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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0959354305054746>

McHoul, A. and Rapley, M. (2005) Re-presenting culture and the self: (Dis)agreeing in theory and in practice. *Theory & Psychology*, 15 (4). pp. 431-447.

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## **Re-presenting Culture and the Self: (Dis)agreeing in Theory and in Practice**

This paper is dedicated to Ed Rose who knew all of this and much more when ethnomethodology was still in its infancy. We're just beginning to catch up.

Alec McHoul & Mark Rapley

School of Media Communication & Culture | School of Psychology

Murdoch University

*... take up and set on its feet Ed Rose's suggestion to revise the Cartesian cogito: 'We think, therefore I am'. We enact practices together, 'we think', therefore I am. The 'we think' ... consists of, is a weak name for, [the] lived orderliness of ordinary practices. (Garfinkel, 2002: 234)*

## **Abstract**

We try to show that the fundamental grounds of psychological thinking about the domains of 'culture' and 'the self' (and their possible connections) are necessarily representationalist in the Cartesian sense. Rehearsing Heidegger's critique of representationalism as the basic wrong turning taken by modern thinking generally (and by psychology in particular) with respect to what human being is, we move on to the possibility of a counter-representationalist respecification of the concept of culture. Here we mobilise ideas from Husserl and Heidegger (again), and also from the basic ethnomethodological theory of Sacks and Garfinkel, to argue for the primacy of culture as an order of practical-actional affairs that makes conceptualisations of a putative 'self' always an effect of, and subsequent to, that very (cultural) order itself. Accordingly, we end by briefly analysing an actual case of an explicitly cultural use of a supposedly intensional term, 'agree'.

**Keywords:** ethnomethodology, Husserl, Heidegger, Garfinkel, Sacks, culture, self, representationalism, agreement, critique of psychology.

## **Bio-notes**

Alec McHoul is Professor of Communication Studies at Murdoch University. A full list of his publications is available at:

<[www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/~mchoul](http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/~mchoul)>.

E-mail: [mchoul@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:mchoul@murdoch.edu.au)

Mark Rapley is Associate Professor of Psychology at Murdoch University.

His most recent books are [The Social Construction of Intellectual Disability](#) (Cambridge University Press) and [Beyond Help: A Consumer's Guide to Psychology](#) (PCCS Books, with Susan Hansen and Alec McHoul).

E-mail: [mrapple@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:mrapple@murdoch.edu.au)

## 1. The Cartesian Picture

From the title of this special issue of Theory and Psychology, ‘Culture and Self’, we might reasonably begin with the assumption that psychology and psychological theory have a problem: the problem of finding a suitably grounded connection between two otherwise discrete entities called ‘culture’ and ‘the self’. It is as though, on the one hand, we had a public realm of material practice and action, visible for all to see and hear; a kind of environment with certain ordering principles and relatively dependable properties that can be found and investigated by empirical means. Then, on the other hand, we appear to have the lonely world of private internality; a self construed primarily as immaterial mind or as a constellation of cognitive processes. Admittedly, on such a picture, this self may be donated, or housed within, a body that acts and participates in the material environment, but this aspect of it is irrelevant to – or, at best, a conduit to – the inner psychic sanctum, positive knowledge of which is psychology’s (especially cognitivism’s) ultimate goal.

Given the prevalence of such a picture – the fact that it is a (if not the) grounding assumption of almost all Western psychological thinking today – the postulated connections between ‘culture’ and ‘the self’, naturally enough, tend to be a set of mental predicates: thinking, knowing, agreeing, intending, cognising, and so forth. The culture-self question can then only be asked in terms such as: how does the self come to know its culture? Or: how is culture thinkable? – and so forth. In a word, the picture is representational at core.<sup>1</sup> Culture, as just one feature (or, worse still, ‘variable’) of the outer environment, is postulated as something the inner self is capable of making a representation of, either by virtue of having such representational capacities (especially for language) hard-wired into its very

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1. In this sense then psychology has yet to move beyond the early Wittgensteinian picture theory of the world and the things in it, and hence beyond the disciplinary sterility Wittgenstein diagnosed in the Philosophical Investigations (1958).

being (cf. Chomsky), or by virtue of its gradual formation of representations via experiential learning from external inputs (cf. Moscovici via Skinner and Piaget). But regardless of which path is chosen – cognitivist or experientialist or some hybrid of the two – the fundamental representationalist grounding remains.

