

THE PRODUCTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE
AS COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION

Pekka Sauri

A thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The Department of Human Sciences
Brunel University

January 1990

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	p.1
2. Communication and the Construction of Meaning	17
3. Modes of Communication in the Production of Psychological Knowledge	53
4. Consensus as Criterion of Truth: A Critique of Habermas	88
5. The Notion of Unconscious Motive Forces and Communicative Interaction: A Critique of Grünbaum	136
6. Common Sense and Communicative Interaction: A Critique of Smedslund	186
7. Agreement as Criterion of Validity: Preconditions and Consequences	216
8. Concluding Remarks: Beyond Psycho- logical Knowledge	243
References	250

Abstract

THE PRODUCTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AS COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION

Ph.D. Thesis, The Department of Human Sciences,
Brunel University

January 1990; pp. 258

Pekka Sauri

While the traditional natural-scientific model of psychology has in recent decades been extensively criticized, the implications of this criticism for the criteria of epistemologically legitimate psychological knowledge have remained unclear. It is suggested that the production of psychological knowledge should be considered in terms of communicative interaction. Two basic modes of communicative interaction - one-directional and two-directional - are proposed. Epistemologically legitimate psychological knowledge requires the adoption of the latter mode.

Agreement between the investigator and the person(s) whose conduct is investigated is introduced as the pivotal criterion of the validity of psychological propositions. If psychological knowledge is based on the understanding of the meaning of actions, and if meaning may only be ascertained by means of two-directional communicative interaction, agreement seems to be both (a) necessary and (b) sufficient criterion of epistemological validity.

Three types of counter-arguments to this view are examined: Habermas's notion of universal rationality, Grünbaum's defence of the epistemological status of the unconscious and Smedslund's common sense psychology. None of these pose any serious challenge to the proposition of agreement as criterion of validity. It is concluded that agreement between the investigator and the other participants in an investigation is the basic criterion of validity in psychology. This conclusion requires a reassessment of the notions of objectivity, relativism and intersubjectivity.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1. A Statement of Purpose

In this thesis, I will examine - and defend - the proposition that consensual agreement between the participants in a psychological investigation is the basic epistemological criterion of the validity of psychological knowledge. While this proposition may seem controversial, I wish to present it as a genuine solution to the epistemological confusion which still besets most psychological investigations despite numerous attempts to resolve the problems involved.

2. The Possibility of Psychological Knowledge:

Past and Present

The past few decades have seen a lively debate on the nature of psychological knowledge. The main thrust of this debate has focused on the argument that the methodological and epistemological tradition of the natural sciences is unsuitable for the purposes of

psychology and the social sciences which require a methodological rationale of their own. Smedslund (NOTE 1) characterizes the current state of affairs thus:

In psychology, a combination of unfortunate circumstances has blocked the development of a generally accepted scientific language. After one century, psychologists still do not agree on how to describe, explain, and predict psychological phenomena. -- It is likely that many of the difficulties stem from an incompatibility between some features of a scientific ideal inherited from the elder physical sciences and the particular characteristics of psychological phenomena.

I take it as symptomatic that such complaints should still be voiced after many decades of serious attempts to establish an epistemologically justified theoretical framework for the study of human conduct. The work of Winch (2), Taylor (3), von Wright (4), Harré (5), Shotter (6), Gergen (7) and Habermas (8) -- much of it either directly or indirectly influenced by Wittgenstein (9) -- has prepared the ground for a conception of psychology based on the notion that people are essentially rational, intentional and rule-following beings as opposed to mechanisms which respond to stimuli.

The successful explication of an epistemologically consistent, autonomous methodology for the production of psychological knowledge has, however, proved

problematic. Despite their declared intention of constructing an appropriate methodology for psychology proper - i.e., a form of investigation fundamentally different from the natural sciences - many theorists still seem to harbour residues of the notion of knowledge characteristic of the natural-scientific tradition. A considerable proportion of the present text will be devoted to indicating this natural-scientific residue in various arguments originally intended to purge psychology of inappropriate assumptions and methods.

3. The Centrality of Communicative Interaction

I propose to examine the production of psychological knowledge in terms of communicative interaction primarily in the context of the validation of interpretative propositions between the investigator and the person, or persons, whose conduct is being investigated and secondarily in the context of the validation of such propositions between the investigator and the rest of the community of investigators. The crucial issue, I will propose, is the mode of communicative interaction employed by the

investigator. Different modes of communicative interaction may be described in terms of variations between the participatory, or first-person, position and the third-person position of an observer. Confusion between these positions seems to be the central source of epistemological problems in psychology.

The central issue in the production of psychological knowledge in terms of communicative interaction is the nature of the feedback system between the investigator and the people whose conduct he purports to investigate. It is my impression that traditional research designs in psychology are based on one-directional communicative interaction: the person whose conduct is being studied is afforded little or no opportunity to comment on the purpose of the study or on the system of meanings in terms of which his responses will be assessed. The use of "naive subjects" is a case in point. I will argue that epistemologically legitimate psychological knowledge may only be produced in terms of two-directional communicative interaction and that, ultimately, the criterion of valid interpretations is indeed agreement between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated.

4. The Epistemological Status of Psychological Laws

The traditional endeavour of psychologists to establish laws which are assumed to govern human conduct is, in essence, made redundant if it is true that people may choose to act independently of such laws when they become conscious of them. It may, of course, turn out in empirical studies that they do not; but if the possibility is theoretically justifiable, and once we have accepted that the establishment of behavioural laws takes place within, and by means of, the process of communicative interaction between participants in the investigation, it would seem that this state of affairs stands in direct contrast to the causal - or "natural scientific" - approach to the explanation of the ways in which people go about their business.

As Gergen (10) puts it in "Toward Transformation in Social Knowledge",

"-- it is appropriate to reconsider the earlier notion that a science of human activity depends importantly on regularized or systematically recurring relationships between stimulus conditions and behaviour. As is clear, without such regularities the prediction of behaviour is largely obviated. Yet, as is equally clear, to the extent that the individual is capable of transforming the meaning of stimulus conditions in an indeterminate number of

ways, existing regularities must be considered historically contingent - dependent on the prevailing meaning systems or conceptual structures of the times."

The establishment of psychological laws seems a viable proposition only in terms of a particular kind of communicative interaction: it requires that the investigator withholds his strategy from the person whose conduct he purports to investigate. Once that person is informed about the psychological invariant, he may choose to modify his conduct, and the invariant becomes redundant.

5. Necessary Presuppositions

It is, I think, commonly accepted that knowledge in psychology - as in any other field of inquiry - requires a consensus among a population of investigators if it is to be properly accepted as knowledge. This observation seems indeed self-evident enough as to be tautological. The notion of consensus between the investigator and the person, or persons, whose conduct is being investigated may appear more questionable. I will try to show that it is the basic criterion of epistemologically legitimate

psychological knowledge and to anticipate the consequences of this principle for the idea of psychological knowledge in general. As the arguments I wish to develop in the subsequent chapters have grown from a growing disillusionment with the goals, logic and methods of empirical investigations of human conduct, my approach is entirely theoretical in character. References to particular instances of interaction serve as illustrations of the arguments presented, not as proof of any empirical propositions.

Throughout this study, I intend to stick to the basic epistemological attitude - i.e., "how do we know? - as strictly as possible. All attempts to make sense of people's conduct will be considered in terms of criteria of valid knowledge. This means that utmost care is needed in laying down the necessary basic assumptions of this study. I do not, for instance, know anything about other people's meanings or states of mind until I do know, and I cannot claim to know unless they choose to tell me.

The notion of psychological knowledge presupposes other people. This means that I have made an anti-solipsistic decision: I have decided that other people exist in their own right and that they are not

mere figments of one big self. This anti-solipsistic decision has no rational foundation. There is nothing about my sense experience that could verify or falsify the notion of solipsism, or anti-solipsism; whatever happens, all changes in my experience could still be interpreted as functions of my private consciousness. For some reason, however, I have decided to give these changes the benefit of the doubt and given up my initial omnipotence.

I borrow the basic assumptions of the present study from Harré's "Personal Being" (11): "There are two primary realities in human life: the array of persons and the network of their symbiotic interactions, the most important of which is talk". Harré points out that the "fundamental human reality is conversation, effectively without beginning or end, to which, from time to time, individuals may make contributions" (12). These distinctions are generally speaking congruent with my purposes. There is one reservation I want to add: personhood is conferred on a being in the context of communicative interaction - it is not something that everybody has automatically.

6. Truth as Argumentation

The ontological assumptions compatible with the notion of psychological knowledge as a function of communicative interaction may now be summarized briefly. There may quite plausibly be a material reality independent of the human observer; but, as our sense experience is inevitably contaminated with a variety of viewpoints acquired through our life in the social world - that is, our participation in communicative interaction and material practices - there is no privileged method available to us of identifying any indisputable, or "objective", facts about this material reality. Consequently, if no uncontaminated information on any objective reality is available to us, the primary method of verification of statements is by means of argumentation between members of whatever community it is that we are committed to.

Once we have chosen the notion of communicative interaction as the basis of the production of psychological knowledge, the correspondence theory of truth loses its primacy and becomes subsumed by what is decided amongst the participants in the current interactive network. A comprehensive argument for

this approach is offered by Habermas (13): "Truth -- is removed from direct confrontation with experience by being asserted or denied only of statements --. Thus truth is conceived as essentially intersubjective, that is, as concerned with conditions of utterance in the speech community, and in particular with reasoning and argument within communicative discourse".

7. Preliminary Definitions

For the present purposes, I propose to define "psychology" as "the production of knowledge about what people do and why they do it". It should be noted that the relationship between the "what" and the "why" is inherently problematic: if we manage to find out what a person is doing, we may already be close to understanding why he is doing it. Knowledge will be defined as a public, or intersubjective, notion: there is no private knowledge. However convinced I may privately be about the truth of a statement, it remains a belief until brought into the sphere of intersubjective evaluation and eventual corroboration.

It seems in the present context both justified and useful to speak in terms of personal pronouns: "I", "we" and "he" will figure at various points along the text. The "I" refers to the writer of this thesis - an investigator of the motive forces underlying people's conduct and of the criteria of justification employed in validating propositions about those motive forces. The "we" refers to the community of investigators which includes the writer and the readers of this text. The "he" (shorthand for "he and she") refers to the person whose conduct is being investigated by the "I" and the "we". The use of personal pronouns is, I hope, a reasonable precaution against the perpetual lure of the objective viewpoint the inappropriateness of which for the purposes of psychological investigations is by now a commonplace.

In order to nip further conceptual confusions in the bud, explicit definitions of the terms I will employ in the text are in order. As the words behaviour and action have particular connotations and belong to separate conceptual systems, they should be used only when adequate conditions for their use are fulfilled. Prior to that point, I will use the neutral term conduct. The same principle applies to the use of cause and reason, prior to the legitimate

differentiation of which the neutral term motive force will be employed. This may seem like mere theoretical splitting of hairs, but I think that such semantic precautions are justified, given the chequered history of psychological concepts. There are probably other terms which should be subjected to a similar treatment - person, for instance - but there are limits to such semantic acrobatics; "person" will until further notice be used in a neutral sense, i.e., without any intended reference to the vicissitudes of how personhood is constructed or denied in different networks of communicative interaction.

8. The Structure of the Argument

By stating these preliminary points, it seems that we have deconstructed the notion of psychological investigation about as close to its basic elements as possible, and may now be in a position to start reconstructing it with the aim of epistemological parsimony - i.e., leaving aside everything which is unnecessary and preserving only those notions and principles which are legitimately needed. After all, we do not know until we do know - that is, until

sufficient criteria of knowledge have been fulfilled. I will argue that there must be an agreement on those criteria; if we are not part of such an agreement, we only have beliefs.

I will press my argument as follows: In Chapter Two, I will discuss the notion of communicative interaction and consider its role in the construction of meaning. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the production of psychological knowledge in terms of two basic modes of communicative interaction and present the notion of consensual agreement between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated as the essential criterion of the validity of psychological propositions. I will then move on to discuss three positions which may be interpreted as counter-arguments to the notion of agreement as criterion of validity: in Chapter Four, I will present a critique of certain aspects of Habermas's thought; in Chapter Five, I will consider Grünbaum's arguments against the relevance of patient assent in the validation of psycho-analytic interpretations; and in Chapter Six, I will try to show that the notion of common sense psychology as developed by Smedslund is not an epistemologically valid account of human conduct. Chapter Seven will be devoted to a discussion of the preconditions and

implications of the notion of agreement as both a necessary and a sufficient criterion of validity of psychological propositions. The argument will be concluded in Chapter Eight, and its consequences for the aims and methods of psychology will be reviewed briefly. The dubious distinction between the "human sciences" and the "natural sciences" will also be dealt with. If my arguments are sufficiently persuasive, the notion of epistemologically legitimate psychological laws will by the end of this study seem a contradiction in terms, and the prediction of people's conduct will only be possible in terms of intersubjective commitments and promises. This would entail a fundamental re-evaluation of the notion of psychological knowledge. The consequences of such a re-evaluation are anticipated by Shotter (14):

Would this mean a total abandonment of the notion of evidence and the checkability of truth claims? Not at all. For, just as a witness's 'story' in a court of law can, if properly told, specify quite precisely the evidence required to refute or corroborate it, so also with narratives generally: they can specify the requirements in terms of which the credibility of the reality they specify can be checked out. It simply means giving up the belief in an already performed and eternally fixed reality, and accepting a vague, or an only partially ordered, unstable world, still open to further specification by human activity, and furthermore open to a number of alternatives. Claims worth believing can still exist; they cease however to be uncontestable.

NOTES

- (1) Smedslund (1988), p. 1.
- (2) Winch (1958), (1962).
- (3) Taylor (1964), (1979).
- (4) Von Wright (1971).
- (5) Harré (1979), (1983); Harré and Secord (1972).
- (6) Shotter (1984); Gault and Shotter (1977).
- (7) Gergen (1982), (1985).
- (8) Habermas (1972), (1984).
- (9) Wittgenstein (1953).
- (10) Gergen (1982), p. 17.
- (11) Harré (1983), p. 20.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Habermas (1972); condensed here by Hesse (1982), p. 100.
- (14) Shotter (1986), p. 7.

Chapter Two

COMMUNICATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

1. Basic assumptions

I assumed above, while trying to strip the notion of psychological knowledge down to its barest necessities, that the notion of knowledge about the motive forces underlying the conduct of others presupposes a plurality of participants as opposed to a solipsistic unity. While I cannot know for certain whether or not this is the case in any epistemologically legitimate manner, the acceptance of the notion of psychological knowledge presupposes the existence of others. Furthermore, I must assume that while I may believe that my fellow beings are in many respects similar to myself, the motive forces underlying the conduct of others are not necessarily the same as my own. In order to know about the motive forces underlying the conduct of others, I must understand what they mean by doing what I observe them as doing. In order to find out about their meaning, I must engage in communicative interaction with them. The motive forces underlying the conduct

of whatever configuration of participants it is that I am interested in are explicated through communicative interaction; and, conversely, communicative interaction is whatever it is through which the motive forces underlying the conduct of that configuration of participants are explicated. While this approach to what constitutes reality clearly incorporates a fundamental skepticism as to the possibility of knowledge about the precise characteristics of what is commonly called the material, or physical, world - after all, knowledge about that world is available to us only in the form of propositions introduced into the network of communicative interaction in which we find ourselves situated - it is, I will maintain, equally clear that the notion of communicative interaction and the intersubjective construction of meaning presupposes a degree of commitment to the material practices of a community. It must be noted, however, that this assertion does not presuppose any universal characteristics of that material world within which we put the beliefs of our existence into practice. As Shotter (NOTE 1) puts it, there are no "extralinguistic entities whose significance is linguistically clear prior to talk about them".

This outline of the basic assumptions implicit in the

notion of the production of psychological knowledge as communicative interaction may serve as a point of entry into a definition of communicative interaction explicit and pragmatic enough for the purposes of the exploration of my argument concerning the justifiable epistemological criteria of psychological knowledge.

At the beginning of this chapter, I will attempt to clarify the concept of communication with particular reference to the function of communication in the construction of the reality within which participants in an interactive situation find themselves on the one hand, and to the distinction between the concepts of communication and action on the other. I will then move on to propose that communicative interaction is a necessary prerequisite for the notion of meaning and that the final criterion of the correct understanding of the meaning of another person's conduct is not to be found in the sphere of linguistic reference alone: that criterion is embedded in the interplay between linguistic and extra-linguistic practices of the community to which we adhere. This view has important implications for the concept of rationality as a whole - an issue to which I shall return in a later chapter.

2. Communication: A Preliminary Definition

The construction of a definition of communicative interaction both unambiguous and sufficiently general is not a simple matter. Building on the basic assumptions I outlined above, it may be tentatively suggested that communication entails the transfer of messages of some sort between what at least initially regard themselves as separate entities. Rommetveit (2) elaborates: "Communication aims at transcendence of the 'private' worlds of the participants. It sets up what we might call 'states of intersubjectivity'." Blakar (3) points out that "(t)he most essential characteristic of communication is that something is being made known to somebody. It follows from this that an act of communication is social and directional (from a sender to a receiver). A crucial characteristic distinguishing communication from the general flow of information is that the sender has an intention to make something known to the (particular) receiver". Communication would thus entail the notions of sender, receiver and intentionality. Information per se - i.e., without these characteristics - does not, according to Blakar, qualify as communication.

Blakar's formulation is cogent enough as a preliminary definition of communication. It must, however, be expanded in two respects: the role of communication in the construction of reality must be addressed, and the different practical possibilities of "making something known" available to participants in communicative interaction need to be specified.

In their review of the development of the notion of communication through history, Pearce and Cronen (4) point out that what was in the Modern era conceived as "an odorless, colorless vehicle of thought and expression" is now understood as "a form of human action by which persons co-create and co-maintain social reality". This means, according to Pearce and Cronen (5), that "(c)ommunication is inherently problematic, consisting of conjoint behaviour by two or more persons functioning within interpersonal rule systems that cannot be fully known or controlled by any of the individuals involved."

Pearce (6) concludes: "Rather than a means by which 'internal' states are expressed and 'objective' facts represented, communication is that process by which 'persons', 'institutions' and 'facts' are constructed."

Communication, in this view, is not to be understood merely as a medium by means of which bits of information concerning states of affairs are conveyed between participants, but as a process through which states of affairs are constructed. While this general characterization of the function of communication as the basis of the reality within which people conduct their lives seems congruent with my approach to the epistemological criteria of psychological knowledge, it must be pointed out that the adoption of this view has acute ramifications for ontology and epistemology, and for the relationship between ontological and epistemological propositions.

If it is accepted that knowledge is not possible independently of communicative interaction - i.e., that knowledge must fulfill some set of criteria constructed and maintained in a social context in order to be accepted as knowledge - the question of the viability of universal, regulative principles in psychology must be confronted. I wish to argue that the crucial choice is indeed made here: if communication is viewed in the above terms, such principles are no longer viable. The notion of psychological laws requires the kind of definition of communication which Pearce and Cronen, above,

describe as the Modern concept of communication - "the odorless, colourless vehicle of thought and action" - which appears quite difficult to justify. Psychological knowledge must, it seems, be worked out in the kind of reality based on communicative interaction described by Bateson (7):

-- the Newtonian world ascribes reality to objects and achieves its simplicity by excluding the context of the context - excluding indeed all metarelationships - a fortiori excluding an infinite regress of such relations. In contrast, the theorist of communication insists upon examining the metarelationships while achieving its simplicity by excluding all objects.

This world, of communication, is a Berkeleyan world, but the good bishop was guilty of understatement. Relevance or reality must be denied not only to the sound of the tree which falls unheard in the forest but also to this chair which I can see and on which I am sitting. My perception of the chair is communicationally real, and that on which I sit is, for me, only an idea, a message in which I put my trust.

It is clear that if we adopt the view of the role of communication in the construction of reality advocated here, the traditional juxtapositions between realism and idealism as well as objectivity and relativism must eventually be reconsidered. I will attempt a clarification of these issues in a later chapter.

3. Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

It is my intention to consider the production of psychological knowledge in terms of communicative interaction between the investigator and the person or persons whose conduct is being investigated on the one hand and between the investigator and other investigators on the other. I take it for granted that regardless of variations in methodological technique, all validation of hypotheses pertaining to the motive forces underlying people's conduct entails some kind of communicative interaction between the investigator and the other(s): the investigator seeks support for his hypothesis based on some theory of the motive forces underlying people's conduct by means of entering a communicative relationship of some nature with other people.

