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7. On the relationship between representation of theories in psychology and ordinary language

GÜN R. SEMIN

1 Introduction

What is the relationship between our mundane, everyday psychological reality and psychological theory such as we find in theories of personality, affect, attitudes, social cognition, attribution, and so on? How do the systematic and abstracted representations that we have of this reality relate to and derive from the ways in which we perceive ourselves and others, relate to others, and our processes of consciousness? What is the relationship between the ordinary language we employ as lay persons and the technical languages of psychology? This chapter will attempt to address these questions and their implications for research and theory construction in psychology in general and social psychology in particular.

Although these are questions which lie at the heart of various newer developments in psychology that are fuelled by an increased focus on de- and reconstructing mainstream psychology and its epistemological foundations (see Sampson 1979, 1983, 1985; Gergen 1982; Manicas and Secord 1983; Gergen and Davis 1985; inter alia) they

have received localized rather than systematic attention (e.g. Berger 1966; Semin, Rosch and Chassein 1981; Brandtstädter 1982, 1984; Semin and Chassein 1985; Smedslund 1985). The underlying issue is the relation of theory development and testing in scientific psychology to everyday psychology and is an issue which is particular not only to the activity of psychologists but the social sciences in general.

Activities such as theory development and testing in the natural sciences are concerned with an analysis of the object world, a world which does not react or, for that matter, which in itself does not engage in the construction and interpretation of the meanings of its activities. In psychology this case cannot be established unambiguously, if at all, because there is a "logical tie" (see Winch 1958) between the ordinary language of lay persons and the technical languages invented by psychologists, since psychology cannot be separated from its "object-world", which in effect is a subject-world.

Furthermore, the ways in which we, as psychologists as well as lay persons, perceive ourselves and others, and relate to our social world, are permeated, maintained and reproduced by social processes (see Mead 1934; Berger 1966; Voloshinov 1976; Vygotski 1981; Wertsch 1985; Semin, 1986a). As Berger argues,

Self and society are inextricably interwoven entities. Their relationship is dialectical because the self, once formed, may act back in its turn upon society which shaped it ... The self exists by virtue of society, but society is only possible as many selves continue to apprehend themselves and each other with reference to it ... This dialectical relation between social structure and psychological reality may be called the fundamental proposition of any psychology in the Meadian tradition. Society not only defines but creates psychological reality. The individual realizes himself in society - that is he recognizes his identity in socially defined terms and these definitions become reality as he lives in society. (1966, pp. 107 -8, emphases in the

original)

An inevitable corollary of the interdependence of identity and society, of psychological reality and social process, is the socio-cultural and historical embeddedness of psychological realities. To that extent the data which are uncovered by a psychological theory are integrally tied to the socio-cultural and historical world that has produced the psychological reality (see Schütz 1955; Winch 1958; Giddens 1981; Gergen 1985).

These issues are discussed in this chapter in three parts. In the first part, I shall provide an overview of the theoretical background to the interrelationship between everyday psychological realities and psychological theory. A review of the empirical work dealing with this problematic will constitute the second part. In the final part, I shall spell out the implications of this theoretical perspective. In doing so, I shall try to pull together the various strands of thought on the subject which have been developed in psychological circles. Thus, a synthesis of these general considerations will be drawn for psychology in general, and research in social psychology and personality work in particular.

2 Theoretical foreplay

Society is an ever present and necessary condition for our psychological realities and activities. At the same time, the collection of practices, conventions, and rules, which are reproduced and transformed by people, constitutes society (see Giddens 1976; Bhaskar 1979; inter alia). Therefore, society can be regarded as providing the conditions for intentional human action, and at the same time such

action is a necessary condition for society. Human actions and thinking are in themselves individual products, but they only constitute two elements in an equation in which the production and reception of meaning constitutes a crucial third parameter.

This means that the ways in which individuals perceive themselves, relate to others, and their processes of consciousness are permeated, maintained, and reproduced by social processes. In Berger's (1966) terms, one can argue that every society contains a number of identities which constitute a part of the "objective knowledge" of the persons in that society. These identities predate individuals. Such identities are not only taken-for-granted constituents of "objective reality", but become subjectively appropriated in the process of socialization, i.e. through the social practices by which culture is transmitted from one generation to another. Identities thus become integral features of the individual's consciousness along with stocks of skills, competences, and other social knowledge, which in turn are necessary in the reproduction of society.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, for example, we find a theory of witchcraft, and it is a matter of fact that there were specific people known to be witches, who had particular psychological realities and identities, and engaged in particular activities. Indeed, as Trevor-Roper points out "... some of the most original and cultivated men of the time not only accepted the theory of witchcraft, but positively devoted their genius to its propagation" (1969: p. 47). He continues:

When we read the confessions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witches, we are often revolted by the cruelty and stupidity which have elicited them and sometimes, undoubtedly supplied their form. But equally we are obliged to admit their fundamental 'subjective reality' ... Again and

again, when we read the case histories, we find witches freely confessing to esoteric details without any evidence of torture, and it was this spontaneity, rather than the confessions themselves, which convinced rational men that the details were true. (pp. 48 - 9, emphasis here) (1)

Feyerabend commenting on the same subject in a quite different context suggests that

This myth is a complex explanatory system that contains numerous auxiliary hypotheses designed to cover special cases, so it easily achieves a high degree of confirmation on the basis of observation. It has been taught for a long time; its content is enforced by fear, prejudice, and ignorance, as well as by a jealous and cruel priesthood. Its ideas penetrate the most common idiom, infect all modes of thinking and many decisions which mean a great deal in human life. It provides models for explanation of any conceivable event - conceivable, that is, for those who have accepted it. (1975: p. 44, emphasis here)

This simply provides an illustration of the interrelationship between society and psychological realities, as perceived by the individuals of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. Conversely, in contemporary European culture we have highly articulate conceptions about individuality, which Geertz summarizes thus:

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against such wholes and against a social and natural background is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures. (1979, p. 229)

Indeed, an examination of diverse sources from literary analysis and history, to anthropology and philosophy (e.g. Cherry 1967; Foucault 1970; Morris 1972; Lyons 1978; Weintraub 1980; Kirkpatrick 1983; Kon 1984; Harrison 1985; inter alia) provides convincing evidence for the conclusion reached by Geertz. Identity as individuality is a contemporary Western conception and has influenced the construction of

psychology's subject (see Sampson 1983, 1985).