This picture of things is at once both fairly old and relatively recent. It is more-or-less co-extensive with modernity itself, a period inaugurated by the Cartesian separation between, roughly, the physical and the transcendental realms. Button, Coulter, Lee and Sharrock neatly summarise the position as follows:

The world is essentially physical in a specifically restricted sense of that term, but the human mind is transcendental. The human body is a feature of the physical world, is a res extensa, but the human mind is cut from non-physical cloth, and is a res cogitans, lacking mass and having no spatio-temporal co-ordinates. One of the most important functions of the res cogitans is to endow the otherwise colourless, tasteless, odourless and silent world with its actually experienced colours, tastes, odours, sounds and so on. It accomplishes this astounding feat by integrating the input from the sensorium and presenting us with a rich internal representation utterly unlike the ‘real’ material world whose causal forces acting upon us help to generate this illusion of itself, an illusion which, apparently, only a scientifically grounded philosophy can show to be such. (Button et al, 1995: 39)

And, of course, we may add that this has more recently become the self-appointed task of a ‘scientifically grounded’ psychology. But there are innumerable problems with this picture. Several basic parameters of these are well known and can be roughly listed as follows:

1. The extensional realm (the realm of res extensa) becomes utterly unknowable in and of itself. It is only accessible via internal representations.

2. These essential representations, as such, are strictly illusional: they have no externally validatable means of assessing their own veridicality or non-veridicality. (Descartes himself, as we will see below, makes validation itself an internal 'faculty' called 'intellect'.) Contemporary psychology, of course, lays claim to the ability to 'measure' this Cartesian capacity, and also to provide the technologies whereby the existence and 'validity' of these otherwise illusory representations may be externally gauged.
3. On this picture, the human being is like an automaton inhabited by a controlling ghost. For it, action in the world is accomplished after the manner of a superbly sophisticated machine – but a machine nonetheless.<sup>2</sup>
4. Action is thereby accomplished in the following way: the human machine finds itself in a particular external environment (a situation) which appears audible, visible, tangible, etc., via sensory inputs. With 'black-box' behaviourism out of fashion, these data are then checked against an internalised but immaterial set of 'look-up' rules (either acquired from previous experience or else hard-wired). Once an appropriate rule is found, the machine acts, automatically, according to its instructions and, if successful, something like a competent action takes place. To be human on this reading is to be, to all intents and purposes, indistinguishable from being something equivalent to a thermostat.
5. In this way, there is effectively a 'feedback loop' postulated between self and environment. Competent socio-cultural action is accordingly equated with the degree of correspondence between extensional conditions and intensional rules. Any severe lack of correspondence may be deemed a 'psychological problem' or as indicative thereof.
6. Other persons (those posulated by the self as outside itself) are opaque to the self; they are no more than further extensional things. The self may assume that

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2. Mr Data in Star Trek comes to mind here. Oddly enough, however, Data's capacity for interrogating his own intensionality, for knowing his own knowing, is denied not only to the humans who wrote Star Trek, but also to the rest of us according to currently influential formulations such as Self-Categorisation Theory. The ghost in the machine is alienated from its self.

they too are governed by intensional rule-arrays but it can never know this precisely because extensional things are utterly inaccessible in and of themselves. (Point 1, above.)

7. It is nevertheless convenient for the self to hypothesise or 'project' the existence of 'other minds'; for this allows such facilities as language to be construed as telementational devices; that is, as means for transporting immaterial contents (such as thoughts, intentions, motives, (dis)agreements, attitudes, beliefs, ideas and so forth) from one mind to what that mind thereby supposes to be another or others like it.