It may be ventured that psychological investigations are ordinarily based on verbal interaction - both talk and written documents play various parts in the production of an item of psychological knowledge from the construction of hypotheses to the accumulation of evidence and the reportage of the results of the investigation. In everyday interaction, talk may be characterized as the primary device of communication: according to Goffman (8), "(i)t is an

example of that arrangement by which individuals come together and sustain matters having a ratified, joint, current, and running claim upon attention, a claim which lodges them together in some sort of intersubjective, mental world".

For the purposes of my present argument, however, I wish to extend the scope of communication beyond merely verbal exchanges. Messages may be conveyed between people by various non-verbal means. Harré (9) concurs: "By 'conversation' I mean not only speech exchanges of all kinds, but any flow of interactions brought about through the use of a public semiotic system, such as that involved in the meaningful flying of flags, the wearing of uniforms, ballroom dancing, gestures and grimaces, a concourse d'élégance and so on." Any exchange of signifiers - facial expressions, gestures, glances, inarticulate grunts, and forms of communication further down the line towards non-verbal actions such as kisses, hugs, the showing of an erect middle finger, physical expressions of aggression and violence and so on - may count as communicative interaction in particular situations in different cultures: something is made known to somebody.

It is when a misunderstanding or disagreement arises

or when the issue at hand should be explained to an outsider that more universal media of communication - e.g. verbal language - are resorted to. In particular circumstances, two people may communicate in a mutually satisfactory manner merely by looking at each other: it is taken for granted that this exchange of glances conveys a particular view of whatever it is that is currently attended to. Should the participants later find that they did not after all mean the same thing, the disagreement must be discussed in a medium of communication other, and apparently more universal and public than than the original and quite private medium of glances. The disagreement must, so to speak, be referred to a larger vocabulary of signifiers which allows for more versatile argumentation and more explicit methods of validation. While verbal language seems, empirically, a commonly accepted instrument of argumentation, other possibilities of making something known to somebody must be acknowledged when the limits of understanding are approached - for instance, when limit cases such as "infants", "geriatrics", the "mentally handicapped" and so on are encountered in practical situations of communicative interaction.

4. Communication vs. action: a problematic distinction

I wish at this juncture to problematize the categorical distinction between the notions of communication and action. This, I think, is an important point if we want to consider the criteria of understanding the meaning of people's conduct. The theory of speech acts as introduced by Austin (10) and developed by Searle (11) may serve as a bridge between the two spheres of human conduct. As Labov and Fanshel (12) put it, "(t)he term /speech act/ may be clarified by noting that a speech act is an action carried out by means of speech".

Austin proposed a distinction between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts: roughly, a locutionary speech act is one by means of which a person says something; an illocutionary speech act is one by means of which a person performs an action by saying something; and, finally, a perlocutionary speech act is one by means of which a person achieves an effect in his audience. In Habermas's words (13), "the three acts that Austin distinguishes can be characterized in the following

catch-phrases: to say something, to act in saying something, to bring about something through acting in saying something".

For my present purposes, I wish to propose that the notion of speech acts in itself renders the distinction between communication and action sufficiently problematic as to warrant the elimination of any precise boundary between the two forms of making things known. Heritage (14) points out that "(a)ll uses of language, including the most mundane of descriptions, are routinely - if tacitly - understood as actions which are grasped through an understanding of the purposes and intentions of speakers. -- Speaking is a major domain of social action and is not to be treated as something separate from social action or as organized by a separate set of methods".

It is interesting to note that Habermas (15) disagrees: "The self-sufficiency of the speech act is to be understood in the sense that the communicative intent of the speaker and the illocutionary aim he is pursuing follow from the manifest meanings of what is said. It is otherwise with teleological actions. We identify their meanings only in connection with the intentions their authors are pursuing and the ends

they want to realize. As the meaning of what is said is constitutive for illocutionary acts, the intention of the agent is constitutive for teleological actions." The distinction between speech acts and (teleological) actions is, however, rendered problematic by the introduction of the epistemological dimension: in order get to know "the meaning of what is said" or "the intention of the agent", we must, presumably, enter into communicative interaction of some sort with the person in question and find out what he means by his utterance or intends by his action. If we obtain a satisfactory answer, we understand his conduct better than we did before. The distinction between "action" and "communication" seems unwarranted: while the meaning of an action may be elucidated by means of communication, communication obtains its meaning from action.

Habermas, however, wishes to maintain the distinction between action and communication for the purposes of his theory of communicative action. "To avoid misunderstanding", he emphasizes (16), "I would like to repeat that the communicative model of action does not equate action with communication. Language is a medium of communication that serves understanding, whereas actors, in coming to an understanding with

one another so as to coordinate their action, pursue their particular aims." Be this as it may, Habermas's statement does not furnish an explicit justification for the strict distinction between the concepts of communication and action: both may carry meanings the validation of which may take place with or without reference to verbal justification, depending on the methods of justification prevalent in particular networks of communicative interaction.

I conclude that the distinction between action and communication is ambiguous enough as to justify a loose definition of communication in which no precise boundary between the two spheres of conduct is drawn. Even though verbal language may in the majority of cases be the final court of appeal for the validation of agreements and disagreements, communicative networks may be imaginable in which agreements are based on non-verbal and intuitive methods of communication.

This loose definition of communication implies a similarly loose notion of rationality - i.e. rationality must be understood in the general sense of an intersubjective method of justification of beliefs.

5. The Meaning of Meaning

I have suggested that the notion of communication is necessary for the notion of psychological knowledge - i.e., epistemologically valid propositions about the motive forces underlying people's conduct. Objectivist approaches to the study of these motive forces have been variously criticized for what amounts to their failure to attend to the rational character of people's conduct (17). This by now quite familiar line of criticism pointed out that the person whose conduct was being studied might have made his moves in the context of a meaning system which was completely or partly different from that of the investigator and that, consequently, the observed movements may have signified something else altogether than what the investigator took them to signify. The other person was doing one thing, while the investigator thought he was doing another. The establishment of what was really going on requires negotiation of the meaning of the conduct in question between the investigator and the other person.

What, then, is meaning? Harré (18) observes that "meaning is a notoriously troublesome concept, and no

common understanding of it can be presumed". Sainsbury (19), however, braves an attempt at definition: "Our experience consists of interrelated perceptions, thoughts, communications and actions. All this experience is experience of something and that something is characterized in a particular way before we can be said to experience it at all. Such characterization is the application of meaning." Meaning, in other words, is inseparable from perception, thought, communication and action; the establishment of the meaning of other people's conduct presupposes involvement in communicative interaction. Taylor (20) offers a useful articulation of the argument for inclusion of meaning in the production of psychological knowledge:

(1) Meaning is for a subject: it is not the meaning of the situation in vacuo, but its meaning for a subject, a specific subject, a group of subjects, or perhaps what its meaning is for the human subject as such (even though particular humans might be reproached with not admitting or realizing this). (2) Meaning is of something; that is, we can distinguish between a given element - situation, action, or whatever - and its meaning. But this is not to say that they are physically separable. -- And (3) Things only have meaning in a field, that is, in relation to the meanings of other things. This means that there is no such thing as a single, unrelated meaningful element; and it means that changes in the other meanings in the field can involve changes in the given element. Meanings cannot be identified except in relation to others, and in this way resemble words.

While these observations seem to provide a

sufficiently explicit circumscription of the meaning of meaning, Taylor's second point requires attention: "we can distinguish between a given element -- and its meaning". This distinction seems questionable. Taylor seems to imply that the meaning of an "element" may be detached from and attached to the element like a label of some kind. It must be asked whether this view is justifiable. As far as the investigation of the motive forces of of people's conduct is concerned, the meaning of something is that something; when meaning is subtracted from an experience, or an instance of conduct, there seems to be no residual. What is left does not mean anything. For all epistemological purposes, the meaning of an instance of conduct is that instance of conduct. As Harré (21) puts it, "We do not ask: 'Here is an action - what is its meaning?', but 'What is going on?'".

6. The Criteria of Understanding

From the epistemological viewpoint, the central aspect of the problem of meaning is the method of verification employed by the investigator of the motive forces underlying people's conduct - i.e. how the investigator (or anyone else, for that matter) knows that he has reliably grasped the meaning of a particular instance of conduct or speech performed by another person. Habermas (22) points out that "(m)eanings - whether embodied in actions, institutions, products of labor, words, networks of cooperation, or documents - can be made accessible only from the inside. Symbolically prestructured reality forms a universe that is hermetically sealed to the view of observers incapable of communicating; that is, it would have to remain incomprehensible to them. The lifeworld is open only to subjects who make use of their competence to speak and act. They gain access to it by participating, at least virtually, in the communications of members and thus becoming at least potential members themselves." Meaning, according to Habermas, may thus only be established from the first-person, participatory position; the position of the third-person observer precludes the understanding of meaning.

Meaning may be explained by means of words. Verbal explanation consists of referring words to other words the meanings of which are assumed to be more self-explanatory, or familiar to the participants in the same way. In many cases, this assumption is undoubtedly adequate for the practical purposes at hand, but as an epistemological method of verification it has its weaknesses: if we explain the meaning of a word by reference to other words, concepts and expressions will never reach a legitimate end. The final reference must again be accounted for by a further reference to an expression, the meaning of which must be assumed to be self-explanatory. McGinn (23) points out that "(t)o interpret a sign -- is simply to translate it into another sign; and translation cannot by itself determine meaning or understanding, since the sign into which the translation is made must itself be understood in a particular way. At some point understanding must break out of the circle of signs - no matter what sort of a sign we consider".

To "break out of the circle of signs" would seem to presuppose reference to whatever activities the participants engage in in their lives. Taylor (24)

notes that "(t)he meanings and norms implicit in these practices are not just in the minds of the actors but are out there in the practices themselves, practices which cannot be conceived as a set of individual actions, but which are essentially modes of social relation, of mutual action". This means, in other words, that the meanings of actions are ultimately dependent on ostensive definitions (25): in order to convey the meaning of an action to another person, we must show him what it means in relation to other actions in our form of life.

An example may shed light on the matter. Let us suppose that somebody tries to explain to us what a spade is. We are newcomers from an alien culture and have never seen one. Our instructor tells us that a spade is used for digging. Coherently enough, however, as we have never before encountered a spade, we do not know what "digging" is either. Perhaps there are no gardens where we come from. The Earthling proceeds to show us what "digging" means: he sticks the spade into the soil, performs the rest of the relevant movements, and proclaims: "This is digging, and the spade is the tool used for the purpose of digging." But, as we have no gardens at home, we are still puzzled: OK, so he sticks this thing in the soil and turns a bit of it over, but

what does it mean? Why does he do it? What is he doing? Our host - apparently patience itself - tells us what a garden is: a patch of land on which edible plants are intentionally cultivated by humans. We may now say "Now I see what you mean" - whereupon our host would nod eagerly and heave a sigh of relief - or we may still be puzzled: "What is 'eating'?" But at some point along the line of questions like this lead us across the borderline between understanding and incomprehension, and between two genuinely incompatible languages: beyond that point, we would not be human beings, and we would have little chance of understanding the other person's meanings, and the context in which he realizes his existence; there would be no communication in any sensible use of the term.

Showing the meaning of an expression, in other words, presupposes familiarity with a particular form of life in the context of which a number of basic concepts are already shared. As Von Wright (26) puts it, "(j)ust as the use and the understanding of language presuppose a language community, the understanding of action presupposes a community of institutions and practices and technological equipment into which one has been introduced by learning and training. One could perhaps call it a

life-community. We cannot understand or teleologically explain behaviour which is completely alien to us".

The final criterion is participation in the other person's form of life, and perhaps sharing a practical project with him, until the demands of a successful practical action gradually make sure that the participants do indeed entertain a common system of meanings upon which they are in agreement. If we grab the spade and start digging what we now know to be a garden, if we go on doing it for as long as the job is done, and especially if we take part in watering and weeding and maintaining the garden and, in time, in harvesting, eating and perhaps even marketing its produce, we reach and even fuller understanding of the place of a spade in this particular system of meanings. The more fully we participate in a particular form of life, or life-community, the better qualified we are to grasp the meanings in the context of which the other participants mind their business - and, also, to contribute to the construction and further development of those meanings.

Winch (27) points out that meaningful conduct is

rule-governed: our conduct is meaningful if it follows a rule. To follow a rule, in turn, presupposes that we commit ourselves to a particular kind of conduct also in the future. Our behaviour is transformed into action when we manage to convey to whoever is making the ascription the impression that it takes place in the context of a system of rules of some description. This means that we commit ourselves to the possible outcomes of our action as implied by the system of rules within which that action is situated. Our conduct acquires a meaning, and that meaning establishes it as action.

But how can we be certain that we have understood the meaning of somebody's action correctly, or that somebody as understood ours?

It seems that we cannot. In the end, the criterion problem merges into the routine of practical action and material practices which is accepted as justified until it is questioned once more: it becomes absorbed into and liquidated by convention - which, by definition, is something implicit and unquestioned, and thus, for the present purposes, beyond epistemological validation. In this way, the determination of the meaning of signs and actions is in constant interplay between convention and

questioning. As long as somebody keeps using a spade in a manner which seems to be at least roughly in accord with our own system of meanings, we have no reason to cast doubt on whether or not he has grasped the correct meanings of a spade. When for some reason or other we open discussion on the meaning, and uses of, a spade, we may find that the other person was in fact doing something completely different from digging a garden; he may have entertained a meaning for the spade which entailed a completely different system of meanings for what we regarded as gardens, cultivation, food, survival, material existence, and so on. When we decide that re-negotiation of the prevalent conceptual system must end, at least for the moment, and go on with whatever the current project is now called, the meanings involved merge once again into routine, tradition and convention - and gradually sink from the sphere of rational justification into the realm of irrationality. We may still be wrong about the meaning of a word: it may turn out that, even though we have thought we have been doing the same thing as the other participants, their idea of what they were doing was different from ours. Ostensibly, we may use a concept perfectly competently or act as if we would be fully familiar with its meaning, but it may suddenly transpire that what was thought of as our grasp of the meaning of

the item in question was in fact mere imitation without any real sense of what it represented to the rest of the community.

The problem of finalizing adequate criteria of meaning is usefully illustrated by Ayer (28): "But unless there is something that one is allowed to recognize, no test can ever be completed: there will be no justification for the use of any sign at all. -- It is through hearing what other people say, or through seeing what they write, or observing their movements, that I am enabled to conclude that their use of the word agrees with mine." Ayer reiterates the view I took up above: the final criterion of meaning is not to be found in further references to signs, but in that sphere of existence where reference and practical action intermingle. Ayer goes on (29): "My argument is that since every process of checking must terminate in some act of recognition, no process of checking can establish anything unless some acts of recognition are taken as valid in themselves. This does not imply that these acts of recognition are uncheckable in the sense that their deliverances could not in their turn be subjected to further checks; but then these further checks would again have to terminate in acts of recognition which were taken as valid in themselves and so on ad

infinitum."

The limit, as Ayer points out, must be drawn at some point in time for shared meaning to be possible at all. After a certain period of successful mutual involvement in the practices of the community - involvement, in other words, in those activities to which the concepts used by the participants refer - we no longer doubt the former outsider's understanding of the meaning of the projects in which he is involved. It is here that Wittgenstein's remark (30) acquires its weight: "If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also -- in judgements." We must believe that we - ourselves and the former outsider - are genuinely committed to the same aim. It is here that we give up attempts at explicit justification and get on with whatever pragmatic projects it is that we are involved in and do not doubt the value of. We share, or assume that we share, the same judgements as to what is worth our while. This is the boundary between knowledge and belief, or intuition; and this is where the realm of rationality ends.

One more point needs to be made on the argument that

the criteria of understanding the meaning of a person's conduct are finally to be found in the activities of a community and the commitment of both the person in question and ourselves - i.e., the investigators - to those activities. This point concerns the possibility of private meaning. McGinn's (31) objections to what he sees as the implications of the "community thesis" of criteria of meaning capture this point in a concise form:

The strongest community thesis is presumably this: it is not possible for an individual to follow rule R unless he is a participating member of a rule-following community in which R is also followed by others. -- So strong is this thesis that it excludes the possibility of someone introducing a rule which only he follows, say a word which only he (in fact) understands: thus the thesis declares impossible a creative mathematician who discovers a new mathematical function which he names and perhaps goes on to investigate (think of the discovery of exponentiation), or a zoologist who comes across a hitherto unknown species and gives it a name. Such newly introduced expressions are not of course incapable of being grasped by persons other than their original introducer; but they would be cases of words which only one member of a linguistic community in fact understands. I take it as obvious that this strong thesis is self-evidently absurd, and I doubt that it has ever been (explicitly) held: it makes nonsense of the idea that a member of a rule-following community can be innovative in the rules he follows. (32)

McGinn's counter-argument is, it seems, based on quite a fundamental epistemological oversight - i.e., a failure to recognize the tautological nature of the "community thesis": if an innovation, or a meaning, is private, this means that it is not available to

others, including us, the investigators. As long as the zoologist or mathematician only uses the new rule privately, we - the others - cannot know of it by definition. It is only after the rule is communicated to us, the others, or the community, that we know of it and are able to talk about it. This is how new concepts and meanings come about in the first place: they are introduced into the sphere of communicative interaction and incorporated into the existing system of concepts or meanings. But if an innovation is truly private, we cannot know about it, and there is no other criterion of its existence - unless the innovator is myself, and then I just know; but nobody else does, until I choose to tell them.

7. Accounts and Accountability

The early reaction against the traditional third-person approaches to the study of human conduct drew attention to the artificial nature of the methodology customarily employed in research (33). It was pointed out that, in many cases, relevant information on the psychological functioning of subjects could be best generated by means of asking them instead of mobilizing a complex array of experiments, tests, questionnaires and other techniques of assessment designed for the purpose. This orientation was based on the assumption that a person is himself the best authority on his conduct and the motive forces that underlie them. The concept of accounts thus gained prominence. It was argued that the actor's account - i.e. his own justification for the conduct under investigation - was the primary data of psychological research, and that it should form the basis of the explanation of conduct instead of mere observation and other traditional techniques of collecting evidence. Shotter (34) provides a description of this development:

The central shift of perspective -- is the attention paid, not at all to the structure of behaviour itself, but to the structure and function of the accounts of behaviour that people give of themselves

in their everyday social life. Accounts can be distinguished from theories in this sense: an account of an action or activity is concerned with talking about the action or activity as the activity it is.

According to Harré and Secord (35), "(m)eaning is elucidated in the accounts of sequences of actions, and these accounts are often commentaries, produced in real life for the purpose of justification, explanation or excuse". Accounting - i.e., the multifarious ways of how people make sense of their situation and report this sense to others - was introduced as a central area of study by Garfinkel (36) and investigated since by the proponents of the ethnomethodological approach. Garfinkel's "leading policy is to refuse serious consideration to the prevailing proposal that efficiency, efficacy, effectiveness, intelligibility, consistency, planfulness, typicality, uniformity, reproducibility of activities - i.e. that rational properties of practical activities - be assessed, recognized, categorized, described by using a rule or a standard obtained outside actual setting within which such properties are recognized, used, produced, and talked about by settings' members" (37). The ethnomethodological approach takes it for granted that people organize their practical activities in a rational manner, whatever the particular characteristics of that rationality may be. People,

in other words, are able to account for them when asked to do so. "Any setting", Garfinkel continues (38), "organizes its activities to make its properties as an organized environment of practical activities detectable, countable, recordable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analyzable - in short, accountable."

The same principle forms the basis of the ethogenic approach to the study of human action introduced by Harré and Secord (39) and further developed in Harré (40) and Harré, Clarke and De Carlo (41). The ethogenic method focuses on the analysis of those accounts in search of the meanings the actors give to their actions and the rules and conventions which they follow (42).

Accounts, however, are not the whole story. Unquestioning reliance on the subject's accounts of his conduct and his interpretations of the motive forces underlying it is based on a neglect of the importance of communicative interaction between the investigator and the other person similar to the traditional non-communicative approach. While people may well be said to be the best authorities on their actions, it must be noted that the actor's version of why he does what he does is subject to continuous revision, augmentation and enrichment if the dialogue

is allowed to continue - that is, if he is given feedback on his account, if he gets a chance to comment on this feedback, and so on, until the participants agree on a satisfactory interpretation.

In this way, the meaning of an instance of conduct is intersubjectively constructed in the course of the investigation; in terms of epistemology, meanings only come into existence through communicative interaction. There is, after all, nothing that can be known about private meanings.

8. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have attempted to define the notions of communicative interaction on the one hand and meaning on the other. I pointed out that it is useful for the purposes of the present study to question any categorical distinction between (1) verbal and non-verbal communication and (2) between communication and action: messages can be conveyed and meanings can be shared in ways which resist such classifications. After a discussion of the criteria of understanding the meaning of conduct, I concluded that the notion of meaning is inseparable from the

notion of communicative interaction. I will now proceed to examine the process of reaching agreements on psychological propositions in terms of different modes of communicative interaction.

NOTES

- (1) Shotter (1986), p. 8.
- (2) Rommetveit (1979), p. 94.
- (3) Blakar (1984), p. 17.
- (4) Pearce and Cronen (1980), p. 31.
- (5) Ibid., p. 21.
- (6) Pearce (1989), p. xvi.
- (7) Bateson (1973), p. 221.
- (8) Goffman (1981), p. 70.
- (9) Harré (1983), p. 65.
- (10) Austin (1962).
- (11) Searle (1969).
- (12) Labov and Fanshel (1977), p. 59.
- (13) Habermas (1984), p. 289.
- (14) Heritage (1984), p. 310.
- (15) Habermas (1984), p. 289.
- (16) Ibid., p. 16.
- (17) Garfinkel (1967), Harré and Secord (1972) and Shotter (1984) have championed this point.
- (18) Harré (1983), p. 281.
- (19) Sainsbury (1987), p. 17.
- (20) Taylor (1979), pp. 32-33.
- (21) Harré (1987).
- (22) Habermas (1984), p. 112.
- (23) McGinn (1984), p. 117.

- (24) Taylor (1979), p. 45.
- (25) Winch (1958), p. 32.
- (26) Von Wright (1971), pp. 114-115.
- (27) Winch (1958), pp. 52-65.
- (28) Ayer (1967), p. 87.
- (29) Ibid., ftn.
- (30) Wittgenstein (1958), 1, para. 242.
- (31) McGinn (1984).
- (32) Ibid., pp. 194-195.
- (33) Harré and Secord (1972) and Gauld and Shotter (1977) draw particular attention to this issue.
- (34) Shotter (1984), p. 3.
- (35) Harré and Secord (1972), p. 166.
- (36) Garfinkel (1967).
- (37) Ibid., p. 33.
- (38) Ibid.
- (39) Harré and Secord (1972).
- (40) Harré (1983).
- (41) Harré, Clarke and De Carlo (1985).
- (42) Ibid., p. 24.

CHAPTER THREE

Modes of Communication in the Production of Psychological Knowledge

1. Introduction

The central role of communicative interaction in the construction of meaning is by no means a novel one: it has been emphasized by a considerable number of investigators and theorists in the past few decades. Symbolic interactionism, as developed by Mead (1), focuses on the ways in which the relevant features of the world are constituted and situations defined by means of symbolization in human interaction; Goffman (2) has studied extensively the ways in which people make use of the frames of reference, rituals and roles - both verbal and non-verbal - available to them in defining their situations; the ethnomethodological approach introduced and developed by Garfinkel (3) concentrates on the processes of interpretation and negotiation by means of which people construct and share meanings in their everyday activities. While any comprehensive review of this literature is beyond my present scope, I will return to the epistemological implications of ethnomethodology in a later section.

Here, however, my intention is to consider the role of two basic modes of communicative interaction - i.e., one-directional and two-directional communication - in the production of psychological knowledge, and the communicative relationship between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated. In order to maintain the epistemological perspective of this study, we must accept that this task requires flexible shifts between the alternate positions of the first-person participant and the third-person, fly-on-the-wall observer. While studying a particular instance of communicative interaction, we play a part in the larger network of interaction which includes ourselves as investigators.

In this context, validation of propositions about the motive forces underlying the conduct of others becomes a moot point. It is one thing to make observations of the relationship between the investigator and the other participant, or participants, in an investigation. It is another matter for the investigator to include himself in the communicative network within which psychological knowledge is being produced. As such an inclusion places particular emphasis on the mode of communicative interaction between the participants

and on the process of how a "result" of the investigative enterprise is achieved and reported to outsiders, the notion of investigating this interaction by empirical means seems to warrant a careful re-evaluation.

2. The Notion of One-Directional vs. Two-Directional Communicative Interaction

In Chapter 1, above, I introduced the notion of feedback between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated as a basic concern in the present investigation of what may be said to constitute epistemologically valid psychological knowledge. In this chapter, I will distinguish between two different modes of communicative interaction according to the extent to which they allow, and make use of, feedback between the participants in an investigation. I call these two modes simply two-directional and one-directional communicative interaction.

Two-directional communicative interaction would be defined as an open feedback system between the investigator and the other person. In the production of psychological knowledge, this would mean that the investigator keeps the other participant or participants in the investigation informed about the aims of the study, the rationale of the techniques employed, and the meaning he ascribes to his (the other's) responses. The other participant is provided with an opportunity to comment on these matters and to present his own interpretation of his responses.

The interpretation of the other participant's responses is, presumably, the critical area of this feedback system; from the epistemological viewpoint, it does not seem to matter if the other participant is tricked into responding under false pretences, provided that the real purpose and design of the investigation is revealed to him before the findings are reported to the rest of the community. The outer limit of two-directional communicative interaction is reached when the participants share their subjective views on the relevant aspects of the situation with each other.

One-directional communicative interaction is, as may be anticipated, the opposite of the two-directional

kind. The feedback system is either wholly or partly closed, and the other participants in the investigation - i.e., those who provide the "evidence" for the investigator's hypothesis - are not provided an opportunity to comment on the purpose of the study, the investigator's hypothesis and the interpretation of his responses. The other participant's understanding of the situation is not taken into account, and his responses are assessed in the context of a system of meanings in the construction of which he has not taken part.

In terms of my initial argument that agreement between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated is the basic criterion of epistemologically valid psychological knowledge, it is clear that such an agreement may only be reached by means of two-directional communicative interaction. Two-directional communication is congruent with the investigative position of the first-person participant, whereas the position of the third-person observer is based on one-directional communication.

I wish to clarify these two modes of communicative interaction by placing them in the more general theoretical framework provided by Habermas's theory

of communicative action and, in particular, by his juxtaposition of action oriented to success and action oriented to reaching understanding (4).

"Success", for Habermas (5), "is defined as the appearance in the world of a desired state, which can, in a given situation, be causally produced through goal-oriented action or omission." Habermas goes on to call an action oriented to success instrumental when it is considered under the aspect of following technical rules of action and when the efficiency of an intervention into a complex of circumstances and events becomes assessed (6). Conversely, an action oriented to success is called strategic when it is considered in relation to following rules of rational choice and appraised from the standpoint of the efficacy of influencing the decisions of rational opponents (7).

According to Habermas, instrumental action is the nonsocial form of action oriented to success, whereas strategic action is its social manifestation. By way of contrast to the categories of action oriented to success, Habermas proposes the category of communicative action which is applicable when "the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but

through acts of reaching understanding" (8). "In communicative action", Habermas elaborates (9), "participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions".

In the framework of communicative action, participants aim at the realisation of "an agreement which is the condition under which all participants in the interaction may pursue their own plans" (10). Elsewhere, Habermas points out that "(t)he goal of coming to an understanding - - is to bring about an agreement - - that terminates in the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another. Agreement is based on recognition of the corresponding validity claims of comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness, and rightness" (11).

Habermas goes on to suggest that "the actors themselves, in every phase of interaction, can know - however vaguely and intuitively - whether they are adopting a strategic-objectivating attitude towards the other participants or are oriented to consensus"

(12) or, at least, "under suitable conditions, these attitudes should be identifiable on the basis of the intuitive knowledge of the participants themselves"

(13). People, in other words, can genuinely know whether they are acting to further their egocentric aims or trying to reach an agreement with some other person or persons.

Throughout, Habermas emphasizes the rational character of agreements reached in action oriented to reaching understanding:

A communicatively achieved agreement has a rational basis; it cannot be imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through influencing the decisions of opponents. Agreement rests on common convictions. The speech act of one person succeeds only if the other accepts the offer contained in it by taking (however implicitly) a 'yes' or 'no' position on a validity claim that is in principle criticizable. Both ego, who raises a validity claim with his utterance, and alter, who recognizes or rejects it, base their decisions on potential grounds or reasons (14).

But not every would-be understanding satisfies the specific criteria Habermas wishes to establish for legitimate agreements.

Reaching understanding -- is considered to be a process of reaching agreement -- among speaking and acting subjects. Naturally, a group of persons can feel at one in a mood which is so diffuse that it is difficult to identify the propositional content or the intentional object to which it is directed. Such a collective like-mindedness -- does not satisfy the conditions for the type of agreement -- in which attempts at reaching understanding terminate when

they are successful. A communicatively achieved agreement, or one that is mutually presupposed on communicative action, is propositionally differentiated. Owing to this linguistic structure, it cannot be merely induced through outside influence; it has to be accepted or presupposed as valid by the participants. (15)

Habermas requires of legitimate agreements that they be propositionally differentiated and linguistically structured. The participants in an agreement must also display a sufficient degree of communicative competence (16) which Habermas describes principally in linguistic terms. I will discuss the limitations of Habermas's consensus theory of truth in the following chapter; for the present, I wish to point out that it is not an unproblematic matter to limit valid agreements only to linguistically structured ones. Insofar as the notion of rationality is understood in the widest possible sense of justification of beliefs, the question of how a distinction is made between experiential and linguistic - or implicit and explicit, or non-verbal and verbal - justification needs to be addressed. It seems inopportune to assume that the linguistic structures prevalent in other cultures or communities would ipso facto resemble those of ours closely enough as to make the identification of their criteria of justification unproblematic. The same reservations must preliminarily be voiced about

Habermas's criteria of communicative competence: if an agreement is reached in a network of interaction in which we are not participants, are we entitled to judge the validity of that agreement by our criteria - in other words, can we be certain that the same criteria of communicative competence are a priori applicable in all possible networks of interaction?

If not, the application of our criteria to an agreement reached in a network in which we are not participants would appear to require that we enter that network and proceed to argue for the validity of our criteria until agreement is reached. But I will return to these limitations of the criteria of agreements in the next chapter.

It will be quite clear by this point that, for all practical purposes, the Habermasian category of action oriented to success corresponds quite closely to my original notion of one-directional communicative interaction. Similarly, Habermas's category of action oriented to consensus corresponds to my notion of two-directional interaction. In order to keep the Habermasian categories in perspective - I am not, for example, prepared to commit the notions of one-directional and two-directional interaction to Habermas's strict requirements of propositional

content and linguistic structure - I am going to keep to my original dichotomy also from now on.

3. The Identification of One-Directional and Two-Directional Modes of Communication

It might be thought that it is relatively unproblematic to describe a psychological investigation in terms of one-directional communication. A checklist of obvious signs of the third-person, objectivating attitude suggests itself immediately. We must not, however, fall into the trap of tacitly adopting the one-directional mode of communicative interaction ourselves: the epistemological investigation at hand requires that we are constantly alert to how we are situated in relation to the networks of communicative interaction in which psychological knowledge is being produced. In order to be able to provide illustrations of modes of communication in terms of practical communicative exchanges without actually taking part in those exchanges, I propose to start off in the third-person attitude of an outside observer and then move on to problematize the notion of identifying modes of

communicative interaction from this position.

In a psychological investigation based on one-directional communicative interaction, the investigator - who is, after all, in the business of seeking valid answers to particular questions pertaining to the motive forces underlying people's conduct - stops communicating his interpretations, inferences and conclusions to the person(s) whose conduct is being investigated in order to be able to gain support for his hypothesis and, ultimately, to be able to report his result to the investigative community to which he subscribes. The person whose conduct is being investigated is thus deprived of an opportunity to reflect on the result in the context of the investigation and, potentially, to change his conduct on the basis of this reflection.

It may be argued that most of what is conventionally accepted as psychological knowledge - i.e. explanations of why people do what they do in the way they do it - is based on one-directional interaction in the sense that the investigator does not report his findings to the person or persons whose conduct is being investigated as part of the research design. The standard design appears to rely on the collection by means of a variety of techniques of responses

which are then interpreted or analyzed in terms of the hypothesis in support of which the evidence is being collected. The interaction is discontinued when the "subjects" of the study have provided the appropriate responses. There are variations in the extent to which the feedback system is limited: the most extreme case is the use of "naive subjects" who must not be aware of the real purpose of the investigation. As an analysis of anything like a sufficient sample of published empirical studies is beyond the scope of the present text, I will illustrate the notion of a psychological investigation based on one-directional communicative interaction with a relevant example - i.e., Milgram's well-known study of obedience of authority (17).

4. An Illustration of One-Directional Communicative Interaction in the Production of Psychological Knowledge: Milgram's Study of Obedience

The choice of Milgram's study as an example of results generated by means of one-directional interaction may seem obvious to the point of triviality. After all, the experiments on which the study was based were a paradigm of one-directional communication. Under the pretext of an experimental study of paired-associate learning, "naive subjects" were instructed to administer progressively stronger electric shocks of up to 450 volts to a learner every time the latter failed to reproduce a pair of words correctly. The "learner" was an accomplice of the experimenter, and no real shocks were generated by the intricate device labelled "shock generator" which the subject manipulated in the course of the experiment.

Staged feedback from the experimenter was an important variable:

At various points in the experiment the subject would turn to the experimenter for advice on whether he should continue to administer shocks. Or he would

indicate that he did not wish to go on.

The experimenter responded with a sequence of 'prods', using as many as necessary to bring the subject into line.

Prod 1: Please continue, or, Please go on.

Prod 2: The experiment requires that you continue.

Prod 3: It is absolutely essential that you continue.

Prod 4: You have no other choice, you must go on.

The prods were made in sequence: only if prod 1 had been unsuccessful, could Prod 2 be used. If the subject refused to obey the experimenter after Prod 4, the experiment was terminated. The experimenter's tone of voice was at all times firm, but not impolite. The sequence was begun anew on each occasion that the subject balked or showed reluctance to follow orders. (18)

The famous results showed that, despite increasingly agonized protests and finally complete silence from the "learner", the majority of subjects proceeded to administer the maximum shock to him when he was in the adjacent room. A considerable number did so when the "learner" was in the same room, and even when they had to press his hand on the shock-plate in order to administer the punishment.

Milgram dismisses objections to the one-directional nature of his procedure (19) as irrelevant:

Baumrind writes: 'The game is defined by the experimenter and he makes the rules' --. It is true that for disobedience to occur the framework of the experiment must be shattered. That, indeed, is the point of the design. That is why obedience and disobedience are genuine issues for the subject. He must really assert himself as a person against a legitimate authority. (20)

The very aim of the experiment, in other words, was to investigate the consequences of one-directional interaction in a particular context. As far as this argument is concerned, Milgram is, of course, right: it is obvious that the consequences of one-directional interaction cannot be studied in a two-directional setting. Milgram even adopted the two-directional mode after the experiment was terminated: the subjects were "debriefed", i.e. told about the real aims of the study and interviewed on their feelings about the whole exercise.

So what is it that is wrong - in the epistemological sense - with Milgram's investigation of obedience to authority if we cannot accept that one-directional interaction cannot be studied in a two-directional setting?

In terms of communicative interaction, Milgram's otherwise impressive results may be criticized on the grounds that the interaction was discontinued by the investigator and the results reported prematurely: the results were produced in the context of one-way communicative interaction, and it would certainly have been rather surprising if the subjects would have behaved in a similar manner had the experiment

been replicated after the "debriefing" procedure - i.e., after the interaction had been made two-directional. It is, of course, conceivable that some of the subjects would have administered "severe shocks" to the "learner" even in a repeat experiment (in which the subject should have been told that now the shocks were real); but epistemologically legitimate conclusions could be drawn only when the subject in question agreed with the investigator on the interpretation of his conduct.

The fact that Milgram's experiments were about the consequences of one-directional communication and that their purpose would have been nullified by two-directional interaction does not make his results any more valid in the epistemological sense. While Milgram's results - namely, that even perfectly ordinary people were liable to engage in extremely harsh treatment of a fellow man - are in many ways highly instructive, they remain epistemologically unfounded.

It is poignant that while Milgram's experiment was designed in order to investigate obedience and disobedience to authority, actual discomfort was only caused to the naive subject, i.e. the "teacher", not the "learner". As Milgram reports (21), a number of his subjects expressed signs of severe distress and

what may from the outside be described only as panic, or hysteria:

As the experiment proceeds, laughter intrudes into his performance. At first, it is a light snicker, then it becomes increasingly insistent and disruptive. The laughter seemed triggered by the learner's screams. -- His very refined and authoritative manner of speaking is increasingly broken up by wheezing laughter. (22)

While Milgram does point out that the subjects were thoroughly "debriefed" after the experiment and that the after-effects of the experience were conscientiously monitored - "A year after his participation in the experiment, he affirms in the questionnaire that he has definitely learned something of personal importance as a result of being in the experiment" (23) - it seems reasonable to suggest that it is the experimenter rather than the naive subject who provides the more relevant illustration of obedience to authority in the context of Milgram's experiment. What made the experimenter, or the investigator, cause such acute distress to many subjects - to such an extent that the latter ended up behaving in ways totally alien to their self-concept? It may be ventured that it was a matter of obedience to some internal ("This is a useful scientific experiment") or external ("I have undertaken to do this job for Professor Milgram") authority. In this sense, the experiment did make its

point twice over, both internally and externally; judging by Milgram's reports, not a single experimenter broke off the experiment because of the distress caused to the naive subject.

Milgram's study could have produced epistemologically legitimate results if the obedience experiment had been used as an input into the interaction between the participants, and if the subsequent conduct of the subjects would have been investigated by means of two-directional methods - for example, whether the subjects would have been less liable to succumb to irrational obedience after the experience of Milgram's experiment than before. In this context, the experiment could have served as a preliminary part in, say, a study of social learning. As they were reported, Milgram's experiments may have been valuable for particular pragmatic purposes - for example, as an illustration of "the banality of evil", as he puts it (24); by treating them in the one-directional mode of communication, people can be tricked into treating other people in the one-directional mode of communication - but, from the epistemological viewpoint, they remain artefacts.

5. The Epistemological Status of One-Directional and Two-Directional Communication

The identification of one-directional and two-directional communicative interaction from the non-participatory position is not always as simple as in the case of Milgram's study. Labov and Fanshel (25) provide an illustration in the shape of an excerpt from a conversation between a therapist and his client:

Th. /therapist/: (breath) So - then - and for some reason you feel they're angry because you're so, underweight, or because they - think you're underweight.

R. /client/:I'on't - I dunno, I don't - I don't - I never felt like that - it's just that...no I never thought of it like that and I don't - I don't think I feel anger because...
(breath) I mean I jist get annoyed, like I'm not - I don't say I get - angry, but it jist gets annoying to hear the same thing.

R.: I mean, the first thing if I say I have a pain in my finger - right away, it's because 'Oh, you're thin!'
I mean, after awhile it gets annoying to hear and I-I-know that -

Th.: Yes.

R.: I guess - maybe I should let it - not bother me.

R.: I mean, I went to the doctor last week -

Th.: But why do they keep repeating it?

R.: I don't know.....

Th.: What are they feeling?

R.:that I'm doing it on purp - like, I w's - like they... well - they s - came out an' tol' me in so many words that they worry and worry an' I seem to take this very lightly.

Th.: So they get angry at you.

R.: Yes... they do, yes.

Th.: So there's a lot of anger passing back and forth.

R.:Yeh..

Th.: (Mm.)

It may be surmised that the therapist attempts to construct an acceptable interpretation of the client's account and to gauge her opinion of this interpretation. The therapist seems keen to introduce the concept of anger into the conversation - a word which the client does not mention:

(1) "So - then - and for some reason you feel they're angry because you're so, underweight or because they - think you're underweight."

(2) "So they get angry at you."

(3) "So there's a lot of anger passing back and forth."

This exchange might be preliminarily interpreted in terms of the therapist and his client reaching an

agreement on the interpretation suggested by the therapist after a rational and - in Habermas's (26) terms - undistorted exchange of views. The client's final affirmations ("Yes... they do, yes" and "...Yeh..") count as expressions of genuine agreement with the therapist's "anger" thesis: an agreement has been reached on the proposition that the client's conduct has (in some supposedly coherent way) been based on some regulative theory which incorporates anger.