The point of advancing these examples is simply to illustrate the argument that our everyday psychological realities are essentially socio-historical. Undoubtedly, they underly a process of transformation, to the extent that they constitute activities which are not in a determinate static relationship to the socially pre-given collection of identities, repertoires of knowledge, practices, and skills. However, what is important for psychological and social psychological theorizing is that the types of theories that we are going to develop will be largely influenced by the psychological realities of everyday life. If we were practising psychology as a science in the 16th and 17th centuries, we would certainly have an elaborate social psychology of witches, their personality, their perceptual processes, their supernatural powers, and so on. No doubt, we would find the necessary empirical evidence without any problems using contemporary methodological devices, such as interviewing, questionnaires, etc. Indeed, this is precisely what the inquisitors did to supply the necessary evidence to test their own theories, e.g., "in depth" interviewing with specially designed "prompting methods" to be employed in order to elicit "truthful answers". Consider conducting such enquiries in contemporary Western societies. However much we could count on the factors involved in the psychology of the "good subject" to tune the most benevolent attitudes in our participants towards our investigation, we would be unlikely to find supportive empirical evidence on night-riding to the sabbath, metamorphosis, intercourse with demons, etc. What is more, such an enquiry would not even enter our own consciousness as a possibility, because it does not constitute a psychological reality of the

society in which we exist. Conversely, if we were to examine contemporary conceptions of individuality, namely an isolated and unique existence, independence of thought and action, etc. through a questionnaire, undoubtedly we would affirm a number of these properties. But consider giving it to people in a contemporary hunter-gatherer society, or people who lived in Europe prior to the 16th century. They would find it incomprehensible.

The point that emerges from these considerations is that psychological knowledge, as represented in theories, derives from representations of a general knowledge about the world and thus the psychological realities of everyday life are integrally involved in the production of psychological theories. If the theoretical model corresponds to the socially available and reproduced psychological reality, then empirical examination will allow its "verification". "(T)he data discovered by a particular psychology belong to the same socially constructed world that has also produced that psychology" (Berger 1966: p. 114).

These considerations suggest that theory construction in psychology is bounded by socio-cultural and historical conventions. A similar conclusion is reached by Gergen regarding the historicity of social psychological knowledge, although his original thesis follows a different avenue and was fuelled in part by an argument, concerning "the impact of science on social behaviour", which can be derived from the more general perspective of the reflexive relationship between human beings and psychological knowledge (see Semin and Manstead 1983: pp. 158ff). The issue here is to detail the interface between psychological theory and everyday psychological realities.

These considerations about the interface between psychological realities and society furnish the background for an examination of the relationship between technical languages in psychology (the medium in and through which theories are represented) and ordinary language. One of the main points of the above argument is that society is only possible to the extent that interacting selves share the same underlying symbolic order. This is an order in and through which (among other things) psychological realities are represented. Thus, an examination of ordinary language in its relation to psychological theory allows us to obtain a more concrete idea of how psychological theories represent everyday psychological realities and thus provides the more specific background for the next section where the existing empirical data on this subject will be reviewed. The assumption made here is that our psychological realities are reflected in ordinary language, particularly if one takes the view that external speech is of paramount importance in the reproduction and transmission of everyday psychological realities (e.g., Leont'ev 1981). What we have to establish first is the generic background to the relationship between theory and ordinary language.

The problem involves a question that has not attracted much systematic discussion in psychology and concerns the status of ordinary language in its relation to theoretical discourses in psychology. This neglect is in part due to a widely shared assumption, namely that ordinary language can most aptly be regarded as a medium of description (although this is only one of the multitude of things that can be carried out through ordinary language - see Austin 1962; Searle 1969). Typically, a naive and uninformed view of language prevails that has

resulted in large part from the orthodox if implicit consensus resulting from subscription to a logical empiricist or critical rationalist epistemology ignoring and dismissing the relationship between ordinary language and theoretical languages developed in psychology. This view holds that ordinary language is always fuzzy and imprecise so that one has to develop clear and precise concepts which are the essence of "scientific languages". In psychology the development of scientific or technical languages has however led to a neglect of the fact that when scientific languages are concerned with the examination of psychological processes in the social world they are largely predicated upon conventions mediated by or mirrored in ordinary language.

The relationship between ordinary and technical languages has been problematized by developments in phenomenological sociology, which derive their origins from Weber (1947) via Schütz's work, as well as newer philosophical conceptions of language within a post-Wittgensteinian frame of reference (e.g. Winch 1958) and more recent considerations in social theory (see Giddens 1976, 1981).

At the core of these considerations is the argument that ordinary language cannot be simply dismissed as corrigible, because it not only enters everyday social activities, but also in the production of social and natural science in a constitutive way (see Knorr and Mulkey 1983). With reference to social science practices in general, Schütz notes that

The thought objects constructed by the social scientist refer to and are founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common sense thought of man living his everyday life among his fellowmen. Thus constructs of the social scientist are (...) constructs of the second degree, namely constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene whose behaviour the scientist observes and tries to explain in accordance with the procedural rules of

his science. (1955: p. 3)

In proposing a relationship between first order and second order constructs Schütz also points out that they are characterized by different systems of relevances. Whereas the former emphasizes practical knowledge through which mastery of everyday life is enabled, in the latter "the social scientist has no 'Here' within the social world, or more precisely, he considers his position within it and the system of relevances attached thereto as irrelevant to his scientific thinking" (1955: p. 31). His emphasis is on generalized knowledge, which is regarded as context free and "... which supersede(s) the thought objects of common sense thinking" (1955: p. 28). Scientific constructs, in this view, have to meet a criterion of adequacy, namely the translatability of second order concepts into first order concepts. How this is obtained is not further clarified in his analysis. Furthermore, by regarding the relationship as a "semipermeable" one Schütz does not address the full ramifications of the reflexive relationship between ordinary and technical languages.

