conception of the person, as well as of the things that it measures and its measure of things. Indeed, one might propose as a test for the plausibility of any conception of the person (semiotic or presemiotic) that members of the same stable community turn out more like each other than like random members of other communities, that members of the same family turn out more like each other than like random members of other families, and that single persons turn out more like themselves from moment to moment than like random others at the same point in time. Where the presemiotic language of autonomous mental states has failed to discover significant levels of within-culture, within-family, or within-individual sharing, it is our wager that the language of intentional consciousness will succeed. With luck, if collaborative research in cultural psychology takes off during the next decade (as we hope it will), by the turn of the century we should be in a position to collect on our bet or to pay up.

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