We might, on the other hand, be excused for constructing the opposite interpretation. The therapist's contributions to the interaction might with some justification be interpreted in terms of one-directional communication: he is trying to convince his client of the validity of his interpretation based, apparently, on some underlying theory of human conduct. The central concept of his interpretation - i.e. anger - does not come up at all in the client's account. The therapist introduces it independently and proceeds to use it repeatedly and with clear emphasis. From this angle, the client's response might be interpreted as uncertain, vague and, perhaps, unconvinced:

"Yes... they do, yes."

".....Yeh.."

According to this interpretation, the therapist has acted in a strategic manner in order to achieve an appearance of an agreement with the client. The agreement, in other words, is not genuine; it is one achieved in the context of, as Habermas calls it, "systematically distorted communication" (27).

Habermas elucidates this concept thus:

Rationalization here means extirpating those relations of force that are inconspicuously set in the very structures of communication and that prevent conscious settlement of conflicts, and consensual regulation of conflicts, by means of intrapsychic as well as interpersonal communicative barriers. Rationalization means overcoming such systematically distorted communication in which the action-supporting consensus concerning the reciprocally raised validity claims - especially the consensus concerning the truthfulness of intentional expressions and the rightness of underlying norms - can be sustained in appearance only, that is, counter-factually. (28)

"Such communication pathologies", Habermas says (29), "can be conceived of as the result of a confusion between actions oriented to reaching understanding and actions oriented to success. In situations of concealed strategic action, at least one of the parties behaves with an orientation to success, but leaves others to believe that all the presuppositions of communicative action are satisfied".

Arguments may be proffered for the legitimacy of both of the above interpretations of the therapeutic episode described by Labov and Fanshel. After all, the client does seem to agree with the therapist's interpretation; on the other hand, the therapist's manner of leading the client to assent may be described as suggestive enough as to be considered consistent with the one-directional, strategic mode of communication.

So far, however, we have assessed the qualities of episodes of communicative interaction from the vantage point of an observer: we have had no opportunity to validate our interpretations of the dynamics of the network of communication under observation against the interpretations of the participants in that network. At this point, I propose that we remind ourselves of the epistemological aims of the present study and adopt the role of a participant.

6. Agreement As Ultimate Criterion

Above, I have been describing one-directional and two-directional modes of communication in terms of

their particular characteristics - i.e. how they appear to an observer. While perhaps necessary for the understanding of the issues involved, this method of distinguishing between the two dichotomical modes of communication is a highly problematic issue: if we devised a preliminary check-list of characteristics to look for in order to identify in terms of practical interaction an orientation to egocentric success on the one hand and an orientation to understanding on the other, we would ultimately have to rely on an interpretation of different aspects of particular cases of communicative interaction. The final criterion of the validity of an interpretation would, however, be agreement between the interpreter and the person whose conduct is being subjected to interpretation.

But the problem of interpretation is more fundamental than merely one of classifying speech acts into the two modes of communicative interaction I outlined above. I wish to argue that there is no independent method of establishing the validity of either interpretation: the interpretations must be referred back to the participants - with the reservations and impressions constructed by the observer - in order to ascertain the legitimacy of the agreement. It is

therefore ultimately irrelevant to the issue of the epistemological legitimacy of psychological knowledge qua interpretations to base the analysis of such legitimacy on the characteristics of the process of interaction as such. As the validity of such an analysis finally depends on the agreement of the relevant participants, it seems that we once more have to concede the only valid criterion of the correct identification of one-directional communication on the one hand and of two-directional communication on the other is the presence or absence of an agreement at the conclusion of the sequence of interaction in question. It is, in other words, the manner in which a sequence of interaction is discontinued which allows us to draw conclusions as to the validity of the interpretation produced in its course.

I return to this argument in connection with a critical assessment of certain aspects of Habermas's theory of communicative action in the next chapter.

7. The Possibility of Mistaken Agreement

I have proposed that, if we accept that the

production of psychological knowledge is essentially a function of the process of communicative interaction between the participants involved, those participants must agree on the suggested interpretation of the motive forces underlying the instance of conduct in question if it is to qualify as epistemologically legitimate. While I still maintain that this conclusion may not be evaded, some potential objections must be dealt with at this stage.

To begin with, it may be pointed out that agreements may be reached mistakenly. The participants in an agreement may find out that what they thought was a legitimate agreement had in fact been based on misunderstanding. Utterances of the type "But I thought you meant P" may be regarded as typical in a situation where the misunderstanding becomes explicit and the basis of the sense of agreement reached founders. How can we be certain that the agreement to which we subscribe is genuine - i.e., that there are no misunderstandings as to the meanings of the expressions employed in the negotiation of the agreement?

In the strictly epistemological sense, we cannot be certain from within the network of communicative

interaction in which the agreement has been reached. We may devise a checklist of criteria with a view to ascertaining the validity of the agreement, but there is no independent guarantee of the exhaustiveness of such a checklist. The notion of an agreement already implies criteria of some description: after all, if the agreement did not seem acceptable to us - according to whatever implicit or criteria we may entertain - we would not be party to it.

Any agreement to which we subscribe at the moment is open to re-evaluation when communicative practices - including both the symbolic-linguistic and material spheres of interaction - go on: while we may be in explicit agreement on the criteria of our shared understanding, these criteria may one day be replaced by new and more relevant ones, and the original agreement may become regarded as false by one, or several, of the participants.

It must be pointed out that even the falsehood of an agreement should be ascertained by means of some criteria - and, if agreement is regarded as the fundamental epistemological criterion, it must apparently be accepted that an agreement between the participants is required as the criterion of the identification of a previous agreement as false.

In other words, if we stick to a strict reading of the consensus theory of truth, the identification of an agreement as false requires the establishment of a new agreement as to the changed status of the previous one. If the participants, on the other hand, cease to be participants and seek new networks of agreement, no knowledge is produced, and epistemological criteria do not become applicable.

These observations may be extended to cover mistaken agreements due to misunderstandings in the use of language. Ultimately, agreements may be tested against continued, shared practices of action and communication. If the participants in an agreement engage in joint action and communication for a period of time and if no counter-arguments are brought forward, the agreement is still valid. There is, however, no certainty as to the validity of the agreement at a later point in time. If the validity of the agreement, on the other hand, becomes challenged, it may quite certainly be concluded that the agreement is no longer in force.

By way of summary: a current agreement cannot be false by definition. If counter-arguments or doubts

are not forthcoming and if the interaction has not broken down, it must be concluded that sufficient criteria for the validity of the agreement have been fulfilled. Current agreements may, however, become regarded as false at some future point in time. Sufficient criteria may only be fulfilled in the present. An agreement is either in force in the present or it is not an agreement.

8. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have introduced the notions of one-directional and two-directional communicative interaction and elaborated them by means of Habermas's categories of action oriented to success and action oriented to reaching understanding, to which they correspond. I argued that the production of epistemologically legitimate psychological knowledge requires two-directional communicative interaction; whatever hypotheses are validated by means of one-directional interaction do not count as psychological knowledge. The identification of the different modes of communication on the basis of the characteristics of the process of interaction is,

however, problematic: while we as observers may classify a communicative exchange as one-directional or two-directional, we are not in a position to know the meanings and rules operative within the network of interaction. It is only the presence of an explicit agreement that allows us to conclude that a communicative episode had been based on two-directional interaction. It may be said that if no consensus as to the validity of the hypothesis at hand is reached, the hypothesis cannot claim epistemological legitimacy in any case. If a consensus obtains, it may be observed that it could be the result of distorted communication or that the participants were not competent communicators. This, however, may only be subsumed to another process of communicative interaction: we must introduce our doubts into the network of interaction and find out whether the participants still remain committed to their agreement. As long as an agreement pertains, the validation of doubts as to its legitimacy leads to an infinite regress within which nothing may be said about the validity of the agreement.

I will now move on to examine three types of counter-argument against the notion of agreement between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated as the basic criterion of the validity

of psychological propositions. In Chapter Four, I will present a discussion of Habermas's views on the preconditions of acceptable agreements; in Chapter Five, I will assess the challenge to agreement as a criterion of validity posed by the notion of unconscious motive forces; and in Chapter Six, I will present a critique of Smedslund's theory of common sense as the basis of valid psychological propositions.

NOTES

- (1) Mead (1962).
- (2) Goffman (1959), (1974), (1981).
- (3) Garfinkel (1967).
- (4) Habermas (1984).
- (5) Ibid., p. 285.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.; also Habermas (1982), p. 264.
- (8) Ibid., pp. 285-286.
- (9) Ibid., p. 286.
- (10) Habermas (1982), p. 264.
- (11) Habermas (1979), p. 3.
- (12) Habermas (1982), p. 266.
- (13) Habermas (1984), p. 286.
- (14) Ibid., p. 287.
- (15) Ibid., pp. 286-287.
- (16) Habermas (1979), p. 29.
- (17) Milgram (1974); also Milgram (1977), pp. 92-146.
- (18) Milgram (1974), p. 21.
- (19) In this case, Baumrind (1964).
- (20) Milgram (1964), p. 850.
- (21) Milgram (1974), pp. 41-43.
- (22) Ibid., pp. 52-53.
- (23) Ibid., p. 54.
- (24) Ibid., p. 6.

- (25) Labov and Fanshel (1977), p. 371.
- (26) Habermas (1979), pp. 119-120.
- (27) Ibid.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Habermas (1984), p. 332.

Chapter Four

CONSENSUS AS CRITERION OF TRUTH: A CRITIQUE OF HABERMAS

While the consensus theory of truth as championed by Habermas is in principle congruent with - and, indeed, necessary for - my present argument about the epistemological basis of psychological propositions, certain aspects of Habermas's position require a critical assessment. Despite Habermas's original purpose of eliminating references to objectively true states of affairs as a criterion of the validity of propositions, it appears that some of the qualifications he attaches to his consensus theory of truth have the actual effect of perpetuating the notion of an objective state of affairs independent of the propositions put forward and discussed in the context of communicative interaction. Such qualifications, I wish to show, bear serious implications for the consensus theory of truth as a whole: after all, all qualifications attached to the notion of consensus must be introduced into communicative interactions by the participants - which, in due course, makes it logically impossible to externalize them. I will try to examine this difficulty below.

1. The Consensus Theory of Truth: A General Description

In reviewing Habermas's ideas on consensual agreement as the ultimate criterion of truth, I will loosely follow Hesse's (NOTE 1) treatment of the subject. This approach serves a dual purpose: while Hesse's article presents a succinct encapsulation of Habermas's views, her criticism of the latter also warrants some comments.

Hesse paraphrases Habermas's consensus theory of truth in five points:

(1) Since even the most elementary observation statements are expressed in terms of some theory language or other, and since these theory languages change with time, truth cannot inhere in observation statements simply as correspondence between statement and the empirical world.

(2) We therefore have to understand theory languages not as directly describing the world, but as interpreting it more and more "adequately" as science develops.

(3) "Adequacy" is measured by experimental verification, but also necessarily by argumentative reasoning from the truth of theoretical postulates formulated in the language.

(4) If adequacy were measured by verification alone we should fall into the meaning variance problem, because there would be no linguistic means of identifying the experience expressed in the language

of one theory with those expressed in the language of another. (It has to be assumed here either that ostensive face-to-face identifications do not work, or that they cannot be assumed to be available because communication between scientists typically takes place linguistically at a distance from the actual experiments referred to -- as Habermas puts it in a different context science is "dialogical", not "monological".)

(5) Therefore, in order to guarantee the identity of reference of observation statements made in different theoretical languages which are "about" the same subject matter, we cannot rely on their "correspondence" with the subject matter, but we rather need communication and argumentation between and within different theory-languages. (2)

Thus, the truth of propositions in both empirical science and in hermeneutic interpretations is defined as the ideal consensus of competent practitioners of those disciplines (3).

But must the consensus be "ideal" and the practitioners "competent" if it is to be legitimate? Let us first consider the notion of communicative competence - bearing in mind that the notions of the ideal speech situation and communicative competence seem closely interwoven.

2. Communicative Competence

Habermas (4) defines communicative competence as "the ability of a speaker oriented to mutual understanding to embed a well-formed sentence in relations to reality, that is:

1. To choose the propositional sentence in such a way that either the truth conditions of the proposition stated or the existential presuppositions of the propositional content mentioned are supposedly fulfilled (so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker);
2. To express his intentions in such a way that the linguistic expression represents what is intended (so that the hearer can trust the speaker);
3. To perform the speech act in such a way that it conforms to recognized norms or to accepted self-images (so that the hearer can be in accord with the speaker in shared value orientations).

"To the extent that these decisions do not depend on particular epistemic presuppositions and changing contexts", Habermas elaborates (5), "but cause sentences in general to be engaged in the universal pragmatic functions of representation, expression, and legitimate interpersonal relation, what is expressed in them is precisely the communicative competence for which I am proposing a universal-pragmatic investigation".

Problems appear, however, when the basic

epistemological question is asked: how is it possible to know that the above criteria of communicative competence are fulfilled among the participants in a given process of communicative interaction? Within a process of interaction, the achievement of an agreement on the validity of a proposition would in itself seem to imply that the signatories of that agreement fulfill the criteria of communicative competence - which, tautologically, is implied by the achievement of the agreement. It is of course possible that a section of the participants are acting in a strategic manner, keeping the others in the dark as to their covert objectives, but this cannot be known from inside the current network of interaction. If it were known, no agreement would apparently prevail. As long as the agreement is endorsed by the participants, foul play - or, in Habermas's terms, "systematically distorted communication" - may only be identified by outsiders; but, as outsiders are by definition not in a position to ascertain the meanings which underlie an agreement reached by insiders.

Presumably, at least some ascriptions of rights and social status are defined in terms of communicative competence. Insofar as there are in a community, for example, "children" and "old", "mentally ill" and

"mentally subnormal" people - or, indeed, insofar as the definition of the status of participants in an interactive situation as subjects or objects is based on ascriptions of communicative competence - limits between competence and incompetence must, apparently, be drawn by some combination of participants; and, it seems, it is on these ascriptions that inclusions into and exclusions from the network of interaction within which agreements are negotiated are based. Harré (6) has suggested that ascriptions of competence based on supposedly context-independent justifications - such as stages of cognitive development - are themselves arbiters of those justifications.

Perhaps the very idea of 'cognitive development' is a cultural artefact. We might suppose instead that in every culture what someone does is a reflection of their beliefs as to whether they have the right to do something and/or the confidence to carry out a cognitive operation in the possible or actual presence of certain others. -- The cognitive 'development' is a secondary phenomenon, an appearance, a cultural illusion, a way of representing a redistribution of rights in the changing social structures of psychologically symbiotic dyads, triads etc. interconnected with a changing capacity to deal with few or many matters at once. (7)

However "context-independent" our criteria of communicative competence are supposed to be, we have to convince others about the justification and

relevance of those criteria within our particular context; if limits are to be drawn and some members of our network of interaction are to be excluded from the circle of competent speakers, those limits must, presumably, be justified somehow. If we manage to justify them to the members who, supposedly, do not satisfy our criteria of communicative competence, they do satisfy those criteria - otherwise they would not have understood and accepted our justifications. In terms of communicative interaction, it seems irrelevant whether our criteria are "context-independent" or "context-dependent": the justification of any criteria of communicative competence takes place within our context in any case.

Habermas's claim that the criteria of communicative competence he has outlined "do not depend on particular epistemic presuppositions and changing contexts but cause sentences in general to be engaged in the universal pragmatic functions of representation, expression and legitimate interpersonal relation" seems at best irrelevant and at worst unjustified: either the evaluation of the communicative competence of participants in actual interactive situations makes no difference to the agreement that has been reached or the task of ascriptions of competence is conferred on outsiders.

The problem is expressed succinctly by Hesse (8): "What are the criteria of competence in discourse, whether technical or practical, if they are not or not only found in the canons of formal logic" - which, as Hesse observes, they are not? If the criteria of competence are properly transcendental, they should be so in terms of logic; if they are not based on logic, their existence and function must, presumably, be established by empirical means. This, again, refers the issue back to particular networks of communicative interaction and, finally to agreements on particular propositions about the criteria of competence.

The notion of communicative competence - and definitions thereof - is, in other words, consistent with the one-directional mode of communicative interaction or, in Habermasian terms, strategic action; and this, in turn, would seem to render the notion of communicative competence irrelevant to the evaluation of the validity of an agreement.

3. The Ideal Speech Situation

Similar objections may be voiced against Habermas's idea of the ideal speech situation as the ultimate criterion of truth achieved through consensus. Habermas tends to describe the notion of the ideal speech situation as the opposite of situations in which communicative interaction is "systematically distorted", i.e. "the action-supporting consensus concerning the reciprocally raised validity claims - especially the consensus concerning the truthfulness of intentional expressions and the rightness of underlying norms - can be sustained in appearance only, that is, counterfactually" (9).

Habermas points out that

the design of an ideal speech situation is necessarily implied in the structure of potential speech, since all speech, even intentional deception, is oriented toward the idea of truth. This idea can be analyzed with regard to a consensus achieved in unrestrained and universal discourse. Insofar as we master the means for the construction of the ideal speech situation, we can conceive the ideas of truth, freedom and justice, which interpenetrate each other - although of course only as ideas. (10)

Giddens (11) summarizes "ideal speech situation" as an interactive situation in which there are "no external constraints preventing participants from assessing evidence and argument, and in which each participant has an equal and open chance of entering into discussion", while Hesse (12) describes the concept in terms of a state of affairs in which "all participants must have equal chances of engaging in discourse and of putting forward justifications, refutations, explanations and interpretations; they must have equal chances of sincerely putting forward their own inner feelings and attitudes; and they must have equal status with regard to the power to issue permissions, commands, etc."

These definitions proffered by Habermas himself and the versions constructed by others may, for the present purposes, suffice to provide an outline of the notion of the ideal speech situation. We may now turn to an examination of that notion with particular reference to epistemological considerations. It must be said that the problems involved are indeed considerable. Hesse (13) encapsulates the basic epistemological difficulty: "That an ideal speech situation occurs is falsifiable but not verifiable... -- ...it may never be realized in history, and

indeed it seems as though we could not certainly recognize it if it were." This seems a crucial point. The notion of a consensual agreement would itself seem to imply that the agreement is accepted by the participants as valid. The speech situation, in other words, would have been regarded by the participants as sufficient for the agreement to have become possible in the first place. In this sense, it may be argued that the notion of the ideal speech situation is irrelevant to consensual agreements: an agreement presupposes a state of affairs in which the participants accept the prevailing conditions as, if not ideal, at least sufficiently undistorted. In order for any objections to this acceptance from an outside vantage point to be valid, they would have to be introduced into the original network of interaction for assessment. A consensus, in other words, is a consensus as long as it remains a consensus; propositions pertaining to the particular characteristics of that consensus are ultimately irrelevant.

Thompson (14) offers a systematic critique of the notion of the ideal speech situation, suggesting a six-step reconstruction of Habermas's thesis:

(i) The process of communication implies that it is possible for at least two subjects to come to an

agreement about a state of affairs.

(ii) To come to an agreement implies that it is possible to distinguish between a genuine and a deceptive agreement.

(iii) A genuine agreement is an agreement induced by the force of the better argument alone.

(iv) The force of better argument prevails if and only if communication is not hindered through external and internal constraints.

(v) Communication is not hindered through internal constraints if and only if for all potential participants there is a symmetrical distribution of chances to select and employ speech-acts.

(vi) A situation in which there is a symmetrical distribution of chances to select and employ communicative, constative, representative and regulative speech-acts is an ideal speech situation.
(15)

Thompson expresses doubts as to the possibility of an agreement being based on a better argument alone: "-- it is difficult to see why subjects can be said genuinely to agree about something only when their agreement is induced by the force of better argument, as opposed, for example, to the feeling of compassion or the commitment to a common goal. Yet if there are, as there certainly seem to be, alternative ways in which a genuine agreement can be induced, then the momentum which allegedly leads to the presupposition of an ideal speech situation is dissipated at an early stage" (16). While these objections may in the first instance seem cogent enough, Thompson appears to labour under the same epistemological oversight as

Habermas. To wit:

-- it seems doubtful whether the elimination of internal constraints, which seem to have been swept under the fifth step of the argument, remains uncertain. Moreover, it seems doubtful whether the elimination of internal constraints could be guaranteed by a symmetrical distribution of chances to employ and select speech-acts; and yet in spite of this formal equality, the final decision is merely an expression of the prevailing status quo, bearing little resemblance to the quality of the arguments adduced. What Habermas's assumption of symmetry seems to neglect, and what his occasional allusions to the model of 'pure communicative action' do nothing to mitigate, is that the constraints which affect social life may operate in modes other than the restriction of access to speech-acts, for example by restricting access to weapons, wealth or esteem. (17)

Here, however, Thompson breaks the rules by readopting the position of the "fly-on-the-wall" third person. If he is aware of restrictions of access to weapons, wealth of esteem in a network of interaction, he would have to introduce his viewpoint into the network in question - which would cast the prevailing consensus into doubt - or concede that his doubts are not epistemologically valid.