It is little wonder, then, that the self-culture connection is a mystery to be solved. The initial conditions of the Cartesian picture of human being have set it up precisely to be a problem. And we can see this by asking an apparently simple question: where, in the picture, is culture? Several candidates are now possible apart from the initial idea that culture might be among the features of the extensional environment. Culture might instead be the set of cognitive 'look-up' rules for sense-making itself, now postulated – under Social Representations Theory for example – as somehow 'shared' between otherwise separate intensional entities (e.g., 'minds'). Thus, under this view, it can be argued that: 'a representation is social ... if it is, or has been, in two or more minds' (Farr, 1998: xii). Again, culture could be the set of possible competent actions or suites of actions that are generated by correspondence between intensional rules and extensional situations (cf. Script Theory). Further still: culture might be the array of telementational possibilities of communicational faculties such as language. Or else it might be the manifold of intensional contents (thoughts, etc.) that are putatively transported by such devices. And no doubt there are several other candidates available from the general Cartesian schematic of the self.

Putting this simply: the model is in crisis from the start. If it is thought of as a



single paradigm of what it is to be human, it nevertheless generates multiple and sometimes contradictory candidates for culture and its locus. To put this another way: insofar as it is impossible to construe human social existence without a workable concept of culture, the dominant Cartesian picture of human being completely obviates anything that might go by the name of a social psychology. Assuming we have an interest in preserving such a possibility – that is, assuming we might want, as part and parcel of psychology, to be able to discover aspects of human socio-cultural being – we would then have to unpick and dismantle the Cartesian picture from the ground up. Fortunately, a number of thinkers have already made in-roads into this territory.

## 2. Heidegger's Anti-picture

Perhaps the most trenchant of these thinkers was Martin Heidegger.<sup>3</sup> In his important essay 'The Age of the World Picture' (1997), Heidegger makes a thorough (and, in the strict sense, 'destructional') reading of the picturing or representationalist version of thinking man's relation to the world. That is, his primary objection to the Cartesian picture is simply that it is itself a picture: a picture that, in turn, poses a picturing or representational relation between 'man' and world. In this sense, it only works (or appears to work) because it is itself an instance of the very thing that it postulates. At heart, it is a boot-strapping operation. Or else, like Baron Munchausen, every Cartesian must pull themselves up by their own hair.

Looking more closely, Heidegger examines this apparently self-authenticating postulation as a particular moment or movement in historical thought. All forms

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3. Part of this discussion is based on an as-yet unpublished paper, "'The Twisted Handiwork of Egypt'" and Heidegger's Question Concerning Culture'. Copies are available on request.

of thought, even prior to the Cartesian moment, he says, are marked by a particular sub-iectum: a sub-ject in the sense of something lying primarily before, as the principal subject of interest. For the pre-Socratics, for example, the subiectum may well have been substance itself. Their principal interest appears to have been something like: from what is everything that there is made up? In this form of thought, there is no distinguishing between animate and inanimate matter, let alone between human and non-human things. The human being is accorded no special status. So the subiectum in general, as a principle of thinking and as the principal thought of an era, does not necessarily have to be man-as-subject:

What is decisive [with modernity] is not that man frees himself to himself from previous obligations, but that the very essence of man itself changes, in that man becomes subject. We must understand this word subiectum, however, as the translation of the Greek hypokeimenon. The word names that-which-lies-before, which, as ground, gathers everything onto itself. This metaphysical meaning of the concept of the subject has first of all no special relationship to man and none at all to the I. (Heidegger, 1997: 128; final emphasis added)

The thinking of modernity, though, is marked by a move to a new and specific subiectum, 'man' in a rather specific sense of that term:

However, when man becomes the primary and only real [ersten und eigentlichen] subiectum, that means: Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its truth. Man becomes the relational center of that which is as such. But this is possible only when the comprehension of what is as a whole changes. (1997: 128)

We should note with respect to this passage (including the part of it quoted just prior) that what is effected here is not just that the subiectum becomes 'man' — which is the case — but also that 'man' becomes the primary [ersten], even the only [eigentlichen], subiectum. In a clarifying passage, that is, Heidegger states,

with respect to the subiectum in general, that: 'We must first remove the concept "man" – and therefore the concepts "I" and "I-ness" as well – from the concept of the essence of subiectum. Stones, plants and animals are subjects – something lying-before of itself – no less than man is' (Heidegger, 1982b: 97). In this respect we should read the advent of modernity not just as the becoming-subject of 'man' but also, and more importantly, as 'man' becoming the first, and so, for himself, as far as he is concerned, the only subject.