Winch also points to the logical relationship ("logical tie") between ordinary language and technical languages and emphasizes the reverse relationship that is considered by Schütz (i.e., postulate of adequacy). His analysis of this logical relationship is based on the proposal that human behaviour is "meaningful" in a way in which events in the "object-world" are not. What is meaningful is, according to Winch, ipso facto rule-governed (2). One of the radical implications that Winch derives from identifying meaningful action as rule-following action is the discrepancy between the methods of natural and social sciences. Thus references to regularities observed in

behaviour, according to Winch, cannot be explained in the same way as in the case of regularities observed in the object-world. The observation of any type of regularity is predicated upon specific criteria regarding identity, which can be understood as criteria of discrimination and categorization according to which specific "phenomena" can be classified as "of the same kind". However, the nature of decisions concerning identity are different in the natural and social sciences. Whereas in the case of natural sciences one is proceeding according to rules which regulate the activities of the scientist in relation to an object-world, in the case of our dealings with the social world the situation becomes somewhat different. Here we are confronted with two sets of rules, namely those governing the activities of a psychologist as a scientist, and the rules which govern the behaviours that we are studying. The important point that Winch raises here is that it is the rules governing behaviour (everyday activities) which supply the criteria of identity for phenomena to be classified or categorized, rather than those governing scientific activity. The examination of any social behaviour involves in the first instance a "making sense" of that social behaviour, irrespective of whether the referent is regarded as the object of social cognition, altruistic behaviour, achievement motivation, attributional processes, or whatever. The psychologist, as the observer of behaviour, can make sense of observed behaviours only in terms of the particular rules to which the behaviour in question relates, because it is only within the context of such rules that this behaviour is meaningful. This does not imply that the psychologist has to make exclusive use of the lay persons' representations and leave it at that (as some authors suggested, e.g.,

Harre and Secord 1972). This is the point at which the importance of the link or "logical tie" between technical and ordinary languages becomes apparent. The psychologist as scientist may employ technical concepts; however, these must always be tied to everyday psychological realities and comprehended in terms of the concepts of lay persons if technical terms are to be applied meaningfully. That is, the relationship between technical and ordinary terms or concepts has to be explicated before technical terms are actually applied and the question of "identity" clarified.

From these considerations Winch derives another important implication, namely that a technical redescription of lay concepts or terms does not mean a "causal explanation"(3). This implication is based on the following consideration: "Social relations between men exist only in and through their ideas ... Since the relations between ideas are internal relations, social relations must be a species of internal relation too" (Winch 1958: p. 123). The example he uses to illustrate this is the relation between an order and an act of compliance. An explanation of the act of compliance is predicated upon the relation involved between command and obedience, which is a conceptual one. One can therefore not speak of a causal relationship between compliance and orders, but behaviours such as compliance are predicated upon conceptual associations existing within a culture (see section 4 for detail).

The problems with Winch's views (1958, 1964) are by now legion (see Louch 1963; Ryan 1970; Wilson 1970, inter alia) although this should not detract from the importance of his central arguments. One ambiguity is in his use of the term "rule", which leads to a number of

interrelated problems. His usage is primarily influenced by a model of linguistic conventions or rules where the interrelationships between propositions and actions may remain an unproblematic feature. Once more, as in the case of Schütz's thoughts on the subject, we find that this is a conception which relies on a semipermeable relationship in which technical languages are assumed to be informed by ordinary language. This, however, ignores the possibility that however informed or uninformed the development of a technical language in psychology may be, it is possible that such a language may itself have an effect on, and shape the nature of ordinary language. It is argued that there is no fixed relationship between technical and ordinary language. The general point is that since both scientific and technical languages in psychology involve "meaningful behaviour" (even though for different audiences engaged in different discourses) then the proper problematization of the issue requires attention to the permeable relationship between both types of language. This, in our case, would mean that concepts introduced by the technical languages of psychology can be appropriated by ordinary language and, vice versa, technical languages rely and derive from ordinary language. The reflexivity inherent in this issue is not addressed in either Schütz or Winch's writings.

This question is one which is central to most of Smedslund's recent writing. He also emphasizes the importance of considering more carefully language and culture as preconditions for psychological description. This view suggests that "... the psychologist can understand, explain, and predict a person's description of a second person's behaviour only to the extent that all three participate in the same culture and master the same language. In this way, considera-

tion of reflexivity and its implications leads directly to recognition of the role of that which is presupposed in psychology, namely culture and language" (Smedslund 1985: p. 76).

The nature of this relationship is one which involves permanent mutual transformation (see Gergen 1982). Issues related to the problem addressed by this dialectic relationship between the two languages have actually been in part central arguments in considerations about the status of social psychological knowledge, precipitated by Gergen's thought-provoking paper on "Social Psychology as History" (1973). Equally, there is direct social psychological work which addresses how scientific conceptions, in this case psychoanalysis, have been appropriated by ordinary language (see Moscovici 1976).

Other related problems arising from Winch's conception of rule and its linguistic understanding involve, as Giddens (1976) points out, a confusion between "the meaning of an action with its occurrence" (p. 48). That is the relation to which Winch refers in his example of command and obedience may be correct in the case of the "intelligibility of the action", but not necessarily the actual occurrence of the behaviours in question. Giddens suggests that this shortcoming actually undermines Winch's critique that a logical case can be made which excludes causal analysis, because behaviours merely "express ideas". The most serious shortcoming of Winch's approach (as well as Schütz's) is that "no indication is given of the relationship which exists between lay and technical concepts nor, indeed, is it very clear why the latter should be called for at all" (Giddens 1976: p. 49). Giddens refers to this problematic, which he identifies as generic to the social sciences as the double hermeneutic (e.g., 1981), pointing out

with Gadamer (1960) that the relations between technical and ordinary languages are dialogical. "The fact that the 'findings' of the social sciences can be taken up by those to whose behaviour they refer is not a phenomenon that can, or should be, marginalized, but it is integral to their very nature. (...) Human beings ... are not merely inert objects of knowledge, but agents able to - and prone to - incorporate social theory and research within their own action" (1981: p. 14, p 16).