Thompson concludes: "I hope that enough has been said to suggest that Habermas's argument for the presuppositions of an ideal speech situation, as well as his conceptualisation of the latter, are in need of considerable attention" (18). While this verdict seems in general terms correct, it is for the

wrong reasons; there are no justifiable grounds for questioning the genuineness of an agreement from the position of an epistemological outsider. It is, after all, the very myth of this position that the whole of Habermas's project is intended to undermine. Whether or not his project may be interpreted as successful is another matter.

In his reply to Thompson, Habermas (19) states that he is "not claiming that a valid consensus can come about only under conditions of the ideal speech situation." Habermas's elaboration of this point warrants quoting in full:

The communicative practice of everyday life is immersed in a sea of cultural taken-for-grantedness, that is, of consensual certainties. To this life-world background of actual processes of reaching understanding, there also belong normative convictions and empathetic identifications with the feelings of others. As soon, however, as an element of this naively known, prereflexively present background is transformed into the semantic content of an utterance, the certainties come under the conditions of criticisable knowledge; from then on disagreement concerning them can arise. Only when this disagreement is stubborn enough to provoke a discursive treatment of the matter at issue do we have a case concerning which I am claiming that a grounded agreement cannot be reached unless the participants in discourse suppose that they are convincing each other only by force of better arguments. Should one party make use of privileged access to weapons, wealth or standing, in order to wring agreement from another party through the prospect of sanctions or rewards, no-one involved will be in doubt that the presuppositions of argumentation are no longer satisfied. (20)

This, however, means that Habermas renders one of his theoretical cornerstones irrelevant: if all agreements are necessarily valid, the status of the ideal speech situation seems to be left without foundation or purpose.

4. The Possibility of a Universal Rationality

While I hold the above conclusions with regard to the notions of communicative competence and the ideal speech situation as inescapable, the criticisms I have put forward must be considered in terms of the general problem of rationality and the justification of validity claims. The central issue to be clarified is whether there may be said to exist a universal rationality based on the characteristics and practices which make human communities human. Habermas, as will be seen, defends this position, which may indeed be regarded as a necessary foundation for his theory of communicative action as a whole. I will attempt an examination of this issue from the vantage point of the different categories of communication outlined above. I base my analysis

mainly on the line of argumentation Habermas offers in his treatment in "The Theory of Communicative Action" of the characteristics of what he calls "the mythical" and "the modern" ways of understanding the world. I must immediately point out that, for the purposes of my overall argument, I equate the distinction between of "the mythical" and "the modern" ways of understanding with the distinction between the perspective of "others" - i.e., the people whose conduct is being investigated - and that of "ourselves" - i.e., the investigator, or the community of investigators to which we (explicitly or implicitly) subscribe.

From the complexity of Habermas's abundant exposition of his views, I choose as a starting point his assertion about the a priori assumptions which supposedly underlie the very notion of communicative interaction: "In communicative action", Habermas states (21), "we today proceed from those formal presuppositions of intersubjectivity that are necessary if we are to be able to refer to something in the one subjective world, identical for all observers, or to something in our intersubjectively shared social world. -- Validity claims are in principle open to criticism because they are based on formal world-concepts. They presuppose a world that

is identical for all possible observers, or a world intersubjectively shared by members, and they do so in an abstract form freed of all specific content. Such claims call for the rational response of a partner in communication".

Elsewhere, Habermas elaborates on this claim of the universal character of rationality:

If some concept of rationality is unavoidably built into the action-theoretic foundations of sociology, then theory formation is in danger of being limited from the start to a particular, culturally or historically bound perspective, unless fundamental concepts are constructed in such a way that the concept of rationality they implicitly posit is encompassing and general, that is, satisfies universalistic claims. The demand for such a concept or rationality also emerges from methodological considerations. If the understanding of meaning has to be understood as communicative experience, and if this is possible only in the performative attitude of a communicative actor, the experiential basis of an interpretive -- sociology is compatible with its claim to objectivity only if hermeneutic procedures can be based at least intuitively on general and encompassing structures of rationality. From both points of view, the metatheoretical and the methodological, we cannot expect objectivity in social-theoretical knowledge if the corresponding concepts of communicative action and interpretation express a merely particular perspective on rationality, one intertwined with a particular cultural tradition. (22)

According to Habermas, then, an - at least in principle - identifiable system of rationality is the necessary basis upon which all communicative interaction must rely; this universal rationality is

context-free and independent of the variations between one culture and the next. This proposition forces upon us the question of the commensurability versus incommensurability of civilizations and worldviews - i.e. whether genuinely alternative standards of rationality are possible.

As Habermas himself clearly recognizes, in terms of the pragmatics of inquiry the question boils down to "whether and in what respect the standards of rationality by which the investigator was himself at least intuitively guided might claim universal validity" (23). From the communicative vantage point, this question inevitably evokes the categories of one-directional and two-directional interaction. How is the rationality or irrationality of a world-view or meaning system established, and which type of communicative interaction is employed? Habermas deals with this issue consistently enough: "Symbolic expressions of speaking and acting subjects can be identified only under descriptions that refer to the action orientations (and the possible reasons) of an actor. The interpreter has therefore no other choice than to test whether an obscure expression - one that is not simply unintelligible in certain aspects - would not after all appear as rational if one clarified the presuppositions from which the agent

proceeds in his context" (24). This observation appears to imply reliance on two-directional communication - or, at least, it does not appear to preclude the centrality of two-directional communication - in the establishment of the form of rationality prevalent in a culture, a community or, apparently, a person. So far, Habermas seems partial to the possibility of alternative standards of rationality, and the impression is strengthened by his subsequent comments:

For the interpreter it is not a question of hermeneutic charity but a methodological precept that he proceed from the presumptive rationality of the questionable expression in order, if necessary, to assure himself step by step of its irrationality. In doing so, only hermeneutic severity in relation to his own presuppositions can preserve him from exercising criticism without self-criticism and falling prey to just the error -- of simply imposing the supposedly universal rationality standards of one's own culture upon alien cultures. (25)

Despite these concessions, however, Habermas proceeds to distance himself from the apparent conclusion: "This methodological position does not at all result in a prior decision on alternative standards of rationality -- The context-dependence of the criteria by which the members of different cultures at different times judge differently the validity of expressions does not, however, mean that the ideas of truth, normative rightness, of sincerity, of

authenticity that underlie (only intuitively, to be sure) the choice of criteria are context-dependent in the same degree" (26). While this point hardly needs to be questioned, it must be noted that the opposite position - i.e., that the ideas of truth, normative rightness, sincerity and authenticity were not context-dependent, and, consequently, that alternative standards of rationality were unviable - does not follow either.

Habermas proceeds to a critique of Winch's (27) position on the possibility of genuinely different modes of rationality, pointing out that "worldviews can be compared with one another not only from the quasiaesthetic and truth-indifferent standpoints of coherence, depth, economy, completeness, and the like, but also from the standpoints of cognitive adequacy. The adequacy of a linguistically articulated worldview is a function of the true statements that are possible in this language system" (28).

Habermas, in other words, seems to emphasize the importance of external criteria of adequacy here as opposed to considerations of internal consistency only: language systems, and world-views, must be capable of being subjected to evaluations of their

capacity to represent external states of affairs. Habermas goes on to construct the sort of counter-argument that could be proffered by proponents of the Winchian view: "If we wish to compare standards of rationality built into different cultural interpretive systems, we ought not to confine ourselves to the dimension of science and technology suggested by our culture and take as the measure of their rationality the extent to which true statements and effective techniques are made possible. Worldviews are comparable only in respect to their potency for conferring meaning. -- They thereby structure forms of life that are incommensurable in their value. The rationality of forms of life cannot be reduced to the cognitive adequacy of the worldviews underlying them" (29).

Habermas counters this by arguing that this cognitive adequacy - in other words, "the coherence and the truth of the statements possible in them as well as the effectiveness of the plans of action dependent on them" - is reflected in the practice of managing the forms of life based on particular worldviews. This statement warrants attention: by stressing the relevance of cognitive adequacy in evaluating the rationality of worldviews, Habermas quite unambiguously links rationality with the

effectiveness of plans of action. But could the criteria of effectiveness not vary across cultures? Habermas quotes Evans-Pritchard's account of the contradictions which proponents of a certain magical worldview are faced with when questioned about their beliefs: "-- the Azande themselves experience unavoidable absurdities as disagreeable as soon as they enter upon a stubborn consistency check such as the anthropologist undertakes. But a demand of this kind is brought to bear upon them; it does not arise within the framework of their own culture; and when an anthropologist confronts them with it, they generally evade it. But isn't this refusal, this higher tolerance for contradiction, a sign of a more irrational conduct of life? Must we not call action orientations that can be stabilized only at the cost of suppressing contradictions irrational?" (30)

At this point, it begins to appear that this line of argument leads to an infinite regress of alternative principles of distinguishing between rationality and irrationality - principles which seem variably, but insurmountably, context-bound. In order to divest the notion of rationality of its context-bound characteristics, it might be helpful to redefine it simply as justification of choices between alternative viewpoints or courses of action without

any reference to, for example, verbalization or even ostensive definitions. In some cultures or communities, justification may be purely intuitive: the community just knows and declines to explicate their knowledge to outsiders. In this case, we are in no position to draw any valid conclusions on the rationality or irrationality of the world-view of that community.

If that community, however, functions in the long run - if it is not a merely temporary aberration - we may have to concede that there must be some sort of underlying justification-cum-rationality underlying its practice of conducting life: that particular form of life could not otherwise go on. If we wished - for whatever purposes we may have in mind, strategic or otherwise - to show that the worldview prevailing in a culture or a community is properly irrational, we would, presumably, have to show that the culture or community in question does not, in fact, function; we would, in other words, have to question the very existence of that culture or community. This can, of course, be done; but it remains doubtful whether we would have proved our point as to the rationality or irrationality of our object of investigation.

Of course, even this minimalist conception of rationality may eventually be eroded by the passage of time: implicit, intuitive systems of justification may gradually become integrated into more explicit "rationality cultures" - as seems to have been the case with regard to a considerable number of "primitive societies"; but I would maintain that developments of this kind do not prove anything about the viability or unviability of the notion of alternative standards of rationality.

Moving on, Habermas introduces another potential candidate for the status of a universal criterion of rationality: following Horton's (31) line of argument, he considers the position according to which it is possible to evaluate worldviews "by the degree to which they hinder or promote cognitive-instrumental learning processes" (32). A rational worldview is "open"; it permits awareness and discussion of alternatives based on the diminished sacredness of beliefs. An irrational worldview, conversely, is "closed" - i.e., characterized by a lack of alternatives, sacredness of beliefs and anxiety about threats to them.

Habermas seems to accept this criterion quite explicitly: "This dimension of 'closed' versus 'open'

seems to provide a context-independent standard for the rationality of worldviews" (33). He qualifies this immediately by conceding that "the point of reference is again modern science" (34) with its Western-instrumental trappings - but, some way later, seems to associate this modern, or scientific, viewpoint with a universal rationality. Consider the following passage:

In fact, however, the structures of worldviews determine a life-practice that is by no means exhausted in cognitive-instrumental interaction with external reality. Rather, worldviews are constitutive across the whole breadth of processes of understanding and socialization, in which participants relate as much to the orders of their common social worlds as to happenings in the one objective world. If mythical thought does not yet permit a categorial separation between cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and expressive relations to the world, if the expressions of the Azande are for us full of ambiguities, this is a sign that the 'closedness' of their animistic worldview cannot be described solely in terms of attitudes toward the objective world; nor can the modern understanding of the world be described solely in terms of formal properties of the scientific mentality. (35)

Despite the final reservation, Habermas seems to support here the argument that the modern, scientific worldview does represent a more rational attitude than does, say, the Zande culture. The aim of this argument, Habermas states, is "not to upset the universalist position but to provide it with a more subtle defense" (36); even more unambiguously, he

goes on to declare that "(s)cientific rationality belongs to a complex of cognitive-instrumental rationality that can certainly claim validity beyond the context of particular cultures" (37 - my italics this time).

Habermas concludes his discussion of the possibility of alternative standards of rationality by arguing that "Winch's arguments are too weak to uphold the thesis that inherent to every linguistically articulated worldview and to every cultural form of life there is an incommensurable concept of rationality; but his strategy of argumentation is strong enough to set off the justified claim to universality on behalf of the rationality that gained expression in the modern understanding of the world from an uncritical self-interpretation of the modern world that is fixated on knowing and mastering external nature" (38). While it must be said that Habermas is again more ambiguous here than in his previous assertion - if Winch's arguments are "strong enough to set off" the claim to a universal rationality, how can this claim still be "justified"? - it still seems reasonable to conclude that, despite his reservations, Habermas ends up supporting the notion of universal criteria of rationality.

The position Habermas defends here must, however, be compared with the views on the possibility of valid interpretations which he supports elsewhere. If we believe that there are universal criteria of rationality, this belief apparently underlies our dealings with others - and presumably, insofar as it is relevant to the issues at hand in each episode of communicative interaction, invests us with a strategic interest which at least potentially directs our choice between modes of interaction: after all, it was pointed out above that the presence of a strategic interest was compatible with the choice of the one-directional mode of communication.

It seems therefore paradoxical that Habermas should in another section of "Theory of Communicative Action" emphasize the principle that two-directional communication is necessary for the understanding of meaning.

-- the interpreter cannot become clear about the semantic content of an expression independently of the action contexts in which participants react to the expression in question with a "yes" or a "no" or an abstention. And he does not understand these yes/no positions if he cannot make clear to himself the implicit reasons that move the participants to take the positions they do. For agreement and disagreement, insofar as they are judged in the light of reciprocally raised validity claims and not merely caused by external factors, are based on reasons that participants supposedly or actually have at their disposal. -- But if, in order to understand an expression, the interpreter must bring to mind the reasons with which the speaker would if necessary

and under suitable conditions defend its validity, he is himself drawn into the process of assessing validity claims. For reasons are of such a nature that they cannot be described in the attitude of a third person, that is, without reactions of affirmation or negation or absten-tion. (39)

Thus Habermas takes a clear stand in relation to the production of valid interpretations: the interpreter is necessarily drawn into the process of evaluating the validity of justifications; and, if this is not possible in the attitude of a third person - which would, presumably, entail the choice of a one-directional mode of communication - the interpreter must adopt a two-directional, non-strategic mode of communication. This, however, appears impossible if the interpreter wishes to maintain the view that genuinely alternative standards of rationality are not viable - with the proviso that the interpreter regards himself as functioning within the universalist rationality the notion of which he accepts.

Habermas points out quite cogently that "the method of interpretive understanding places the usual type of objectivity of knowledge in question, because the interpreter, though without aims of action of his own, has to become involved in participating in communicative action and finds himself confronted with the validity claims arising in the object domain

itself. -- The interpreter could neutralize the latter only at the cost of assuming the objectivating status of an observer; but from that standpoint internal interrelations of meaning are entirely inaccessible" (40).

Here, Habermas's views are perfectly congruent with the notion of consensual agreement as the basis of legitimate interpretations. He does not leave much room for doubt about this: "(A)n interpreter who participates virtually, without his own aims of action, can descriptively grasp the meaning of the actual course of a process of reaching understanding only under the presupposition that he judges the agreement and disagreement, the validity claims and potential reasons with which he is confronted, on a common basis shared in principle by him and those immediately involved" (41).

I would maintain that the two positions of Habermas's which I have attempted to outline above - i.e., the notions of universal criteria of rationality on the one hand, and of agreement based on participation and two-directional interaction on the other - are ultimately incompatible. It seems that Habermas wants to fend off the notion of fully-fledged relativism by

means of his theory of the universality of rationality, but, at least on the strength of the arguments I have reviewed here, he cannot have it both ways: the adoption of a two-way, consensus-oriented mode of communication precludes - or renders irrelevant - the notion of any a priori universal criteria within that particular episode of interaction. I must conclude that Habermas has failed to present a solution to this problem.

5. Communication, context and convention: Habermas and Coulter

The notions of context and convention - i.e. the background convictions in which communicative interaction and action in general are necessarily embedded - must also be addressed here. Habermas uses the concept of Lebenswelt, or lifeworld, "as the correlate of processes of reaching understanding" (42).

Subjects acting communicatively always come to an understanding in the horizon of a lifeworld. Their lifeworld is formed from more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions. This lifeworld

background serves as a source of situation definitions that are presupposed by participants as unproblematic. (43)

But, if our lifeworld is formed from "more or less diffuse, always unproblematic, background convictions", what is its epistemological status? In order to clarify this problem, I wish to make use of Coulter's (44) treatment of the notions of context and convention. While I do not intend to equate Habermas with Coulter, the issues concerned are closely related.

In general terms, Coulter presents a cogent analysis of the communicative construction of what have traditionally been regarded as mental contents, such as thoughts, emotions, and memory. In places, however, it appears that certain concepts still retain an objective status of some sort - or, rather, that the wheel has turned a full circle, and some entities which were previously recognized as socially constructed have once more assumed an objective, or external, status. The main culprits in Coulter's case are the notions of context and convention.

For the purposes of the present argument, it seems reasonable to build on the basic Wittgensteinian

postulate that our actions - including speech-acts - only have meaning in the context in which they are performed (45); no action may be identified without reference to the circumstances within which it takes place. Further, it seems equally reasonable to assume that the context without which a particular action would be meaningless is a creation of the participants in the communicative interaction in question. Whatever the physical-material circumstances present, they only become a context when construed as such by the participants - or, to emphasize the epistemological criterion, the context cannot become known by the participants unless, and until, it has been established through a process of negotiation and agreement. Coulter seems to agree in principle, but certain passages in his text are ambiguous:

-- when I observe someone's conduct, I do so in context, and it is both his conduct and the context in which it is performed that enable me to say of him that he has such-and-such an intention or that he has understood what has been said or agreed about, etc. (46)

But whose context are we dealing with here? While it is no doubt true that both a person's conduct and the context within which it is performed play a part in our making sense of his intention, the communicative link between ourselves and the person in question is

easily overlooked. Our context - i.e. our interpretation of what is relevant in the situation, and what its various aspects mean - may be quite different from that of the person in question, and the most straightforward method of finding out about the degree of congruence or incongruence between contexts is surely to do with engaging in some sort of verbal interaction with him. If this method of validation is neglected, our interpretation of the current context remains unchallenged, and the spectre of objectivism looms on the horizon once more.

Another example of Coulter's ambivalent position deserves mention:

-- notice that we will often find that someone's claims about the way the world appears to him can tell us something about himself rather than the world in cases where the report of the appearance is totally unacceptable in terms of group culture and its interpretive procedures. For instance, if you were to tell me that the ordinary scene we have both observed outside your window now appears to you like a nightmare from one of Dali's surrealist paintings, this would tell me something about you: viz: that you are hallucinating, or joking, lying, the victim of an illusion, etc. Your scene from the window could not have appeared to anyone like that, so there is something wrong with you or the circumstances of your looking. (47)

There is "something wrong", however, only if I terminate the dialogue at this point, keep my conclusions to myself and choose not to attempt to find out what you mean. Obviously, the fact that my

perception - or interpretation, which seems the more appropriate term here - of the scene from the window is different from yours makes me wonder what sort of reasons prompted your idiosyncratic view, i.e., what your context was; but the obvious, and epistemologically sound, course of action for the "me" would be to continue the interaction in order to find out why there was such a discrepancy between our reports - to give you an opportunity to provide a context for your statement.

To recapitulate: even though it is the context of our actions that provides them with their meaning, this context is itself a construction dependent for its existence on whoever is involved in its validation. It may be "frozen" in order to promote a pragmatic plan of action, but mistaking such a freeze-frame for an autonomous, objective factor would certainly give rise to further epistemological confusion.