And what is so peculiar to this rather sudden change; what is so special about 'man' once he or it becomes the only principal subject? It is this: how being itself can be thought undergoes a fundamental shift. With the advent of man-as-subject – with the Cartesian moment – everything that is becomes an object for a subject. Being itself is, if one likes, permanently subject-ified. And, just as importantly, the primary thing-in-the-world that 'man' takes as an object for his own subjectification of being is this: no less than man himself. This may be the essential defining moment of modern psychology, then. Heidegger's basic insight is that the study of 'man' only becomes possible when 'man'-as-subject appears and, to boot, takes himself as his own primary object of thought. The problem, then, is not simply one of so-called mind-body dualism: it is deeper than that and goes to the core of a radical change in how 'what is' (what it is for anything, including ourselves, to be) can be thought. From the advent of modernity, everything in the world is transformed into a representation (a picture) for a specially privileged subject. 'Man', as the 'I', as 'consciousness', as 'mind', and as a host of further intensional postulates, moves to centre stage and assumes the dominant position of determining the entirety of what is and can be.

Emmanuel Levinas brings this to light. What Heidegger reads as the picturing or representationalist version of thinking man's relation to the world, Levinas refers to, more narrowly perhaps, as 'idealism'. The fact that Heidegger and Levinas

mean much the same thing by these terms, however, is clear from the following passage of Levinas's careful reading which, because it is of such moment for psychological thinking today, we will quote from at length:

The concept of the subject, understood as a substance having a specific position in the entire domain of being, presents us with difficulties of two kinds. First, how do we understand this leave-taking from the self which the thinking substance brings about and which displays an entirely original aspect? Indeed, we could say that thought, in reaching out toward objects, does not actually take leave of itself, since its objects — considered as ideas and contents of thought — are, in a certain sense, already within it. In order to make sense of this paradox, Descartes had to invoke the existence of a veridical god who guaranteed the correspondence between things and ideas. Furthermore, he had to reflect on truth's method and criteria — a reflection and preoccupation endemic to modern philosophy. Such reflection is a basic requirement for subjectivity enclosed within itself which must search within its own interior for signs of its conformity with being. From there, it is but a step to idealism. Henceforth, the thinking substance will not have to reunite with extended substance; it will recover that extended substance within itself. The subject itself will constitute its own object. Idealism comes to be one of the consequences both of the Cartesian cogito and of the theories of knowledge whose flourishing has been fostered by this new conception of the subject. (Levinas, 1996: 12)

Here, then, we arrive at the ultimate problem with the Cartesian picture: the res extensa is made to vanish into, to be subsumed by, the res cogitans. Accordingly, any primordial (pre-subjective) external, environmental, actional, social, public thing (e.g., a cultural object, event or situation) becomes an effective impossibility. The Cartesian picture means that the self must eternally precede culture and that the latter must remain epiphenomenal: a mere representation or manifold of

representations. Little wonder then that psychology, like contemporary Cultural Studies (to name just one salient discipline which dominant thought in psychology would repudiate as 'unscientific'), cannot but repeat Descartes himself. In Descartes' own words:

Where knowledge of things is concerned, only two factors need to be considered: ourselves, the knowing subjects, and the things which are the objects of knowledge. As for ourselves, there are only four faculties which we can use for this purpose, viz. intellect, imagination, sense-perception and memory. It is of course only the intellect that is capable of perceiving the truth, but it has to be assisted by imagination, sense-perception and memory if we are not to omit anything which lies within our power. As for the objects of knowledge, it is enough if we examine the following three questions: What presents itself to us spontaneously? How can one thing be known on the basis of something else? What conclusion can be drawn from each of these? This seems to me a complete enumeration and to omit nothing which is within the range of human endeavour. (Descartes, 1985: 39)

And now in the words of Cultural Studies guru, Stuart Hall:

According to [our constructivist approach], we must not confuse the material world, where things and people exist, and the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning and language operate. Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent [!] our concepts. (Hall, 1997: 25)

To make cultural things central, then, we have to start to find a way outside or beyond the dominant representationalism we are all but condemned to find in the available (cultural) disciplines today.