Let us briefly recapitulate the main points of the argument so far. The first is that society is only possible to the extent that interacting selves share the same underlying symbolic order. Consequently, the second point is that psychological realities must always refer to the corresponding cultural and historical backgrounds upon which they are predicated. What are the implications of this for theory and empirical findings in psychology? The major implication of the argument leads to the third point which is that psychology, in order to develop models or theories, that are tested "empirically", can only do so through accessing socially, i.e. historically and culturally constituted social representations (see Moscovici 1981, 1984). The data that are collected are at the same time part and parcel of a social world, which is integral in the constitution of the psychological reality of the individuals who share it. It can therefore be assumed that the reality of everyday psychology is constitutively and reflexively involved in the production of scientific models in psychology to the extent that proposed models constitute empirically verifiable social representations. Thus the appropriateness of scientific models will depend on the degree to which they adequately cap-

ture the representations of socially constituted realities. This, however, leaves open the following question: What do scientific models provide above and beyond a "re-representation" of prevailing everyday conceptions of knowledge? This is a question which addresses the "surplus" in scientific models. Associated with this question is the question of whether there are aspects of psychological models which may be regarded as independent of the reflexive interdependence of knowledge. This is an issue addressed in detail in the final section of the chapter.

3 The empirical evidence

There is a considerable body of evidence that has been accumulated over the years lending direct or "indirect" support for the contentions advanced here. The indirect evidence is research which does not explicitly set out within the theoretical perspective outlined here, but is concerned with specific problems, such as the question of the fakability of personality inventories (e.g. Brown and LaFaro 1968; Power and MacRae 1971; inter alia), examinations of lay conceptions of intelligence (e.g. Sternberg et al. 1981; Jäger and Sitarek 1985; Wagner and Sternberg 1985; inter alia), or attribution theoretical work in personality (Pawlik and Buse 1979). These studies, in our view, can sensibly be interpreted within the framework developed here. There are also a number of conceptual analyses of specific models in psychology (e.g. Smedslund 1978; Brandtstädter 1982) and social psychology (e.g. Semin and Manstead 1979; Semin 1980; Fiedler 1982) which we shall not detail in this section. In the main, research work will be selectively reviewed with the aim of providing demonstrations, to use Garfinkel's (1967) phrase, "for a sluggish imagination".

There is a substantial amount of work examining trait-type models of personality which falls into the categories of both direct and indirect evidence. A number of studies addressing the question directly set out with the following general hypothesis: There is an overlap between ordinary language and scientific propositions due to the interdependence between culturally given psychological realities and scientific psychological theorizing. Consequently, the general methodological requirement is to use procedures through which "identity relationships" between scientific and ordinary language propositions can be established.

The higher order propositions about personality are derived from taxonomies of phenotypic attributes of personality. Thus a classificatory system is advanced which is obtained by employing, for example, factor analytic techniques (see Eysenck 1970b). The methodological question would thus be the following: Are naive subjects able to generate, discriminate, and/or classify the same phenotypic behaviours, attributes, etc. to a given super-category of a trait-type model (e.g. extraversion)? There are a number of ways in which this can be methodologically realized.

If our general arguments are correct, then lay persons should be able to discriminate successfully between items of diagnostic instruments (e.g. EPI, Eysenck and Eysenck 1975), that is they should be able to discriminate items belonging to a given scale category from those which do not, in any personality inventory. The indirect empirical evidence comes from research on the susceptibility of personality inventories to faking (e.g. Brown and Gomez 1966; Gomez and Brown 1967; Hoeth et al. 1967; Semin and Rogers 1973). The present argument

would suggest that a good scale should consist of items which are easily detectable by subjects as belonging to specific super-categories. Obviously, within traditional psychometric thinking this presents a paradox. Indeed, we find in earlier research that 'good' scales also have the characteristic of containing items which are easily detectable by subjects as belonging to the trait category concerned (e.g. Power and MacRae 1971). Semin, Rosch, Krolage and Chassein (1981) examined two multiphasic personality inventories, one consisting exclusively of behavioural items (Freiburg Personality Inventory - FPI, Fahrenberg, Selg and Hampel 1973) and the other solely of adjectives (Eigenschafts Wörter Liste - EWL, Janke and Debus 1978). Four subscales (aggressiveness, excitability, depressiveness, and inhibition) were selected from the first inventory and a further four (excitability, anger, anxiety and depressiveness) from the second one. The 200 subjects participating in this study were divided randomly into eight groups of 25, one for each scale category. They either received the complete FPI or the complete EWL and were asked to identify those items in the inventory which belong to a given scale category. As expected, subjects were able to discriminate systematically and with above chance probability those items belonging to the supercategories. Obviously, they also identified items belonging to scales other than the ones they were supposed to. The question is whether or not this constitutes an actual error. An examination of the data provided in the manuals shows high interscale correlations. It may have been the case that those items which on first inspection appear to belong to scales other than the ones that were provided are correctly selected in the sense that they "belong" to a scale that

correlates highly with the "target scale". Further examination revealed the following. Comparing the interscale correlations (i.e., Manuals of FPI and EWL) for the four critical scales in both inventories with the frequency data obtained in these studies by means of a rank order correlation revealed that subjects' "errors" actually reflected the interscale correlations. In the case of the FPI this average correlation was .85 and for the EWL it was .82 (i.e. the response structure of lay persons over all the items for the respective inventories accounted for more than 65% of the variance). This means that apparent errors in discrimination were in fact correct selections. Further corroboration comes from a less detailed study by Furnham (1984) who showed that subjects were able to identify with reasonable accuracy those items in the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck and Eysenck 1975) that measure neuroticism.