The notion of convention is equally susceptible to this kind of "second-generation" objectivism. Coulter points out - quite rightly - that, in our practical affairs, we do not negotiate the precise meaning of each word, gesture or act that we use while interacting with other members of our community. In Coulter's formulation,

-- in most ordinary communicative situations, the sense of what I say (and do) is determinable quite independently of any of my possible intentions in saying it; if it were not, communicative interaction could not proceed in the orderly way it usually does, since we would continually be ascribing and/or avowing our communicative intentions in order to make elementary sense of another's words or speech acts to ensure that he has grasped the sense of ours. But how could the words with which the communicative intentions are articulated themselves be understood without still further intention-determinations, etc. per impossibile? It seems necessary to postulate conventions as the bases for our mutual understanding of talk and action. (48)

Coulter seems right insofar as the very language we use in our interactions is itself a convention. When we use language, we take the meaning of most of our expressions for granted; we simply assume that the other person shares with us the same system of meanings. This may not be sensibly contested. But even so, it should be noted that conventions are not givens; they, too, are essentially a product of the communicative interactions of people who have come to believe that they share at least roughly the same system of meanings. The nature of conventions is thus dynamic, not static, as Coulter seems to come close to implying: "Even on those occasions where we (intelligibly) intend to mean one thing rather than another, we are still relying on conventional meaning that is independent of our intention on that occasion (unless what we are doing is giving the word or

phrase a special meaning for that occasion)." (49) In other words, we rely on a conventional meaning that is independent of our intention unless, or until, we choose to do otherwise - which seems to take us back to where we started. (50)

It would be difficult to dispute the validity of Coulter's claim that for practical interaction to be possible for us in the first place, we must rely on conventional meanings; but it is important to recognize that this statement only makes sense in terms of a vague notion of probability - it does not tell us anything about particular instances of meaning something by an expression. If we choose to point out that we have relied on a conventional meaning in our use of a particular concept, that concept will be brought under scrutiny and potential re-evaluation which would undermine the conventional use of that concept.

Convention and regeneration of meanings are in constant interplay in communicative interaction. Members of communities grow up into a world of for-grantedness, i.e. a system of conventional meanings and ways of rendering sense experience intelligible. The issue at moot here is, however, the point at which conventions become questioned and liable to

change, as members of the community in question become capable of reflecting upon the origins of particular concepts, rules, or implicit meanings, and of subjecting them to re-evaluation through communicative interaction. The revised concept may then gradually recede into the realm of convention and become an aspect of the unquestioned conceptual landscape, or lifeworld, until its relevance is questioned once more. For most of the time, the majority of the concepts through which reality is structured will remain "for granted" - but, as disgruntled opinions as to their relevance in the current situation are voiced by a sufficient number of members with sufficient vigour, they face eventual re-evaluation.

6. Conclusions

When entering a process of interaction we necessarily do so from the basis of our more or less explicit or implicit, and more or less consistent or inconsistent, assumptions on acceptable criteria of the validity of propositions and arguments. Insofar as we enter the process of interaction in an investigative purpose - that is, with a view to the production of psychological knowledge - we obviously have a particular interest in mind; but insofar as we, as investigators, start from the premise that the knowledge we are about to produce will only be valid if it is based on two-directional interaction, I venture that this interest does not as such systematically distort the process of interaction at hand.

The other participants in the investigative interaction must, presumably, proceed from their respective background assumptions as to acceptable criteria of justification of validity claims. Our initial assumptions regarding the characteristics of their criteria may turn out to be anything between precisely correct and completely mistaken; the same observation applies to their initial assumptions

regarding our criteria. If no agreement on an acceptable interpretation of the conduct under investigation is reached, no knowledge is produced, and no epistemologically valid conclusions on the rationality or irrationality of the motive forces underlying the conduct of the other participants may be drawn.

If, on the other hand, an agreement is reached, it must be assumed that an agreement on an acceptable interpretation of an item of conduct presupposes an agreement on the criteria of justification underlying the specific agreement in question. While it may be that the agreement on the criteria of justification is based on the criteria originally entertained by the investigators, it is equally possible that it may be based on the criteria originally entertained by the other participants in the investigation - or on any combination of the original two sets of criteria, or of the original sets of criteria complemented by criteria that are new to both groups of participants, and so on. While Habermas seems to be right insofar as he emphasizes the necessity of agreement on criteria of justification as a prerequisite of legitimate knowledge of them - an agreement between a particular configuration of participants and investigative set-ups may, theoretically, be extended

to encompass all possible configurations - it does not seem to follow that the type of rationality constructed in the process of negotiation and agreement in a particular-but-infinitely-extensible context could be described in terms of particularistic or substantive criteria of justification.

It is questionable how the exact form and content of such a universal rationality could be consistently predicted or anticipated in an epistemologically relevant manner; after all, if we had constructed a potential model for such a universal rationality, we would, presumably, have to introduce it into some process of communicative interaction in order to establish its universal validity - which, in turn, would entail the adoption of the two-directional mode of interaction and the abandonment of the claim to universality for our rationality. We may sensibly suggest that our model of rationality be accepted as the model prevalent in the present process of interaction and present those arguments we manage to muster in support of this suggestion but, even in the case of eventual agreement on a version acceptable by the current participants, it would be difficult for us to justify a claim to the effect that the current agreement would contribute to the establishment of

the present version as universal in any logically binding sense.

Even if in the end all imaginable communities will have reached an agreement on a common set of criteria of justification - i.e., a common rationality - the features of such an agreement may not be determined a priori. While it is necessarily true, and tautological, that an infinitely extended agreement will finally produce a universal rationality, the particular characteristics of that rationality are established in the course of the negotiation which in the end results in agreement and in which we will have to participate with those assumptions and beliefs we may entertain; and whether or not we consider our initial assumptions and beliefs as universally valid is neither here or there. If the validity of our (supposedly universalist) concept of rationality will in any case be determined in the course of two-directional interaction with a view to consensus, the notion of universality seems more or less superfluous. Habermas fails to accommodate and, indeed, address this issue which seems essential for the implications of his general position.

If it is accepted that reality is present for

subjects situated in networks of communicative interaction in the form of propositions and if it is similarly accepted that the production of knowledge takes place through communicative interaction, it would seem to follow that the consensus theory of truth is - at least in general terms - superior to any version of the correspondence theory. The problem with Habermas's description of the consensus theory lies with his concept of the ideal speech situation and his definition of communicative competence which are, ultimately, left without epistemological justification.

In the final analysis, then, a consensus is a consensus, and an agreement is an agreement regardless of the characteristics of the interaction between the participants. If counter-arguments are no longer forthcoming from the participants, the agreement is legitimate and valid - and, conversely, if the agreement is legitimate and valid, counter-arguments are no longer forthcoming. At this point, the central issue is the decision among the participants to subject their agreement to criticism from outside their current network or community - i.e., to extend the current network of interaction, which would open the agreement to argumentation once

more. If we are outside that network of interaction, the agreement is not our agreement, and we have no particular reason - or possibility, for that matter - to endorse it. We may wish to emphasize the importance of particular criteria of legitimate agreements and, perhaps, apply particular criteria of communicative competence to the participants, but such criteria bear no relevance to the network of interaction in question as long as we remain outsiders.

All agreements are necessarily local. Some agreements may be valid across various localities. When local agreements are entered into a process of validation with other local agreements and if a common agreement is again reached, the degree of universality of the agreements involved is increased. This may include variations of revision and compromise from simple observation of agreement between agreements to the abandonment in toto of one or another of the agreements by its original signatories and the adoption of the competing one, or of an altogether new one. If no agreement is reached and negotiations are discontinued, the agreement remains local, and valid in the local context as long as no counter-arguments are brought forward.

As long as no communicative interaction between different localities takes place, statements pertaining to the validity of an agreement currently in force in another locality are valid only in the context of the locality in which such statements are expressed. While Habermas's basic position on consensual agreement as the criterion of valid interpretations is sound, his attempts to qualify this principle by introducing "context-independent" criteria remain ultimately irrelevant.

NOTES

- (1) Hesse (1981).
- (2) Ibid., pp. 378-379.
- (3) Ibid., p. 380.
- (4) Habermas (1979), p. 29.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Harré (1983).
- (7) Ibid., p. 226.
- (8) Hesse (1981), p. 384.
- (9) Habermas (1979), p. 120.
- (10) Habermas (1970), p. 372.
- (11) Giddens (1985), p. 131.
- (12) Hesse (1981), p. 380.
- (13) Ibid., p. 381.
- (14) Thompson (1982), pp. 128-129.
- (15) Ibid., p. 128.
- (16) Ibid., p. 129.
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Habermas (1982), p. 272.
- (20) Ibid., pp. 272-273.
- (21) Habermas (1984), p. 50.
- (22) Ibid., p. 137.
- (23) Ibid., p. 53.
- (24) Ibid., p. 54.

- (25) Ibid., p. 55.
- (26) Ibid.
- (27) Winch (1970).
- (28) Habermas (1984), pp. 58-59.
- (29) Ibid., p. 59.
- (30) Ibid., p. 60.
- (31) Horton (1970).
- (32) Habermas (1984), p. 61.
- (33) Ibid., p. 62.
- (34) Ibid.
- (35) Ibid., p. 63.
- (36) Ibid.
- (37) Ibid., p. 65.
- (38) Ibid., p. 66.
- (39) Ibid., p. 115.
- (40) Ibid.
- (41) Ibid., pp. 116-117.
- (42) Ibid., p. 70.
- (43) Ibid.
- (44) Coulter (1979).
- (45) Cf. Wittgenstein (1969), para. 229.
- (46) Coulter (1979), p. 44.
- (47) Ibid., p. 88.
- (48) Ibid., p. 44.
- (49) Ibid.
- (50) From the epistemological viewpoint, the notion of language as a convention is of crucial importance. Conventions seem often to become conceived as

autonomous entities which evolve according to some objective laws of their own. See, for instance, McGinn (1984, p. 119): "One's use of language is habitual, unreflective, taken for granted; it is not a perpetual guessing game in which hypotheses about correctness of use are constantly reviewed and selected." While this is quite obviously true in everyday life of most people, the point surely is that this is an empirical statement, not an epistemological one. If we accept the Saussurean view that signs are basically arbitrary - i.e. not determined by the object with which the sign is associated - it would seem to follow that people are in principle capable of questioning the meaning of a concept and thus of reflecting on an item of language when they feel it no longer serves the purpose it was once assumed to serve. Questioning the meanings of words and concepts is certainly a crucial part in claiming territory from what has been called the unconscious; conventions such as language should not be afforded more independence from communicative interaction than is the case in each interactive situation.

Chapter Five

THE NOTION OF UNCONSCIOUS MOTIVE FORCES AND
COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION: A CRITIQUE OF GRÜNBAUM

1. Introduction

Since the advent of Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams" (NOTE 1), the juxtaposition of unconscious and conscious motive forces has been a widely employed device for making sense of people's conduct. While this distinction has on many occasions undoubtedly provided an instructive paradigm for psychological investigations and therapeutic interventions, the epistemological problems involved are considerable: if the production of psychological knowledge is considered in terms of communicative interaction between the participants in the investigation, the status of "the unconscious" seems to warrant particular attention - especially the epistemological criteria employed in justifying interpretations of particular instances of conduct.

While it may be argued that it is not the primary aim of the therapeutic encounter to generate empirical knowledge, I would still suggest that it is useful to consider the psycho-analytic situation in terms of warranting general psychological propositions. After all, there is - presumably - a theory underlying

psycho-analytic interpretations, and it seems reasonable to expect that there is at least some interplay between that theory and the interpretations constructed in the course of a sequence of therapeutic sessions.

The notion of unconscious motive forces would seem to constitute a serious counter-argument to my initial thesis according to which agreement between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated is the basic epistemological criterion of a valid interpretation. In this chapter, I will try to show that the epistemological credentials of the notion of the unconscious are ultimately insufficient.

Freud described the unconscious in various ways at different points of his career. For the present purposes, and to obtain an illustration of the concepts involved, I choose a passage from his later work - namely, the 1925 paper "Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety":

If the ego succeeds in protecting itself from a dangerous instinctual impulse, through, for instance, the process of repression, it has certainly inhibited and damaged the particular part of the id concerned; but it has at the same time given it some independence and has renounced some of its own sovereignty. This is inevitable from the nature of repression, which is, fundamentally, an attempt at

flight. The repressed is now, as it were, an outlaw; it is excluded from the great organization of the ego and is subject only to the laws which govern the realm of the unconscious. If, now, the danger-situation changes so that the ego has no reason for fending off a new instinctual impulse analogous to the repressed one, the consequence of the restriction of the ego which has taken place will become manifest. The new impulse will run its course, under an automatic influence - or, as I should prefer to say, under the influence of the compulsion to repeat. It will follow the same path as the earlier, repressed impulse, as though the danger-situation that had been overcome still existed. The fixating factor in repression, then, is the unconscious id's compulsion to repeat - a compulsion which in normal circumstances is only done away with by the freely mobile function of the ego. The ego may occasionally manage to break down the barriers of repression which it has itself put up and to recover its influence over the instinctual impulse and direct the course of the new impulse in accordance with the changed danger-situation. But in point of fact the ego very seldom succeeds in doing this: it cannot undo its repressions. (2)

My treatment of the epistemological status of the unconscious will be in two parts: first, I will examine the proposition - which follows directly from my basic argument - that the fundamental epistemological criterion of the validity of ascriptions of the origins of a particular instance of conduct to unconscious motive forces is agreement between the participants in the investigation; second, I will re-evaluate the epistemological status of the unconscious in relation to the criterion of agreement. I will argue that if - as I try to show - agreement between the participants in an investigation is indeed the only epistemologically

valid criterion of verification or falsification of interpretations involving unconscious motive forces, the notion of the unconscious as a basis of psychological knowledge is made redundant.

2. Agreement and the unconscious: Grünbaum's critique of Habermas

I will begin by examining Grünbaum's (3) critique of Habermas's (4) advocacy of agreement between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated as the basic criterion of the validity of psychoanalytic postulates, or, in Habermas's terms, "general interpretations". Habermas states his position as follows:

Whereas in other areas theories contain statements about an object domain to which they remain external as statements, the validity of general interpretations depends directly on statements about the object domain being applied by the 'objects', that is the persons concerned, to themselves. -- Analytic insights possess validity for the analyst only after they have been accepted as knowledge by the analyst himself. For the empirical accuracy of general interpretations depends not on controlled observation and subsequent communication among investigators but rather on the accomplishment of self-reflection and subsequent communication between the investigator and his 'object'. (5)

Habermas goes on: "interpretive suggestions -- can be verified in fact only if the patient adopts them and tells his own story with their aid" (6) and points out that "(o)nly the patient's recollection decides the accuracy of the construction. If it applies, then

it must also 'restore' to the patient a portion of lost life history: that it must be able to elicit a self-reflection" (7).

Grünbaum (8) offers a detailed critique of what he calls Habermas's emphasis of "patient assent" as the ultimate epistemic arbiter of the validity of psychoanalytic interpretations. "Upon looking at the original of Freud's text", writes Grünbaum (9), "we find him emphasizing that, more often than not, the cognitive role of the analysand's memory is anything but the one depicted by Habermas. For immediately after saying that the analyst's construction 'ought' to elicit the patient's corroborative recall, Freud declares soberingly:

-- but it does not always lead so far. Quite often we do not succeed in bringing the patient to recollect what has been repressed. Instead of that, if the analysis is carried out correctly, we produce in him an assured conviction of the truth of the construction which achieves the same therapeutic result as a recaptured memory. (S.E. 1937, 23: 265-266)."

Grünbaum is decidedly unhappy with the notion of "patient assent" and calls upon Freud for support:

Freud claims in effect that 'quite often' there is an epistemic asymmetry between the doctor and the analysand that is the precise converse of the one affirmed by Habermas. For, as Freud reports, quite often the patient's memory simply fails to supply information vital to the psychoanalytic

reconstruction of the pathogenically relevant part of his early life history. Then, in lieu of 'a recaptured memory' furnished by the patient, the analyst convinces the patient of 'the truth of the construction', a conviction therapeutically equivalent of the retrieval of a pertinent memory. (10)

I will return to the epistemological implications of this view below - but let us first consider the principal arguments by means of which Grünbaum objects to Habermas's thesis. Paraphrasing Freud's original, he argues that the patient cannot be relied upon for verification of an interpretation precisely because he (the patient) is unable to recall the unpleasant themes which he has repressed into "the unconscious": "The patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it. Thus he acquires no sense of conviction of the correctness of the construction that has been communicated to him." (11)

"As Habermas would have it", Grünbaum continues, "the patient's memory invariably affords him/her privileged and hence indispensable cognitive access vis-a-vis his/her analyst to the determination of the validity of the explanatory psychoanalytic interpretations. In effect, Freud rejects this epistemic asymmetry as utopian, if only because

actual clinical experience with the mnemonic performance of numerous patients prompted him to give cognitive pride of place to the inferences drawn by the analyst from the totality of the patient's productions." (12)

Grünbaum completes his presentation of Freud's position: "In some of his case histories, he also offered theoretical reasons for making the doctor the ultimate epistemic arbiter, rather than the analysand. For example, in a paper on the therapeutic fiasco in his treatment of a young lesbian (S.E. 1920, 18: 147-172), Freud expressed full confidence in his own etiologic reconstruction of her sexual object choice. Yet he pointed out that she completely rejected his interpretive insights, and he attributed the rejection to her desire to punish him as a father surrogate by clinging to her neurosis" (13). Grünbaum concludes that "-- such reliance on the analyst's inference is necessary because -- the patient's poor mnemonic performance can readily fail to supply the information vital to the reconstruction of his pathogenically crucial past. Thus, if the confluence marshaled by Freud does have probative cogency, while the patient's 'yes' or 'no' may be discounted, then there is good reason for according cognitive primacy to the analyst's inference over the patient's 'self-

reflection'. And just such an epistemic elevation of the analyst's inference as the ultimate epistemic arbiter of a psychoanalytic construction is both the logical import and explicit tenor of Freud's entire paper. Hence, its conclusion obviously gainsays Habermas's bald, peremptory, though repeated, assertion that 'the patient himself is the final authority'." (14)

Judging by the quotes summoned by Grünbaum - and by his own arguments - Freud appears to have quite explicitly rejected the notion of consensus as a criterion of psychological knowledge (as far as psychoanalytic interpretations may be regarded as representative examples of psychological knowledge). While we are not in a position to assess the quality of an agreement from outside of a network of interaction, Grünbaum saves us the trouble by stating Freud's principles in terms which leave little doubt as to his preferred mode of interaction in relation to the person whose conduct is under investigation: "the analyst convinces the patient of the truth of the construction" (15). It is the analyst who convinces the other of the truth of the interpretation: the one-directional mode of interaction can hardly be outlined more unambiguously. There is apparently a "correct

interpretation" independent of the vicissitudes of the communicative network at hand, and one of the participants "convinces" the other of the validity of this interpretation. If the other has not been convinced within a given period of time and effort, the interaction is discontinued without an agreement at least with reference to this particular interpretation - but the "truth" which the investigator has already inferred remains valid. The other's rejection of the current interpretation becomes assimilated into the interpretation itself: "he attributed the rejection to her desire to punish him as a father surrogate by clinging to her neurosis" (16).

In terms of communicative interaction, the above example may be regarded as a case of frustrated negotiations which end up in a return to one-directional communication between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated. Freud abandons the original network of interaction - himself and the patient - and turns to another one - the audience of his subsequent account, including ourselves. His attempts to "convince" the patient of the validity of his interpretation have failed; now he attempts to convince us of the justification of the failure and of the validity of the

interpretation. While we may become convinced - and many have - it is incumbent on us to be aware of the fact that the interpretation will be valid, and counted as knowledge, only within this network of interaction; the patient - the original "other" - is explicitly excluded.

3. Habermas and Grünbaum in terms of communicative interaction

At this showing, Habermas's epistemological position seems more solid than Grünbaum's defence of Freud's original thesis. Whereas Habermas relies on agreement based on two-directional interaction, Grünbaum purports to establish the patient's meaning by means of one-directional communication - which, given the postulates I have adumbrated in previous sections, seems logically contradictory.

Grünbaum still owes Habermas an account of what finally constitutes the criteria of the acceptability of psychoanalytic interpretations. Let us give him

the opportunity: "-- note that Habermas tacitly banished all extraclinical testing of general psychoanalytic hypotheses from consideration", he urges us (17). "For he simply took it for granted that the treatment setting is the sole arena for any and all validation of disconfirmation of these universal propositions. Just for argument's sake, let me assume that if one were to confine all testing to the clinical investigations carried out by the doctor-patient dyad, then the analyst can confirm an interpretation only on the authority of his patient's prior certification of its validity. Even then, it would hardly follow that the clinical setting is the principal arena for the well-designed testing of general psychoanalytic hypotheses, let alone the sole arena. But if extraclinical tests of at least some of these hypotheses are feasible, as indeed they are, then patients in analysis surely do not have the cognitive monopoly that Habermas conferred on them."