### 3. Husserl, Heidegger, Sacks, Garfinkel

Attempting to take a step in this direction, Edmund Husserl repostulated culture as, in his terms, ‘the intuitive life world’ (Lebenswelt). Also reacting against the sterility of the Cartesian picture and its massively negative hold on the European sciences (particularly the human sciences), Husserl made it clear, possibly for the first time, that while this picture was the very cornerstone of psychological thinking, it also made any effective psychology a logical impossibility:

The psychic, considered purely in terms of its own essence, has no physical nature, has no conceivable in-itself in the natural sense, no spatio-temporal causality, no idealisable and mathematisable in-itself, no laws after the fashion of natural laws; here there are no theories with the same relatedness back to the intuitive life-world, no observations or experiments with a function for theorising similar to natural science — in spite of the self misunderstandings of empirical experimental psychology. (Husserl, 1970: section 64)<sup>4</sup>

To establish any effective social science — and by implication, to find one that can actually begin with something like ‘culture’ rather than leaving it to trail in the wake of supposedly more essential internal affairs — we need to begin by looking for an analytic which, unlike either cognitivism or constructivism, does have what Husserl calls ‘relatedness back to the intuitive life-world’. That is, we need to begin by postulating an always-already intersubjective, material public realm which has ordering principles above and beyond those which might be located in any Cartesian version of ‘mind’, ‘representation’, ‘consciousness’ and so forth. Husserl at least starts along this path with his initial idea of the life-world:

For the life-world — the ‘world for us all’ — is identical with the world that can be commonly talked about. Every new apperception leads

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4. We are grateful to Steve Schofield for the two passages from Husserl cited here.

essentially, through apperceptive transference, to a new typification of the surrounding world and in social intercourse to a naming which immediately flows into the common language. Thus the world is always such that it can be empirically, generally (intersubjectively) explicated and, at the same time, linguistically explicated. (Husserl, 1970: section 59)

Here, then, is the glimmering of a new configuration. We begin by posing an actually lived world which is not mediated through a single and primordial subject but is 'for us all' prior to any possible individuation. And instead of language being a form of telementation (carrying mental contents from one mind to a possible second or third), it is now posed as essential to the constitution of that world. The life-world is identical with the world of common discourse. In place of the lonely perceiving subject, we now pose a general process of 'apperception': a term which should not be mistaken as referring to any psychologistic process whatsoever since apperception is always already a collective public process, something that cannot be done alone outside the already-established collective realm. In short, the life-world is a working together in, for example, language in order to produce that very world itself as a concrete, material, audio-visually available order of public affairs and actions. This is not constructivism in Hall's sense.<sup>5</sup> Rather it is an attempt to put on the map an intrinsic connection between overtly public language and action that is posed as the initial condition of what it is to be human and hence as prior to the formation of anything that might, as it were, arrive later such as, for example, 'a sense of a self'.

Of course, Heidegger is famous, in the early parts of Being and Time (1962), for his insistence that, roughly, social practice – actually doing things in the world – must precede any 'mentalistic' construal of that practice. Rorty (1993: 356) puts

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5. Nor indeed in the sense most commonly encountered in so-called post-crisis social psychology. In this context, Derek Edwards's (1997) distinction between epistemological and ontological constructionism provides a useful clarification.

this baldly: 'the recognition ... that social practice is determinative of what is and is not up to social practice is Heidegger's crucial insight in this work'. Heidegger's analytic of Dasein ('being there') – which cannot be fully developed here (See McHoul, 1998) – insists that, for example, an otherwise psychological concept like 'understanding' can in fact be respecified in terms of actual collective practice. To use his famous example: to understand a hammer, I do not first cognise it as a res extensa present before my consciousness as res cogitans; I do not work with mental representations of, say, its head and its handle. Rather, I learn to hammer. To understand the hammer is to be able to do hammering in a way that anyone like me (any Dasein, any being of my ontological sort) can recognise as competent hammering. Understanding, then, is not first and foremost an intensional, 'psychological' or psychical process, rather:

In German we say that someone can vorstehen something – literally stand in front or ahead of it, that is, stand at its head, administer, manage, preside over it. This is equivalent to saying that he verstehet sich darauf, understands in the sense of being skilled or expert at it, has the know how of it. The meaning of the term 'understanding' ... is intended to go back to this usage in ordinary language. (Heidegger, 1982a: 276)<sup>6</sup>

This passage is cited by Mark Okrent whose book, Heidegger's Pragmatism, should be compulsory reading for psychologists. Okrent concludes:

Practical understanding of a tool is the capacity to use the tool in a variety of practical contexts for a variety of purposes.... The capacity to act in such a way is part of what it is to be Dasein, and every Dasein, as Dasein, is always actually acting coherently in some way or another so as to achieve

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6. This passage carries interesting echoes of Wittgenstein who wrote that: We are under the illusion that what is peculiar, profound, essential, in our investigation, resides in its trying to grasp the incomparable essence of language. That is, the order existing between the concepts of proposition, word, proof, truth, experience, and so on. This order is a super-order between – so to speak – super-concepts. Whereas, of course, if the words 'language', 'experience', 'world', have a use, it must be as humble a one as that of the words 'table', 'lamp', 'door'. (Wittgenstein, 1958: §97)



some end or another. It is thus always displaying its practical understanding of tools. (Okrent, 1988: 38; emphasis added).

Suitably equipped, we can now begin to see a way of placing public socio-cultural talk and action at the start of a possible social psychology. If ‘understanding’, just for one example, can be de-intensionalised and respecified actionally – that is, in terms of how social practice always and necessarily self-discloses its own coherence or methodicalness – then we should (though we won’t try it here) have no genuine difficulties performing similar operations on other psychological mainstays such as knowing, agreeing, intending, having attitudes, motives, reasons and so forth. (For a summary of some such attempts, see Potter and Edwards, 2003. We also note Jeff Coulter’s (1979: 37) very helpful analysis of the actional usage of ‘understand’ as what he refers to as a ‘terminus verb’. These approaches are compared in McHoul and Rapley (2003).)

It may be mere coincidence (or not), but the fundamental insight of Heidegger’s analytic of Dasein – that social practice, qua social practice, is both (a) primordial (in the sense that ‘it’ itself ‘decides’ what counts as social practice) and (b) self-disclosing – has an almost direct repetition in the work of the founders of ethnomethodology, Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks.<sup>7</sup>

In a series of lectures from 1965 – in the current context, interestingly titled ‘Culture and Personality’ – Sacks (1992: 135-231) pondered how best to think through the kind of a thing that a culture is. He starts with the metaphor of a ‘machinery’ for getting things done. For example, in a well-known analysis, he asks how it is that, when we hear a couple of adjacent sentences like ‘The baby cried. The mommy picked it up’, we cannot but hear it that the mommy is the

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7. For a fuller explication of the relevance of Sacks to theoretical questions in psychology, see McHoul and Rapley (2000; 2001).

mommy of the baby, even though the sentences contain neither possessive nor genitive expressions. The ‘machinery’ or ‘apparatus’ that he derives from this turns out to be enormously consequential for the building of things we might call cultures. The whole analysis cannot be rehearsed here (see Sacks, 1972; Silverman, 1998: 74-97): suffice to say that it leads to a significant, materialist (counter-psychologistic) description of how it is that cultural members in general (not as particular monads or ‘individuals’) go about ‘understanding’ one another via the use of membership categories. So, right from the start, we can see that Sacks is re-specifying the very ideas of ‘personality’ or the ‘self’. That now turns out to be the kind of a thing that people may be said to have by virtue of how they operate with, and are operated on by, membership categorisation devices: a describable cultural machinery, tool, or apparatus.