These types of studies proceed by supplying the scale category label in advance and examine whether subjects can discriminate items, thus providing one possible way of establishing "identity" relationships between psychological and ordinary language representations of personality. A possible objection is that if subjects were not provided with categories in advance, then they would be less likely to come up with a classificatory system. Indeed, this is similar to the argument that Eysenck advances in favour of "scientific taxonomies":

(The) demand for one typology instead of a whole collection of different typologies is, in essence, a demand for a scientific methodology which will enable us to test claims advanced for any specific system; the essential incompleteness of the typologists' achievements lay in their failure to provide a technique of verification by means of which their claims can be subjected to genuine scientific validation. It is only through the method of factor analysis that such verification can be done. (1970b: p. 35)

The assertion is that by using psychometric procedures a model of personality can be developed which supersedes 'unsystematic' common sense or ordinary language descriptions, in terms of its abstraction, generality and validity. If, however, as is assumed here, this "systematic" is already contained in the normative conventions that are part and parcel of everyday life, subjects should actually be able to generate the structure of an inventory without being provided with the scale category label. Semin, Chassein, Rosch, and Krolage (1984) employed the short-form of the FPI (i.e., FPI-K, Fahrenberg et al. 1973). Each of the 67 items belonging to the 12 subscales of the inventory were written on separate index cards and presented to 40 subjects. The method employed was a card sorting task (see Miller 1969). Subjects had to put those cards which they thought were similar in meaning into the same group. There were no restrictions in terms of the number of groups they could construct, nor in terms of numbers of items per group. On the basis of this procedure an inter-item proximity matrix was obtained. A second sample of 58 subjects was administered the FPI-K. From this sample the inter-item correlations were obtained. The structure of the inter-item correlations and the proximity matrix obtained by the "subjective" classifications of participants were compared by means of a multidimensional scaling procedure which provides an index of the amount of common variance between two configurations (see PINDIS, Borg 1977). As expected, it was found that the two matrices had 75% of variance in common. That is, the independent subjective orderings of the items replicated the personality inventory structure. Semin and Chassein (1985), employing a similar methodology, were also able to establish a more general case for a

generic theoretical taxonomy of personality (see Eysenck 1970a) showing that such generic models are primarily contained in ordinary language propositions.

Another way of examining the arguments advanced here consists in asking lay persons to generate statements about the characteristics of specific types in trait-type models. These lay statements can then be examined with respect to their "identity relation" to the scientific model in question, namely the degree of conceptual overlap. For example, Semin, Rosch and Chassein (1981) asked 39 subjects to describe what they regarded to be the attributes of a typical extravert to be and a further 39 subjects what the attributes of a typical introvert are. The content analysis of these answers yielded 58 non-overlapping items. These items were then presented to a further sample of 40 subjects. Twenty of them judged the 58 items in terms of their typicality for an extravert and the remaining 20 for the typicality of the items for an introvert, on 7-point Likert scales. The twelve most typical items for introversion and 12 most typical for extraversion were selected to constitute an "ordinary language scale". A new sample of 33 subjects was given the "ordinary language scale" which was constructed in a 7-point Likert-scale format with the endpoints labelled "Applies to me" and "Does not apply to me" and the A-form of the EPI with standard instructions. The item order in the ordinary language scale was randomized and the order in which the two scales were filled out was counterbalanced across subjects. Both scales were filled out from a self-referent perspective. The question of the identity relation was examined through the interscale correlation, which provided a convergent validity index. This was .51 which compared favourably with

existing convergent validity indices of the EPI. Furnham (1984) conducted a study similar to this one examining "neuroticism". His subjects generated over 400 behaviours/traits and he reduced this to 100 on the basis of a content analysis. These items were then rated for their typicality for a neurotic person on 7-point scales. On the basis of a purely qualitative analysis Furnham concludes that the "10 most typical characteristics appear to fit well with explicit theories of neuroticism" (p. 100).

An aspect of trait type models such as Eysenck's is their dimensionality, e.g. extraversion-introversion. The research reviewed so far has been concerned with the "identity relationship". Another possible approach to this is to examine theoretical propositions about dimensionality. This can be analysed by employing attribute inference methods, of which there are many variants. This would involve supplying subjects with one behaviour or trait of a hypothetical target person and asking subjects to estimate how likely it is that other attributes apply or do not apply to this person. Semin and Rosch (1981) employed such a paradigm using items from the extraversion and introversion domains, generated by lay persons. Indeed, they found a near-perfect symmetry in inferences. If the stimulus item is an item from the extraversion domain, then all extravert items are endorsed as applying, and vice versa for a stimulus item from the introversion domain. This study demonstrates that knowledge about personality is not only organized in discrete propositions relating specific behaviours and traits peculiar to a specific type, but also that ordinary language contains propositions about implicative relationships. These implicative statements take on the form if person A is X, then

all x's (x_i to x_n) apply. Contained in this are also relational propositions, namely, if X, then not Y and thus all implicative statements belonging to Y (y_i to y_m) are seen as not applicable to the person as well. Thus, dimensional propositions observed, for example, in extraversion-introversion are also found in ordinary language. The item discrimination study reported earlier (Semin, Rosch, Krolage, and Chassein, 1981) in which subjects reproduced subscale intercorrelation patterns reveals indirectly the same finding. It is important to note throughout that the reference here is not to any process properties divorced from content; rather, it is argued that the relational and implicative propositions are contained in semantic conventions.

An interesting indirect study helping to clarify the implications of the availability of ordinary language propositional knowledge for scientific knowledge is reported by Pawlik and Buse (1979). This study is designed to re-examine within an attributional framework the hypothesis formulated by Mayo, White and Eysenck (1977) concerning the relationship between astrological birth sign and personality differences in extraversion and neuroticism within an attributional framework. Mayo, White and Eysenck (1977), using a sample of 1000 males and females, provided evidence for two hypotheses relating personality profiles with star signs. The findings were that: (i) people born under "odd numbered" astrological signs (i.e. Aries, Gemini, Leo, Libra, Sagittarius, Aquarius) are on average significantly more extraverted than those born under "even numbered" astrological signs (i.e. Capricorn, Taurus, Virgo, Pisces, Cancer, Scorpio); and (ii) that people born under so-called water based astrological signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces) are significantly more neurotic than persons

born under all other astrological signs. Our argument would be that such a relationship would hold only in a population with firm beliefs about the psychological relationships between star signs and "dispositional" proclivities, and thus have a psychological reality within which this relationship is objectified. Indeed, Pawlik and Buse's (1979) study demonstrates precisely this point. They introduce belief in and familiarity with astrology as a crucial variable in their study, which they measure by a questionnaire and find that in a sample of 799 adults the postulated relationship holds only for subjects who have a firm belief in astrology.