(18) By "extraclinical" testing of hypotheses Grünbaum, presumably, refers to reliance on evidence obtained from outside the context of communicative interaction constituted by the client and the therapist.

Grünbaum elaborates: "Freud -- placed very much greater epistemic reliance on patient responses other

than verbal assent or dissent as 'indirect confirmations' or disconfirmations of analytic constructions. For after concluding that 'the direct utterances of the patient after he has been offered a construction afford very little evidence upon the question whether we have been right or wrong', Freud declares that 'it is of all the greater interest that there are indirect forms of confirmation which are in every respect trustworthy'" (19 - my italics). "It is patent", he goes on, "that Freud appealed to a consilience of inductions from other clinical data to assess the probative value of the patient's acceptance or rejection of his analyst's interpretations. In particular, he invoked the patient's neurotic resistance to discount the latter's dissent only when the analyst had what he took to be consilient support that the interpretation was nonetheless true." (20 - Grünbaum's italics.)

Grünbaum concludes: "It would seem that the validation of Freud's cardinal hypotheses has to come, if at all, mainly from well-designed extraclinical studies, either epidemiologic or even experimental" (21). In other words, support for the cardinal hypotheses of the theory of unconscious motive forces must be sought from outside the network of interaction at hand - which, it seems, means that

the mode of interaction involved is one-directional, the investigator chooses to refrain from conveying his assumptions to the other person, the other person's meanings remain hypothetical, and the resulting interpretation is epistemologically illegitimate. Grünbaum fails to note that any "other modes" capable of discrediting or verifying interpretations are available to the interactive situation only as propositions the validity of which must, in a communicative context, be argued for within a context of communicative interaction which either includes or excludes the person whose conduct is being studied. "Extra-clinical" evidence has no - and cannot have any - automatic authority. Such evidence may only serve as an argument in the negotiation of a relevant interpretation; but, as Grünbaum asserts that the patient is incapable of participating in two-directional interaction by definition, no objection is really relevant.

Grünbaum completes his case against agreement-as-criterion by asserting that even though external criteria were introduced into the interaction as arguments by means of which an agreement could potentially be achieved, this would still be impertinent to the validation or falsification of the interpretation. Grünbaum quotes Eagle (22): "If self-

interest (including self-esteem) is sufficiently involved and if A's capacity and willingness for self-confrontation are limited, A may never be able to acknowledge the motive attributed to him - even when his attention is called to the same things that led the outside observer to make his judgment."

"Accordingly", Grünbaum goes on, "sometimes analysts do take the patient's denial but subsequent acceptance of some painful motivational imputation to bespeak his achievement of new insight and emotional maturation. But -- if, after the analysand's initial denial, it is ever legitimate for the therapist to ascribe such cognitive gain and increased self-mastery to the analysand, then this judgment cannot itself first derive its warrant from the patient's self-confrontational assent. Instead, the doctor's verdict as to his client's attainment of new bona fide insight is predicated on a criterion of validity for interpretations that can authenticate an interpretation as genuine (rather than fancied) insight independently of the patient's assent."
(23 - Grünbaum's italics.)

Let us consider the above passage - both Grünbaum's own position and his paraphrase of Eagle's - in terms of communicative interaction between participants in

a psychological investigation.

Plausibly enough, given the basic assumptions underlying psychoanalytic theory, "the tendency of people to disown unflattering motives and to avow flattering ones" is used as an argument against the trustworthiness of patient assent as a criterion of the validity of an interpretation. The problem, however, is a more fundamental one: how does the investigator justify his reliance on one-directional communication as a trustworthy method of providing insight into the patient's meanings? The distinction between "flattering" and "unflattering" motives, for example, is far from self-evident; it is clear that what the investigator regards as flattering or unflattering may not carry the same meaning for the patient. If it is accepted, as seems reasonable by now, that the psychological significance of an event is determined by the meanings the person in question associates with it, and if it is acknowledged that meanings cannot sensibly be ascribed from outside - i.e., by means of one-directional communication - we must infer that Grünbaum's (and Eagle's) argument is quite seriously inconsistent.

Grünbaum's skepticism of the patient's credentials as regards fully fledged partnership in two-directional

interaction is prohibitive: "one can expect the patient to deny his doctor's imputation of unconscious motives irrespective of the evidence of them" (24) - unless, of course, "the defenses against their recognition have been successfully overcome" (25). The patient, in other words, is unable to respond to the arguments presented by the investigator - which makes it impossible to relate to him in terms of two-directional interaction and potential agreement on a relevant interpretation. The patient is thus not a relevant participant in an agreement on an interpretation of his motives by definition - "even when his attention is called to the same things that led the outside observer to make his judgment" (26).

This assertion is of particular interest for our purposes: if the external evidence influencing the investigator's interpretation were introduced into the interaction as arguments in the negotiation, the other participant "may never be able to acknowledge the motive attributed to him" because, no doubt, of his resistance to the exposition of his repressed experiences - Q.E.D.: as the other person's assent or denial is, or at least may be, influenced by his resistance to the "correct" interpretation, there is

no point in engaging in two-directional interaction with him.

Grünbaum seems to accept this circular view as an argument for the exclusion of the patient, or the other person, from two-directional interaction - and from the status of a subject - by definition. This conclusion leaves the other person no legitimate possibility of participation in the interaction through which psychological knowledge is produced; the resulting "findings", after all, are independent of the views of the person whose conduct is being investigated.

Someone, presumably, must become convinced of the validity of the interpretation, if it is to qualify as knowledge. If it is only the interpreter himself that is convinced, the item of knowledge is valid only within that particular network ($N = 1$); if it is a community of investigators, it is valid within that network - which does not include the person whose conduct and motives is being investigated and to whom the item of knowledge in question is supposed to refer. This has interesting implications for cases in which the person concerned is under investigation for problems involving what have become called "paranoid" experiences; the circularity problem would seem

particularly poignant here.

One more argument of Grünbaum's against the notion of "patient assent" - i.e., agreement between the participants - as the criterion of valid interpretations should be considered. If the patient initially denies the relevance of an interpretation but at some later point accepts it, which position of his is the more trustworthy? Why should we accept his later assent more eagerly than his earlier denial? Grünbaum elaborates: "-- the patient's assent to the interpretation is taken to be evidence for his ability to face a conclusion about himself whose truth the analyst was able to infer validly while the patient was still denying it. -- After all, if the analysand were the ultimate epistemic authority - a la Habermas - why should the doctor rely on his client's assent to a given interpretation I but discount an earlier denial and/or the patient's avowal of a psychoanalytic conjecture contrary to I?"

(27)

Grünbaum's problem, however, is a genuine one only from the standpoint of the "correct" interpretation which may be identified by means of "external evidence". If the investigator harbours doubts as to the validity of the other person's assent or denial,

that assent or denial may only be made more trustworthy by the introduction of these doubts into the negotiation of an acceptable interpretation. Once such an interpretation is agreed upon, it is valid until further notice: there is no external guarantee of the permanence of its validity independently of the process of interaction in question.

I will now try to sum up the substance of Grünbaum's critique of Habermas's position on the criteria of the validity of interpretations within the psychoanalytic framework. I have tried to show that there are two overlapping areas of interest here: the notion of "patient assent" as the criterion of a valid interpretation on the one hand, and the status of "recollection of repressed memories" on the other.

To begin with, Grünbaum seems to make too much of Habermas's assertion that "the patient himself is the final authority". Habermas is admittedly ambiguous on this point: while he does claim that the patient's assent is the final criterion of the validity of an interpretation, he also points out that "the empirical accuracy of general interpretations depends not on controlled observation and subsequent

communication among investigators but rather on the accomplishment of self-reflection and subsequent communication between the investigator and his 'object'" (28). This formulation seems to emphasize the communicative relationship between the participants rather than the "final authority" of the patient as such - i.e., that the patient's subjective version should be accepted as superior to the investigator's subjective version; while it may be a reasonable working hypothesis that, if one must choose between rival subjective versions of the meaning systems involved in an instance of conduct, one should opt for the patient's account rather than the investigator's, the point is surely that an epistemologically legitimate interpretation should be based on an inter-subjective agreement.

Given the apparent ambiguity of Habermas's wording on this issue, Grünbaum may be forgiven for not giving Habermas the benefit of the doubt. But even if we were prepared to accept Grünbaum's reading of what Habermas "really" meant, we are left with the more fundamental problem of the reliability, or unreliability, of the patient's "recollection of repressed memories".

Grünbaum concludes - quite cogently, it seems - that

Habermas places undue emphasis on the reliability of the patient's memory. Habermas's use of the notions of "recollection", "memory" and "self-reflection" seems indeed problematic: their status within the communicative context to the primacy of which Habermas otherwise subscribes remains unaccounted for. Grünbaum's argument is based on the juxtaposition of Habermas's reliance of the patient's recollection and Freud's rejection of it as a criterion of the validity of an interpretation. In terms of this juxtaposition and of the central position of the notions of "repression" and "resistance" in psychoanalytic theory, it is evident to the point of circularity that the patient's memory cannot be relied upon for corroboration or falsification of an interpretation. It is another matter that Freud's own position as to the epistemological status of the notions of memory and recollection seems in the end quite ambiguous and appears to have varied somewhat between different phases in the development of his thinking.

4. The epistemological status of "repressed memories"

The significance of the notions of memory and recollection as criteria of unconscious contents warrants closer scrutiny.

The validity of an interpretation may, it seems, be corroborated independently of such auxiliary concepts: the interpretation may be accepted by the patient - and therapeutic results may be achieved - without any reference to memory. While a person may describe his acceptance of the interpretation offered by the investigator - or a version constructed in collaboration between himself and the investigator - as a recollection a repressed memory, but there is no a priori need for it, let alone any method for verifying the assumption that the item produced by the person actually is "recollected" from "memory". Although Habermas and Grünbaum present diametrically opposed views on the reliability of the patient's recollections, both fail to provide an account of the epistemological status of the notion of memory, and the possibility of recollection from memory. As long as no explicit clarification of this issue is forthcoming, we should be entitled to conclude that references to memory are quite uninformative at least in this context.

But the epistemological problem remains: how are we to identify a statement which purports to represent a "recollection" of a "repressed memory" as opposed to any other item constructed by present "self-reflection"? If the production or at least expression of such statements takes place in the present as opposed to the past, what grounds do we have for the assumption that they refer to some historical event, or past experience?

For my present purposes, these questions may be compressed into a more practical one: what is lost if "memory" and "recollection" are dispensed with as epistemologically viable notions?

Freud does not seem to lose a great deal. After all, it has been made clear that the patient's acceptance or denial of the analyst's interpretation do not qualify as epistemological criteria by definition. The analyst seeks to "convince" the patient of the validity of his interpretation, and, as we have seen, that conviction "achieves the same therapeutic result as a recaptured memory". In effect, the notion of memory seems superfluous in this context: while the patient's conviction may involve experiences of remembrance of things past, such experiences do not seem necessary for the achievement of such

conviction.

For Habermas, on the other hand, the notions of memory and recollection seem to be relics of the objectivist tradition which he explicitly challenges but of which he at many junctures harbours a tacit residue. While his principle of the primacy of communication and agreement between the investigator and the other participant in the investigation (29) is coherent enough, his dictum that "only the patient's recollection decides the accuracy of the construction" (30) appears more or less unnecessary in the context of communicative interaction. If the patient's acceptance of the interpretation is the principal criterion of its validity, why should that acceptance be qualified by the requirement that it should be based on "recollection"? The issue is made more poignant by the problem of distinguishing between "memories" and "not-memories". Habermas fails to provide explicit criteria for this distinction - which, after all, seems necessary for the maintenance of the status of any concept in a theoretical language.

It may be concluded, somewhat paradoxically perhaps, that neither Freud nor Habermas need the notions of memory and recollection as an integral part of this

respective theories. Freud's reliance on one-directional communicative interaction makes these concepts irrelevant - except perhaps as auxiliary metaphors by means of which the search for an intersubjectively acceptable interpretation can proceed; Habermas's emphasis of two-directional interaction and agreement between the participants, on the other hand, only requires the notion of the patient's acceptance of the interpretation; reference to "recollection of repressed memories" may be presented as an aspect of and justification for the agreement, but Habermas does not offer any particular arguments for its primacy.

Grünbaum continues his defence of the significance of extra-clinical, observational "facts" for psychoanalytic theory by criticizing Paul Ricoeur's (31) philosophy of psychoanalysis - especially Ricoeur's view that "all truth claims of psychoanalysis are ultimately summed up in the narrative structure of psychoanalytic facts" (32) or, for our present purposes, that the domain of psychoanalytic truth-claims is necessarily limited to the construction of acceptable narratives. Grünbaum (33) calls this view an "ontological amputation": apparently, the psychoanalytic framework does extend

beyond the construction of narratives which takes place in the context of the communicative interaction between the analyst / investigator and the analysand / other. Grünbaum points out that Freud's "etiologic hypotheses purportedly explained generically why people at large acquire neuroses, regardless of whether they are treated psychoanalytically or not -- By the same token, he claimed to have illuminated why, even among the unanalyzed, the personality traits of obstinacy, orderliness, and parsimony tended to cluster together and deserved the etiologic label of 'anal character'" (34 - Grünbaum's italics). Grünbaum makes it quite clear - many times over - that the "therapeutic dynamics depicted in psychoanalytic theory is hardly restricted to speech acts on the analyst's couch or in his/her office" (35).

Grünbaum's arguments provide an instructive illustration of the very core of psychological epistemology: on the one hand, interpretations are supposed to be based on the verbal interactions between analyst and analysand - and on the other, on the analyst's "extra-clinical" observations. It must, however, be noted that the borderline between the verbal interactions between analyst and analysand and

"extra-clinical" observations is determined by the analyst / investigator's decision on whether the meaning of such observational material is determined by both of the participants or only by himself. In the former case, the investigator introduces his observations of the other person's conduct into the verbal interaction; in the latter, he keeps his observations to himself and attributes his own meanings to them.

Grünbaum appears to regard "the personality traits of obstinacy, orderliness, and parsimony" as epistemologically unproblematic, i.e., as characteristics which can be identified without reference to the dynamics of interaction within which the meanings of events are constructed and confirmed. It must be pointed out that it is precisely the acceptance or rejection of this assumption with which Grünbaum's defence of "extra-clinical" evidence stands or falls - and it must, judging by Grünbaum's offerings, be quite unambiguously doubted. The categorical difference between "intra-clinical" and "extra-clinical" evidence is defined by the investigator's choice between one-directional and two-directional modes of communicative interaction. It is difficult to envisage just how "intra-clinical" evidence can be complemented by "extra-clinical"

observations in an epistemologically justifiable manner. What, after all, are the criteria according to which some "extra-clinical" observations are introduced by the investigator into the "intra-clinical" context and others are excluded from it? Why should the investigator refrain from subjecting any relevant observations he may have within his grasp - clinical or extra-clinical - to intersubjective assessment within the therapeutic interaction? As long as this question remains unanswered, the basic issue, it seems, is evaded.

6. The unconscious as metaphor

On the basis of the above analysis, it may be ventured that the epistemological status of the unconscious seems quite fragile: if its existence may only be corroborated by "extra-clinical" methods - i.e., methods relying on one-directional interaction - the person himself will be excluded from, and is irrelevant to, the community of knowers within which the notion of unconscious motive forces is relied upon, by definition; it is clear that at least Grünbaum's notion of "extra-clinical" evidence

refers quite categorically to observations independent of the construction of interpretations which takes place in the context of a conversational exchange. Observation may furnish arguments and hypotheses, but these are relevant only insofar as they are introduced into the communicative interaction between the participants in the investigation. If, on the other hand, the person's assent is accepted as the basic criteria of the validity of an interpretation, that assent must presumably be based on a conscious choice - which would make the notion of a categorical distinction between "repressed motives" and "contemporary narratives" seem quite unpromising.

Given the weaknesses of Grünbaum's argument, it is not surprising that Spence (36), among others, has drawn the conclusion that the unconscious should be regarded at best as a metaphor - used by the participants in a psychological investigation as an aid in the generation of possible interpretations - without any pretensions to epistemological validity. Spence (37) points out that the form and function of the unconscious are never directly observed and that they therefore "must be reconstructed from conscious behaviours" (38 - my italics) - and if the identification of unconscious motive forces is

possible only by means of conscious behaviours, the task of drawing a reliable line between the two devices of making sense of why people do what they do becomes quite problematic. Spence (39) faults the conviction that an instance of conduct can be attributed to unconscious motivation on two grounds: "First, if the form of the unconscious fantasy cannot be established independently of its presumptive effect, we may have a piece of circular reasoning. Second, if we claim that a previously established unconscious fantasy can be used to account for a new clinical event, we may have demonstrated no more than the chance overlap between two unrelated happenings." In other words, the notion of unconscious motive forces is, according to Spence, not only logically circular, but also beyond empirical corroboration. While "there may still remain a metaphorical use for this construct", he argues, "we should be clear that there may be no referent" (40).

It is instructive to note that Freud himself was demonstrably ambivalent as to the epistemological and ontological status of the unconscious, subscribing to different definitions of that status at different points in his lifetime. These differences seem to offer ample scope for the accommodation of views quite fundamentally at variance with each other.

Grünbaum, above, tends to seek support from those sections in Freud's writings which lend credence to the view that unconscious motive forces are an independent, epistemologically legitimate and verifiable feature of human conduct; Spence, on the other hand, points out those passages in which Freud seems to acknowledge the ambiguity of the nature of the concept - to wit, a sentence in Freud's account of the Little Hans case:

--- For a psychoanalysis is not an impartial scientific investigation, but a therapeutic measure. Its essence is not to prove anything, but merely to alter something. (41)

It is perhaps predictable that Spence's own solution of the problem of legitimate epistemological criteria of interpretations is congruent with the Habermasean principle - namely, that "truth is arrived at through dialogue and argumentation leading to consensus" (42). The task of the epistemologically serious investigator is to recognize "that there are any number of meanings contained in the clinical encounter" (43) and to present to the person whose conduct is being investigated "as full a range of alternatives as possible" (44).

In the context of the basic modes of communicative interaction I have advocated above, the metaphoric

construal of the unconscious - as outlined by Spence - seems more justifiable than the "extra-clinical" evidence offered by Grünbaum as an argument for its autonomous position: the latter fails to define his precise location between the vantage points of the first-person participant and of the third-person observer and to provide sufficient epistemological justification for withholding relevant observations from the person whose conduct is being investigated. I must conclude that if the notion of unconscious motive forces is to be preserved as an independently verifiable feature of human conduct, it cannot be corroborated by means of psychological evidence and two-directional communicative interaction; other kinds of evidence based on one-directional modes of communicative interaction must be employed. It is another matter whether the notion of unconscious motive forces can be supported without recourse to two-directional interaction especially insofar as that notion is supposed to - and I would suggest that it must - imply a reference to meanings attributed to some hypothetical events by the other person. On the strength of the arguments presented by Grünbaum on the one hand and Spence on the other, the metaphor alternative seems to be the only legitimate means of saving the notion of the unconscious, and unconscious motive forces, for posterity.

This conclusion, however, need not be as devastating in practice as it may sound in theory. Spence (45) reminds us that while both metaphor and empirical laws carry explanatory force, the kind of explanation provided by the first is significantly different from that provided by the second. "The explanatory force of the Freudian metaphor of the unconscious is not diminished by the fact that it is seen as a manner of speaking; indeed, its credibility may even be strengthened" (46). It must, however, be pointed out that if the credibility of the notion of the unconscious indeed is strengthened, this is for contingent, pragmatic reasons, not for any universal, independently determinable ones; in other words, if the participants in an investigative encounter agree that the metaphor of the unconscious is more useful than other possible metaphors for their attempt to make sense of a given instance of conduct, that is entirely for them to decide - but such an agreement does not tell us anything universal about the status of the unconscious.