In an appendix to the lectures, Sacks says something quite remarkable which is picked up and further explicated by Schegloff in his Introduction. Sacks writes:

A culture is an apparatus for generating recognizable actions; if the same procedures are used for the generating as for the detecting [cf. recognizing], that is perhaps as simple a solution to the problem of recognizability as is formulatable. (Sacks, 1992: 226; and see Schegloff in Sacks, 1992: xxxvi)

This is a remarkable step in the direction we are trying to take away from the Cartesian-representationalist conception of culture and the self. It suggests that if we look at socio-cultural practice as an ensemble of methods (a machinery or apparatus), what we find is that the methods for the production (or generation) of competent actions are identical with the methods for their recognition as just those actions and not something else. We can ‘know’ or ‘recognise’ that such and such (for example an instance of categorising one person as ‘the baby’ and another as ‘the mommy’) has been competently brought off – as just that cultural practice and not some other – because that is precisely how we would do it

ourselves if we had to do so. The cultural machinery works both ways: to use it competently is identical with disclosing its operations in and as the very use of it!

Schegloff matches up this insight of Sacks's with that of Garfinkel who says the following of his own ethnomethodological studies:

Their central recommendation is that the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings 'account-able'....

When I speak of accountable my interests are directed to such matters as the following. I mean observable-and-reportable, i.e., available to members as situated practices of looking-and-telling. (Garfinkel, 1967: 1)

This is, if one likes, a clear social-theoretical operationalisation of Heidegger's fundamental insight. A culture is an arrangement of social practices such that the doing of them comes absolutely and utterly first: but such that the very doing of them – and not something superadded to them, something coming along later such as a thought, or a cognition of any sort – discloses (makes account-able) how they are to be understood or recognised. Cultural action is, in and as its very accomplishment, self-disclosing as to what it is, what it does, what it means, how one is to understand or recognize it, and so on down through a very long list of matters that are now no longer mistakeable as, for example, intensional states or processes.

There is no ghost in the cultural machinery. And whatever this mysterious 'self' may or may not still turn out to be – should we still need such a concept when both 'Dasein' and 'membership' seem better equipped for our purposes – this much is certain about it: it comes along as part and parcel of the cultural machinery because it can't arise anywhere or anyhow else. Either that, or we're back to Descartes and the explicit grounding of psychology in illusion.

#### 4. A Mundane Example: (Dis)agreement

Since we are interested in the question of self and culture, and its respecification along practical lines, we might open up a very basic question as an example: what would it be for persons to agree or disagree upon something? In the Cartesian tradition, by-and-large inherited by psychology today – especially in its cognitivist guises – agreement would be something like a meeting of minds. Two separate intensional domains would somehow (how?) concur on a set of extensional circumstances; and, just possibly, that ‘agreement’ could become the basis for a wider acceptance of the (still-ultimately-unknowable) extensional ‘facts’ in question. Then, perhaps, that ‘wider acceptance’ could be the grounds for something like a culture: and indeed this is not so far from the basic premises of Social Representations Theory. But what happens, after Husserl, Heidegger, Garfinkel and Sacks, if we refuse to start with intensional selves and begin instead with such matters as ‘agreement’ conceived of not as ‘mental states’ to be discerned (still less measured and their congruence quantified) in two separate departments of internal affairs, but rather in terms of their always-already public (social and cultural) status?

To re-cite three crucial parts of our argument so far, Heidegger showed that:

an(y) otherwise psychological concept like ‘understanding’ [cf. agreement] can in fact be respecified in terms of actual collective practice;

And that:

every Dasein, as Dasein, is always actually acting coherently in some way or another so as to achieve some end or another.

Additionally, Sacks:

re-specifies the very ideas of ‘personality’ or the ‘self’. That now turns out to be the kind of a thing that people may be said to have by virtue of how

they operate with, and are operated on by, membership categorisation devices: a describable cultural machinery, tool, or apparatus.

So what of something like 'agreement'? In the following data extract we present part of a clinical interview between a paediatrician and the parents of a child brought to her surgery for possible diagnosis of their son as 'suffering from' Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). At the start of the extract, the mother is referring to her son's school psychologist and his earlier diagnosis based on a questionnaire:

Mo: He- he's one 'v those people th't (1.0) makes  
th- like th- say the diagno[sis=  
Dr: [Mm  
Mo: =themselves  
Dr: Mm hm  
→ Mo: and then expects ev'rybody to agree with [him  
Dr: [Mm=  
Dr: =Mm hm, mm hm  
Mo: E:rm that questionnaire th't he w's talking  
about I filled that out  
Dr: ↑Ye:s ((Child enters; short inaudible  
exchange))  
Fa: Knock on the door next time  
Mo: I- it w's all based on (.) sch↓ool  
Dr: Mm  
Mo: [The questions were what's he like in the=  
Dr: [Mm  
Mo: =[cla:ss[room  
Dr: [Mm [Mm  
Dr: Mm  
Mo: I can't answer that [as a parent=  
Dr: [Mm yes  
Mo: =because I'm not in the cla:ssroom  
Dr: °Yes°  
Mo: E:rm (1.5) so I had to try:: an (1.5)  
?: ( )  
?: °Thank you°  
Mo: Rewo::rd it  
Dr: Yes  
Mo: Em (.) to >like outside 'v< the cla:ssroom  
Dr: Mm mm  
Mo: Y'know like the question was (1.0) does he  
concentrate on his school work [for=  
Dr: [Mm  
Mo: =long periods a time >an I'd have to sit there

'n go< okay the- does he concentrate (.)  
watchin' TV

The marked line shows the mother's orientation to the possible notion of agreeing with another person, in this case the school psychologist. Her adduced reasons for not agreeing, in the rest of the extract, are highly detailed and have everything to do with practical matters and nothing to do with that person's (nor her own) interiority. The mother's non-agreement is referenced to her reading of the professional instrument (the questionnaire) as flawed. It was based on the school; it had to do with her son's conduct in the classroom. The mother makes it materially plain that she is 'not in the classroom' (note her emphasis) and so she had to extrapolate from the son's conduct at home: such as his concentration on TV. And again, we hear 'concentration' as a description of her son's publicly visible conduct, not as some mysterious quantum of interiority available for disposal in social space. All of these matters – and there are several more in the transcript – have to do with practical, everyday, audio-visually available details and not with any supposed interiority of the person agreed (or disagreed) with.

To agree (or, in this case, not) is then by no means a Cartesian procedure (or a failure thereof). It has to do with the material circumstances of using a particular instrument, tool or technology – here, a questionnaire – and its comparative relevance to different memberships. For the school psychologist, the instrument is objectively valid, we presume, and used for ADHD-type diagnoses wherever and by whomsoever. (Elsewhere in the transcript, we hear, for example, that the son's teacher has been asked to complete the same questionnaire.) For the mother, not agreeing with the school psychologist is identical with, and rendered visible in, her account of the deficiency of the instrument in its asking of questions of a membership category (family) which could not reasonably (i.e., publicly and socially, for any cultural member) be presumed to know the fine details of classroom conduct. These are the material circumstances under which

she practically achieves (to revisit Heidegger) 'some end or another' – i.e., the raising of a complaint to one professional about another and so, as the consultation proceeds, to 'eliminate the possibility' of an ADHD diagnosis. ('Eliminate the possibility' are the mother's own words, used close to the start of the consultation.) And note that the mother's complaint is pervasively attentive to cultural matters, for instance to the asymmetric entitlements of 'lay' and 'professional' category memberships. Here what every competent member 'knows' is delicately attended to by the mother in her accomplishment of disagreement: she does not directly avow disagreement via a telling. For example, she does not say 'he expects everybody to agree with him but I don't'. Rather she brings off the disagreement with a supposed 'expert', as such, by accounting (for) the grounds of that disagreement through reportage of her practical actions in the world. That is to say, reinvoking Heidegger's metaphor: rather than making a readily defeasible claim to expertise in 'hammer-ology', she hammers.

In at least one ordinary everyday use, then, a phrase like 'he expects everybody to agree with him' cannot be simplistically read for its psychologistic import. Only at the most superficial level could the utterance be construed as an assessment of the 'personality' of the psychologist. In the context of its use, it can only be read via Husserl's life-world, the 'world for us all'. And that must always have to do with matters such as membership, its material capacities and entitlements, and the achievement of practical ends; that is, with the accomplishment of specifically cultural matters. Whatever anyone – lay member or psy-complex professional – might assume about the putative internal states of the participants (the 'selves') in this colloquy, any such assumption will always arrive after the fact. So what price psychology's claim to scientific status when it routinely reverses this natural-logical ordering by putting mere assumptions (about selves and their putative interior states) prior to the readily-available

(cultural) facts?



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