If the relationship between behavioural proclivities and personality is a function of the beliefs one holds, then one of the issues that can be questioned is the genotypic foundations of trait-type models. The general argument is that it is the biological basis, i.e. genotypic foundations of trait-type models, which provides them with their special scientific status (e.g. Eysenck 1983). Intuitively, this level of analysis not only denies lay conceptions the availability of such higher order, typically psychogenetic models, but also denies lay conceptions the possibility of entertaining propositions which refer to genotypic-phenotypic links within the trait-type model. Such propositions relate to specific and intricate relationships between differences in cortical arousal for extraverts and introverts which are mediated by the reticular formation, and rely on postulated differences in resting levels of arousal. These differences, which are hypothetical constructs, are demonstrated in a number of experimental studies testing behavioural differences derived from this hypothetical model concerning the relationships between postulated cortical

processes and behavioural proclivities. Semin and Krahe (1987) examined the common-sense availability of experimental relationships derived from genotypic propositions and their behavioural (i.e. phenotypic) statements within Eysenck's E-I trait-type model in two studies utilizing an attribute inference paradigm. In the first study typically genotype based statements about either extraverts or introverts served as the two stimulus conditions describing two independently manipulated target persons and phenotypic statements derived from the EPI as dependent variables. This order was reversed in the second experiment. Results from both studies show a high degree of accuracy in subjects' inferences, suggesting that lay persons have well-formed conceptions about personality containing "higher-order" psychogenetic propositions corresponding to Eysenck's trait-type model.

In a further set of two studies, Semin and Krahe (1986) examined whether perceptions of cross-situational consistency are mediated by semantic propositions rather than being theory guided (in the sense of biasing theory, e.g. Nisbett and Ross 1980). An important factor in this realm of research is how a personality psychologist selects items for personality inventories in order to be able to introduce a specific behavioural domain. Semin and Krahe point out that the issue of how these behavioural criteria are selected is not explicitly addressed in studies of cross-situational consistency. The question that arises in this context is: what are the resources that an investigator can draw upon in order to generate instances of behaviour which may then be utilized as indicators of consistency? On the basis of their findings Semin and Krahe argue that such a selection must be largely guided by an intuitive understanding, mediated by linguistic

conventions, according to which a set of behaviour instances are perceived to belong to the same domain. From their findings they conclude that in the domain of cross-situational consistency research, language furnishes the general repository of knowledge from which are derived not only judgments of predictability and similarity in meaning are derived, but also the selection of empirical criteria for behavioural consistency.

A series of highly interesting studies on lay conceptions of intelligence have been conducted by Sternberg and his colleagues (Sternberg, Conway, Ketron and Bernstein 1981; Sternberg 1985; Wagner and Sternberg 1985). These studies, which are primarily designed as descriptive studies, are concerned with reconstructions of the "form and content of people's informal theories" (Sternberg et al. 1981: p. 37-8). In part of this research Sternberg et al. (1981) first of all ask lay persons to generate behaviours characteristic of intelligence, academic intelligence, and everyday intelligence or unintelligence. They use the final 250 behaviours extracted from the generated items for a number of purposes, but among other things for self-ratings on intelligence and compare these self ratings with IQ scores. They find that "the three kinds of self-rated intelligence were ... significantly correlated with IQ; People's conceptions of themselves were related to their objective test performance. The highest correlation with IQ was that for rated academic intelligence" (Sternberg et al. 1981: p. 47).

In a more recent paper Sternberg (1985) contrasts lay theories of intelligence, creativity, and wisdom with explicit-theory-based measures (see Experiment 3). He concludes:

Correlations of scores from implicit-theory-based measures with scores from explicit-theory-based measures showed both convergent and discriminant validity: The prototype scores correlated with the psychometric tests with which they were supposed to correlate and did not correlate with the psychometric tests with which they were not supposed to correlate. Thus, implicit theories of intelligence and wisdom do correspond substantially to explicit theories (1985: p. 619, emphasis in original).

Similar results are reported by Jäger and Sitarek (1985) who examine lay conceptions of ability. They compare the Berlin Intelligence-Structure Model (BIS, Jäger 1982, 1984) with lay conceptions of abilities and find correspondences between 7 main components of the BIS and lay conceptions of abilities and intelligence. Indeed, this study shows that the ability structure available to lay conceptions yields concepts of practical and social intelligence above and beyond those provided in the BIS.

Smedslund (1978) provides a conceptual analysis of Bandura's self-efficacy model (1977) with a view of presenting an alternative perspective on "empiricist" psychology, namely that "... theoretical statements should have empirically testable consequences and that they should be validated by means of empirical studies" (p. 1). In this study he engages in a logical analysis of the model of self-efficacy (Bandura 1977) by translating it into non-technical language and showing that it consists of logically necessary rather than empirically testable hypotheses. In a later study (Smedslund 1982) he uses a different method to examine whether the 36 propositions derived from Bandura's theory are merely explications of common sense. The criterion he uses to determine whether these propositions are merely explications of common sense is whether members sharing a culture agree that the proposition is correct and its negation incorrect. Thus

scientific propositions are subjected to "consensual validation". Overall, the results are highly supportive of the explanation offered by Smedslund (1982). Both for the concrete explanatory and concrete predictive conditions subjects identify the theory-consistent explanations or predictions with above chance likelihood.

Finally, it is worth briefly considering whether and how lay people put these everyday theories or representations into use and what the practical implications of these findings are. There are demonstrations that, for example, the test-retest reliability of ordinary language self-descriptions (e.g. depressiveness, emotional stability/lability, excitability, extraversion-introversion, etc.) over a period of 3 months give r values of .81 which do not differ from administering multiphasic personality inventories (see Rosch, Chassein, Semin and Krolage 1984). Indeed, in this latter study, the authors demonstrate that the convergent validities between ordinary language self-descriptions on these categories and multiphasic inventories are very high and significant, ranging from r -values of .46 to .64. Similar results are reported in an independent study using a different method for extraversion-introversion (Semin, Rosch and Chassein 1981). Furnham and Henderson (1983) asked subjects to estimate their own and a friend's score on five standard psychological tests. Their results show that they were successful in this estimation task for "self" on extraversion, neuroticism, psychotism and self-monitoring and only on two scales for another person (extraversion and neuroticism). These results from the personality domain are tentative, but suggest together with the examination of the ordinary language foundations of trait type models that one could possibly dispense with the

extensive and expensive development of personality inventories and replace them with the cheapest diagnostic commodity available, namely common sense.

4 The theoretical and empirical implications

The preceding review demonstrates that, for substantial sections of psychology, theory is predicated upon everyday psychological realities which are objectified in language as a shared symbolic convention (see Mead 1934; Berger and Luckmann 1967; Semin 1986b). To the extent that language contains the culturally and historically situated psychological realities of everyday life, psychological theory consists of representations of everyday psychological realities. Furthermore, psychological theory in order to be valid has to refer to and represent everyday psychological realities. However, the general aim of theorizing in any science is generally to furnish knowledge which goes beyond common sense. Does this mean that the veil of science in psychology is but a mere ideological and rhetorical device, which allows us to keep faith with the idea of a natural science? In general, the assumption that psychology furnishes knowledge which goes beyond mere common sense has been generally substantiated by reference to explanatory models which "uncover" underlying process mechanisms, propensities, which are then utilized to "explain" individual states, thought, and action. In social psychology, this issue has been paramount in recent years with the mainstream distinction between content and process, and criticisms of this distinction (e.g. Moscovici 1981, 1984; Sampson 1981; inter alia). This distinction has also enabled theorists to maintain the possibility of arriving at causal empirical explanations. To the extent that the distinctive features of

human beings, i.e. the contentful and conventionalized features of human existence, are separated from assumed underlying processes, one can maintain the promise of delivering causal explanations through processes which are independent of content. According to such a view, psychological explanations are rooted in the individual, who is considered in isolation from the social environment. If, however, it can be shown that the regularities of data points which are then taken as evidence for supposed processes are predicated upon features of content and that this content is not only interindividual but also process as has been argued extensively, for example, in the Russian socio-cultural school (see Wertsch 1985), then different visions for psychology in general and social psychology in particular begin to emerge (e.g. Gergen 1982; Farr and Moscovici 1984; Gergen and Davis 1985).

Unarguably, action and thinking are individual products. However, they are elements in an equation in which a third parameter is not entered, namely the production and reception of meaning.

Humans' activity assimilates the experience of humankind. This means that humans' mental processes (their "higher psychological functions") acquire a structure necessarily tied to the sociohistorically formed means and methods transmitted to them by others in the process of cooperative labour and social interaction. But it is impossible to transmit the means and methods needed to carry out a process in any other way than external form - in the form of action and external speech. (Leont'ev 1981: p. 56)

The vaguest, unspoken thought, just as much as a complex argument, presupposes organized communication among individuals (see Mead 1934; Berger 1966; Giddens 1976; Voloshinov 1976; Vygotski 1981). Indeed, a central insight of all these authors is that intersubjectivity precedes subjectivity; that "self-understanding is connected integrally

to the understanding of others" (Giddens 1976: p. 19); that it constitutes the ontological condition of human life in society. The first two elements in the equation are predicated upon the biological finitude of human beings, but the essential characteristic of being human is that we are part of an historical process, and it is therefore not sufficient to consider human action and thought as predicated upon the biological characteristics of the individual. It is only "... a social and historical localization (that) makes man real, and determines the content of his personal and historical creation" (Voloshinov 1976: p. 24).

Examinations of the relationship between psychological theory and ordinary language are not merely demonstrations of how psychological theory is infused by everyday psychological realities as was argued at the outset, but have implications for the status of empirical statements in psychology in general and social psychology in particular. If psychological statements consist of representations of conventions as content then their empirical status is quite different from what they are generally assumed to be, namely causal explanations subject to experimental validation. Generally, psychological statements are regarded as "empirical truths" which provide causal explanations by reference to "inner mental structures", underlying processes, or intrapsychological processes. This view permits the preservation of "content" as distinct from descriptions and explanations of human beings.

This case is best made by two contrasting examples (see Smedslund 1978, 1982, 1985; Brandtstädter 1982, 1984). Let us take a statement such as "All bachelors are unmarried men" versus "Smoking during preg-

nancy influences the weight of the child at birth". The truth content of the second sentence can only be examined empirically. The first sentence is taken as an instance of statements which are true by reference to social conventions, e.g. semantic or logical conventions. But the same is true of sentences such as "Extraverts are talkative persons", "A precondition of mental health is autonomy", "Intelligence consists of verbal ability, practical problem solving ability and social competence", etc. The problem with these statements is they are immune to "contradictory evidence". Their operation is not different from the poison oracle among the Azande described by Evans-Pritchard (1937). The consultation of this oracle involves feeding the poison to a chicken and addressing the poison clearly in words. It is first told to kill the chicken if the answer is "No" to the question; the second time around it is told to kill the chicken if the answer is "Yes". Any future contradictions of the oracle are dismissed through the use of "secondary elaborations", which maintain the sagacity of the poison oracle.

Let the reader consider any argument that would utterly demolish all Zande claims for the power of the oracle. If it were translated into Zande modes of thought it would serve to support their entire structure of belief. For their mystical notions are eminently coherent, being interrelated by a network of logical ties, and are so ordered that they never too crudely contradict sensory experience, but, instead, experience seems to justify them (Evans-Pritchard 1937: pp. 319-20).

Similarly, in mathematics we have a situation where once we accept certain axioms as agreed upon conventions then we are confronted with what Gasking (1955) terms "incorrigible propositions", namely propositions which are analytically true and at the same time "An incorrigible proposition is one which you would never admit to be false

whatever happens: it therefore does not tell you what happens" (Gasking 1955: p. 432).

The point about the theoretical statements in psychology we have examined in this chapter is that they are empirically-based explications of everyday psychological realities only in the sense that they have emerged in the cultural history of communities, and are subject to consensual validation (see Smedslund 1985). To the extent that they are conventions they are non-contingent propositions, namely based on semantic, logical, or conceptual relationships. This stands in contrast to the classic meaning of empirical in psychology which in the traditional sense of science regards propositions as subject to experimental validation, and thus as contingent. The chief problem is that in general there is no clarity about the epistemological status of the types of statements that are examined in psychology. Statements which rely on formal or conceptual relationships are often subjected to hypothesis testing procedures with the purpose of establishing causal statements (see Brandtstädter 1984; Smedslund 1985). In the case of different forms of address or politeness, which require different types of activities to be executed in different cultures (e.g., a greeting ceremony in Japan vs. England) we are content to explain these regularities in terms of external guides, which we term, without second thought, as "conventions", "norms", or "rules". We do not feel inclined to explain the different regularities in terms of causal propositions, or for that matter through resorting to underlying mechanisms. If these types of conventions cannot be subjected to causal analysis then psychological models which represent conventions to be found in ordinary language should have the same status. Indeed,

Brandtstädter (1982), for example, details the implications of similar considerations for diverse areas such as attributional analysis of achievement (Weiner 1982), moral and social-cognitive development (Kohlberg 1976; Selman 1976), learned helplessness (Seligman 1975), stage theories of development (Piaget 1932) and models of learning hierarchies (see Resnick 1973). Among other things he also draws attention to the paradox which one encounters, for example, in the case of the theory of correspondent inferences (Jones and Davis 1965). On the one hand, the case for the theory is argued on the basis of experimental work, and yet in the same breath the authors of the theory state:

Correspondent inference theory is essentially a rational baseline model. It does not summarize phenomenal experience; it presents a logical calculus in terms of which accurate inferences could be drawn by an alert perceiver weighing knowledge, ability, noncommon effects and prior probability ... the theory cannot be invalidated by experimental results any more than game theory can be invalidated by the choices of players in a prisoner's dilemma game. (Jones and McGillis 1976: p. 404)

Where is the difference between the poison oracle and correspondent inference theory?

The implication of these considerations is that empirical analyses in psychology in general and social psychology in particular presuppose what Gergen (1985) terms linguistic forestructures, namely conceptual knowledge about the social world, which investigators share with their subjects as pre-givens of their social world. An examination of, for example, moral judgement and the ascription of responsibility, requires the foreknowledge of the conceptual edifice surrounding responsibility (see Semin and Manstead 1983: pp. 123-55), and any attributional study requires a detailed knowledge of the rules,

conventions, and metaphors of the culture in which studies are being conducted (see Semin 1980). Without such prerequisites it is impossible for an investigator to use, for example, the term "responsibility" in a culturally sensible manner (see Winch 1958).

5. Conclusions

The theoretical argument and the empirical demonstrations reviewed here may be regarded in the first instance as a serious consideration of the consequences for psychology of the interface between psychological realities and society. This, in itself may be seen as a corrective measure for doing psychological research and reconsidering its epistemological status.

The consistency with which the findings from diverse domains show an overlap between ordinary language models of psychological realities and diverse scientific models indicates that the knowledge structures which people rely on have a somewhat special status. These knowledge structures are idealized abstractions which are both the preconditions and consequences of the use of diverse references to intelligence, development, responsibility, achievement, personality, etc. in everyday discourse. Yet, they appear in this idealized form nowhere during routine discourse, except perhaps in "reflective" comments on intelligence, personality, achievement, etc., as such. Such idealized knowledge structures obviously have no pragmatic reference. The distinctive feature of "meaning in use", or meaning in pragmatic contexts, however is that it is situated, or indexical (see Garfinkel and Sacks 1970; Mehan and Wood 1975). That is, meanings in pragmatic contexts are predicated in part on idealized knowledge structures (since they function in a constitutive manner) but also on the extralinguis-

tic properties of the situations in which dialogue about the subjects in question takes place. It must also be emphasized that dialogue is characterized by negotiation, interaction, and processes, i.e. meanings are not fixed or static. The implication of such considerations is that scientific representations of psychological realities are largely decontextualized or idealized representations. They refer primarily to static knowledge structures which are both constitutive of everyday discourse and reconstituted therein (see Giddens 1976). The distinctive feature of such knowledge structures is that although they are "enabling" for everyday discourse they are not visible as objective manifestations in discourse. Seen in this light psychological models are representations of idealized knowledge structures of everyday psychological realities that are contained in language. They are therefore references to "temporally frozen" aspects of ordinary language. If one were to subscribe to the Saussurian distinction between "parole" and "langue", one would locate these models on the side of langue, and they would have little to suggest about speech, which has dialogical, processual, and negotiated features and thus refers to a different reality than the one contained in such models.

An important lesson from the present analysis is that most of our examinations in social psychology consist of examinations of language as an abstract property of a community of speakers. If one sustains the analytic distinction between meanings in pragmatic and semantic contexts (see Garfinkel and Sacks 1970; Douglas 1971; Meertz 1985 inter alia) and examines their differences, then the former is spatially and temporally located; presupposes a subject; and acknowledges the other, i.e. entails dialogue (see Ricoeur 1971). Meaning in

semantic contexts, regarded as an abstract property of the community of speakers is "virtual and outside of time" (Ricoeur 1971: p. 530). If we were to locate most of the psychological work examined here then it is obvious that it should be located in the semantic context. This does not necessarily have negative implications, but it needs to be recognized nevertheless.

One of the issues which becomes apparent in both conceptual and empirical analyses is that a compartmentalized view of the discipline as consisting of say developmental psychology, social psychology, personality theories, etc. is blinding to the meaning of our current disciplinary efforts. All human forms are tied to the socio-historically shaped means and methods transmitted to them in the course of the processes of acculturation through social interaction and cooperative labour (see Leont'ev 1981). This means we must develop a growing awareness of the unity of the endeavour called human sciences and attempt to escape the narrow confines of disciplinary visions contained within very particular socio-historic locations as well as traditionalized "science-making conventions", such as the prevailing methodological imagination.

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Notes

1. I am not concerned here with how such a social identity emerged in the period in question. The interested reader is advised to consult, e.g., Trevor-Roper (1969).
2. The definition of rule-governed is simply "whether it makes sense to distinguish between a right and a wrong way of doing things in connection with what (a person) does", and not necessarily the ability consciously to formulate or express the rules in question, such as some authors claim (see Harre and Secord 1972).

3. This is a point which will be elaborated in detail in the final section with reference to psychological literature where through the absence of considerations pertaining to the link between technical and ordinary languages psychologists have often jumped to causal explanation models, which consist merely of technical redescriptions of propositions contained in ordinary language.

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