7. The Causality of the Unconscious

After the preceding considerations, it seems reasonable to suggest that in a psychology based on communication between members of an unambiguously defined group, or community, the conscious-unconscious distinction may most usefully be defined in terms of those meanings, and motive forces, which are not identified by the participants at the beginning of the investigative interaction but which unfold - or are constructed - in its course. The actor gains an insight into those meanings and motive forces as a result of a period of communicative interaction involving the actor himself and any relevant others: the actor's initial account of the meaning of his conduct is revised, complemented or replaced by a more plausible, acceptable and agreeable one in the course of the ensuing exchange of potential interpretations. The difference between the actor's original account and the interpretation generated in the course of the interaction is - or, rather, was - the unconscious motive force: the actor did not originally recognize it, was unable to articulate it, was not prepared to consider it: he was not conscious of it.

In the course of this process, causes are transformed into reasons or choices, and action gains ground from behaviour: one's personal control over one's conduct is enhanced - or, to paraphrase Gergen (47), one achieves a greater degree of "freedom from stimulus control".

It may be argued that causal explanation of human conduct is viable if the person whose conduct is being studied is - in general terms - unaware of the motive forces underlying his activities and choices. It seems that the concept of causality may, at least provisionally, be applied to the explanation of conduct determined by unconscious motive forces. Indeed, unconscious motive forces are, for the purposes of epistemology, best be described as causes: as long as a person is unable to present a convincing justification for (some aspects of) his conduct, the possibility remains that other people may - by means of observation, for instance - identify some stimulus-response connections of which he is unaware but by means of which his conduct, or in this case behaviour, may be predicted and manipulated by others. It seems reasonable to describe such stimuli as causes of behaviour.

Grünbaum (48) leaves no room for doubt as to whether psychoanalytic explanations are to be regarded as causal ones; he emphasizes their causal nature on numerous occasions. This is a perfectly logical observation insofar as the construction of psychoanalytic interpretations is based on one-directional communicative interaction - in which the patient's assent and dissent are regarded as symptoms stemming from unconscious motive forces and therefore disqualified from the category of legitimate speech acts - but it seems doubtful whether such interpretations can be accepted as epistemologically legitimate psychological knowledge.

After all, it seems as if unconscious meanings or motive forces may only be identified in their conscious form. We can only meaningfully discuss conscious meanings - or, rather, meanings become conscious through communicative interaction: it is communication that defines them as conscious. When we understand them - or, more to the point, when we decide that sufficient criteria for an understanding of them are fulfilled - they are no longer unconscious; they have become as they can get at least insofar as our agreement presupposes, and is based on, conscious meanings if it is to be a

rational and epistemologically legitimate one. The existence of unconscious meanings and motive forces is determined in the first instance by the contingency that no agreement has been reached on an adequate interpretation of a problematic instance of conduct and one of the participants chooses to accept his hypothetical explanation for the purposes of some pragmatic project in which the other does not take part - or in which the other only takes part as an object as opposed to a subject.

Both participants may, of course, be equally perplexed by the first person's conduct and unable to suggest viable explanations. They may now agree that the motive force in question must be unconscious; but, unless they continue the process of constructing a convincing enough explanation, that agreement is on a par to saying something like "we just do not know why you did / do / keep doing this". This admission does not, however, entitle the participants to translate their present bafflement - their inability to construct a reason for a particular instance of conduct and thus to elevate it into the category of action - into some independent entity called "the unconscious". There is hardly any justification for defining our ignorance as a characteristic of some independent reality; such logic would seem decidedly

circular.

8. The Unconscious as what is not known

For the purposes of the present epistemological argument, the unconscious is quite simply synonymous with what is not known about the motive forces underlying a person's conduct. When adequate interpretations are agreed upon, unconscious motive forces become conscious reasons, and the unknown becomes known. While the participants may choose to decide that something or other has now been "retrieved" from the unconscious - and thus uphold the notion of the unconscious in general - that notion is by no means an epistemologically necessary one. Spence's redefinition of the unconscious as a metaphor which may be successfully employed in, for instance, various therapeutic enterprises, appears quite cogent.

In conventional uses of the notion of unconscious motive forces - such as psychoanalysis - the translation of such forces into conscious interpretations is supposed to be accompanied by

therapeutic effects. It must be asked, however, whether such pragmatic results ipso facto qualify as an epistemological argument. If the new interpretation of a person's conduct is accompanied by favourable changes in that conduct, all the better for him; but it is by no means self-evident that the new interpretation has hit upon something in the recesses of the person's unconscious. The most we can confidently say, it seems, is that the new interpretation seems to have provided a more useful framework for the actions of the person in question than the old, or missing, one. There appears to be no compelling reason to believe that the interpretation of the motive forces underlying somebody's problematic behaviour constructed in the course of the interaction should correspond to something which previously resided in the unconscious. The case is, I think, elegantly summed up by Cioffi (49):

The error in question might be described as looking for consummation in the wrong place; an instance of which is asking for the etiology of the phenomenon where what we really want is an analysis of the impression produced on us by the phenomenon. For example, we often think we are interested in the past when it is really the experience of pastness which absorbs us.

9. Therapeutic results as epistemological arguments

But problems do not end here. The person whose conduct is being investigated may continue to behave in what was regarded as a problematic manner despite the agreement on a plausible explanation, as in some patterns of behaviour traditionally diagnosed as neurotic, e.g. obsessive or compulsive syndromes. May the agreement still be properly called knowledge?

If we remain faithful to the present argument, we should probably answer to the effect that this depends on the criteria set by the participants: if knowledge of the motive forces underlying a form of a form of conduct - or the elevation of those forces from the unconscious into the conscious - is assumed to have a therapeutic effect per se, the agreed explanation should be seriously questioned, and the search for a more convincing interpretation - i.e. one the explication of which would effect a change in the person's conduct - should be resumed. If, on the other hand, the participants agree that knowledge and therapeutic effects do not necessarily have to be linked, or that the new knowledge constructed in the course of the investigation may need some time to "sink in", the original explanation may still retain its epistemological status as legitimate knowledge.

As the therapeutic effects of rendering an unconscious meaning or motive force conscious may not be immediate, the evaluation of the validity of the agreed interpretation may be a complicated affair, and it is beyond the scope of the present analysis to speculate on the various possible alternatives of such an evaluation.

It should be noted that therapeutic results may also be achieved without any attempt towards constructing a new interpretation. The idea of behaviour therapy, for example, relies primarily on causal explanations; any meanings underlying the unwanted behaviour are supposedly irrelevant to the process of treatment. As such therapeutic methods do not aim for an understanding of meanings, they are not of epistemological concern and will not be discussed here.

10. Conclusion: The Demise of the Unconscious

The by now inevitable question must finally be asked: May the construction of the new interpretation or narrative itself not be held responsible for the therapeutic effect without any reference to unconscious motive forces?

A convincing narrative is one in which the participants believe; it helps make sense of behaviour which was previously unintelligible. The afflicted person may have had no coherent narrative at his disposal at all in the framework of which the causes of his behaviour could have been transformed into reasons for his action, or his original narrative may have become obsolete for the purposes of his present activities and relationships with others. The objective of the therapeutic encounter is the construction, or reconstruction, of a satisfactory interpretation of whatever it is that is relevant in the person's life. While the notion of the unconscious may play a part in the construction of such an interpretation, the arguments for the status of unconscious motive forces as a universal, independent entity seem - at least from the

epistemological viewpoint - quite unconvincing.

By way of conclusion, there seem to be sufficient reasons for suggesting that there is no method available to us of producing any epistemologically legitimate knowledge about unconscious motive forces. In the interests of epistemological parsimony, we must ask whether the construction of a conscious reason is not in itself sufficient for the understanding of any changes in a person's conduct and whether there is adequate justification for the notion of unconscious motive forces. On present evidence, the latter seems expendable.

We may only have knowledge about conscious reasons for actions; but the successful construction of a conscious reason does not mean that an unconscious motive force would thus have been unearthed. It should perhaps be stressed once more that the pragmatic value of what may best be termed the metaphor of the unconscious may be considerable for many therapeutic and heuristic purposes. This is not, and could not reasonably be, disputed; but pragmatic value should not be equated with epistemological legitimation - or vice versa.

If it is nevertheless considered desirable to afford

the notion of the unconscious some sort of a theoretical, ontological status, it must clearly be in the context of physiological rather than psychological mode of explanation - insofar as the former is defined in terms of one-directional and the latter in terms of the two-directional communicative interaction. Psychological descriptions of unconscious motive forces may be plausibly, and rationally, understood only as metaphors which may or may not be of use in the construction of acceptable reasons for actions (50). In a psychology based on two-directional interaction, there is no place for the unconscious as an ontological entity.

It seems justifiable to conclude that the notion of unconscious motive forces does not constitute a sufficient challenge to the proposition that agreement between the investigator and the person, or persons, whose conduct is being investigated is the basic criterion of the epistemological validity of psychological knowledge. In the following chapter, I will consider the notion of commonsense psychological explanations from the epistemological viewpoint. While the content of commonsense explanations is quite unrelated to the claims of the psycho-analytical mode of explanation, I will try to show

that the epistemological status of both notions is in effect the same.

NOTES

- (1) Freud (1900).
- (2) Freud (1925/1926), pp. 311-312.
- (3) Grünbaum (1984), pp. 9-43.
- (4) Habermas (1972).
- (5) Ibid., p. 261.
- (6) Ibid., p. 260.
- (7) Ibid., p. 230.
- (8) Grünbaum (1984), pp. 9-43.
- (9) Ibid., p. 22.
- (10) Ibid., p. 26.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid., pp. 26-27.
- (13) Ibid., p. 27.
- (14) Ibid., p. 32.
- (15) Ibid., p. 26.
- (16) Ibid., p. 27.
- (17) Ibid., p. 38.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid., p. 263.
- (20) Ibid., pp. 276-277.
- (21) Ibid., p. 278.

- (22) Eagle (1973), p. 273.
- (23) Grünbaum (1984), p. 28.
- (24) Ibid., p. 27.
- (25) Ibid.
- (26) Eagle (1973), p. 273.
- (27) Grünbaum (1984), p. 28.
- (28) Habermas (1972), p. 261.
- (29) Ibid.
- (30) Ibid., p. 230.
- (31) Ricoeur (1970), (1981).
- (32) Ricoeur (1981), p. 268.
- (33) Grünbaum (1984), p. 44.
- (34) Ibid.
- (35) Ibid., p. 45.
- (36) Spence (1982), (1987).
- (37) Spence (1987), p. 17.
- (38) Ibid.
- (39) Ibid., p. 20.
- (40) Ibid., p. 23.
- (41) Freud (1909), p. 104.
- (42) Spence (1987), p. 213.
- (43) Ibid., p. 155.
- (44) Ibid.
- (45) Ibid., p. 7.
- (46) Ibid.
- (47) Gergen (1982), p. 42.
- (48) Grünbaum (1984).

(49) Cioffi (1969), p. 197.

(50) Cf. Coulter (1983), p. 157): "One quite central metaphorical construction illustrative of the problem in the behavioural sciences is that of the 'unconscious'. From the Freudian hydraulics of mind to the contemporary computational analogy, the result has been to personify the mind or brain and to lose the person in the process. There is, of course, nothing wrong with saying that someone did something unconsciously (meaning: pre-reflectively, habitually, without thinking, or spontaneously). Problems arise, however, when either (i) actions are assigned, or motives, desires, thoughts, etc. are imputed to persons in the absence of ordinary ascription criteria and are claimed nonetheless to have a 'locus' in the unconscious 'mind' of the persons in question, or (ii) mundane activities are uniformly construed as the outputs of some internal programming operative out of the awareness of those engaged in the activities."

Chapter Six

COMMON SENSE AND COMMUNICATIVE INTERACTION:
A CRITIQUE OF SMEDSLUND

1. Introduction

Smedslund's (NOTE 1) attempts to establish the concept of common sense as a basic element in psychological explanation provides another useful illustration of the persistent difficulty of grasping the sometimes subtle but epistemologically decisive difference between what may usefully be called objective and intersubjective modes of psychological knowledge. Smedslund sets out with a cogent criticism of traditional notions of the nature of psychological research and knowledge, but since he, too, ends up with a neo-objectivist position, his efforts warrant closer scrutiny.

Smedslund's principal charge against traditional empirical psychology is that in many instances, empirical evidence is based on semantic tautologies, or common sense, and subjects of experiments are bound to behave in accordance with the theory because there is, logically, no sensible alternative. Empirical results of this kind, Smedslund argues, are therefore not properly empirical; they are based on an implicit or explicit set of common sense theorems about human behaviour/conduct, and psychological

investigations would therefore be best advised to concentrate on the explication of these common sense theorems in order for them to be productive of any legitimate knowledge.

After having developed his approach in a succession of papers, Smedslund has finally constructed a "non-empirical system" (2) of "psycho-logic" consisting of a series of definitions, axioms, theories and corollaries purported to be logically necessary determinants of human conduct (3). The axioms range from "A conscious person is continuously acting" (4) to "Every person wants to continue to exist" (5) and "A person's belief system will change in the least extensive way possible, which is taken by that person to be compatible with a perceived inconsistency" (6).

I will try to show that while Smedslund manifestly distances himself from the traditional objectivist notion of psychological knowledge (7) and champions a psychology based on meanings (8), his alternative approach does not solve the epistemological problems involved - contrary to his own confidence: "In my view, the predictive and explanatory power of the non-empirical system to be presented far exceeds that of any existing psychological theory. As I see it, this system may replace many preceding empirical

psychological theories and reflects an alternative and more adequate view of psychology. According to this, psychology is the study of the culturally created order in human behaviour, and this is the only order to be found in this domain, besides the biological constraints within which each individual functions" (9). Although this formulation seems to establish quite unambiguously Smedslund's position vis-a-vis the objectivist notion of psychological knowledge, the implications of his non-empirical system do not seem to bear this out.

2. Commonsense Psychology: Smedslund's Definition

Smedslund defines common sense as "the system of implications shared by all members of a culture" (10) or "the set of all implications taken for granted by all members of /a culture/" (11); commonsense psychology is thus defined as "The set of all implications pertinent to psychological matters, taken for granted by all members of /a culture/" (12). Smedslund goes on to provide an "operational criterion" of the concept: "A proposition stating an implication of the given context is a successful explication of common sense to the extent that

members of the culture involved, familiar with that type of context, agree that the proposition is correct (acceptable) and that its negation is incorrect (unacceptable)." (13)

Smedslund elaborates his notion of common sense further : "As socialized adults we -- agree about rules, including what are proper meanings and implications. This agreement makes it possible to formulate generally acceptable logically necessary propositions. It also ensures that common sense propositions become factually true, since everyone obeys them, and expects everyone else to do so, etc." (14). It should be noted at this point for further reference that in his definitions of common sense, Smedslund makes no explicit distinction between (formal) semantic tautologies and (substantive) rules of conduct.

To complement his theoretical analysis, Smedslund has reported empirical attempts to support his advocacy of the importance of common sense theorems in the study of human conduct. One of these studies involved presenting a number of students with 36 theorems (15) - for example, "if P wants to do A in S at t and if P believes with complete certainty that she can do A in S at t, and no other circumstances intervene, then P

will try to do A in S at t." (16) - and asked them to indicate whether the theorems were correct and whether their opposites were incorrect. The results showed that 93 per cent of the predictions of the respondents were consistent with the theorems (17). These results encourage him to state in another paper (18) that "-- the possibility of direct studies of the degree of consensus elicited by attempted explications of common sense means that much of the programmatic discussion -- about the consistency, preciseness, stability, etc. of common sense may, henceforth, be dispensed with. The high degrees of consensus observed in my most recent studies /(19)/ have convinced me that common sense is a reasonably stable and measurable system" (20). Smedslund asserts, furthermore, that "(t)he very fact that people generally manage to communicate, collaborate, and live in societies bears witness to the existence of a solid consensual foundation" (21) - an observation which is, indeed, difficult to contest as such.

Finally, Smedslund describes his system as relating "to psychological realities in the same way as geometry relates to physical realities, that is, geography" (22) and goes on to claim that "(t)he formal analogy between geometry and psycho-logic

holds up in every respect" (23).

3. Logical necessity and historical contingency: some problems with Smedslund's position

On closer analysis, however, Smedslund's system of "psycho-logic" seems to overreach itself in some crucial respects. The linkage between the formal definitions and theorems on the one hand and the apparently substantive axioms on the other remains unclear.

A number of the substantive axioms seem to rely on a vague notion of normality from which there may be deviations - to which, apparently, the logic of common sense does not seem to apply. While Axiom 2.4.2. states that "A person wants to believe what is the case" (24), the subsequent Note 2.4.3. points out that "There obviously exist cases of denial and cases of reluctance to know the truth." (25) The notion of the existence of such cases would, however, imply that the axiom is not a necessary one and that its validity would, after all, be an empirical issue to be settled by means of entering some sort of an interaction with the person or persons in question. It does not seem consistent with Smedslund's

purported aim of explicating a set of logically necessary commonsense axioms to refer to normal situations and deviations from these; the establishment of the borderline between the norm and deviations from the norm would seem to be the crucial issue here - and if the norm may be deviated from, it may not, it seems, legitimately be called logically necessary.

A number of similar paradoxes may be pointed out in Smedslund's supposedly non-empirical system. Axiom 5.6.5., for example, states that "Every person wants to continue to exist" (26). This assertion immediately brings up the notion of suicide. Smedslund proceeds to address this obvious counter-example in the subsequent Corollary 5.6.7.: "If a person attempts suicide, then that person has a want to escape suffering, which is stronger than the want to continue to live" (27). Note 5.6.6. extrapolates on this: "Although the want to continue to exist is one of the strongest that people have, it is sometimes weaker than the want to escape from the suffering of life. In line with the general distinction between unreflective and reflective acting, one may, roughly, distinguish between spontaneous and premeditated suicide attempts. The spontaneous suicide attempt occurs when the person is

overwhelmed by accumulated suffering and acts spontaneously in a here-and-now context. The premeditated suicide attempt is planned over time and involves reflective awareness in the context of the person's total life situation. Obviously, many suicide attempts may involve intermediate or mixed states of awareness" (28).

Taken literally, corollary 5.6.7. and Note 5.6.6. show, effectively, that Axiom 5.6.5. does not hold axiomatically after all. In other words, we do not know for certain whether every person actually wants to continue to exist unless we do know - and that, again, would necessarily appear to be an empirical matter which may be settled only by means of entering a communicative relationship with the person or group in question.

On a similar note, Smedslund's Axiom 4.3.5. states that "P /= the person/ wants to minimize exertion" (29). In the subsequent Note 4.3.6., he elaborates: "This axiom does not state that people are lazy, but only that a want to minimize exertion exists among other wants. The extent to which it determines trying depends on the relative strengths of the entire set of wants and beliefs involved" (30).

Again, Smedslund's elaboration seems counter-productive to his original aim of presenting a system of non-empirical axioms. The reservation explicated in Note 4.3.6. effectively re-confers on the preceding axiom an empirical status. Everyday examples may also be lined up to counter the invariant suggested by the axiom. I may want to play, say, squash in order to keep physically fit. For this purpose, I want to maximize exertion. It may be that I want to keep fit with minimum exertion - i.e. that I set myself a goal involving a particular state of fitness and attempt to reach that goal with minimum exertion - but it would be nonsensical to claim that "keeping fit" would involve "minimum exertion". At least in some instances and for some purposes I have chosen, I do not want to minimize exertion. It may be that most people in most situations want to minimize exertion, but that, again, is a hypothesis pertaining to a contingent state of affairs which needs to be established by empirical means - which involves entering a communicative relationship of some description with particular people in a particular context; and that is quite unquestionably an empirical enterprise.

Some of Smedslund's axioms, on the other hand, do appear genuinely non-empirical. Axiom 4.1.0 seems

indeed logically necessary: "A person P does A in the context C at time t if, and only if, P can do A in C at t and P tries to do A in C at t" (31). The semantic relationship between the verbs "do", "be able" ("can") and "try" seems to guarantee the non-contingent status of the proposition (32). This means that the proposition is devoid of substantive psychological content: it does not provide any information on why a person or a group of people engages in particular kind of conduct. The same observations apply to Axiom 4.2.0: "A person P can do A in the context C at time t if, and only if, P's ability to do A in C at t exceeds the difficulty of doing A in C at t" (33). As Smedslund offers no justification for this discrepancy between different axioms, their purpose remains puzzling.

Apart from this formal inconsistency, it seems that the problem with Smedslund's enterprise is a basic disregard of the communicative dimension of the production of psychological knowledge. While his point about the semantic interrelatedness of the variables used in many supposedly empirical investigations of human conduct is a sound one - it is, as it were, common sense that empirical variables should be semantically independent of each other -

his failure to anchor his axioms to a basis of communicative interaction derives them of the status of logical necessity he explicitly wants to confer on them. His account of the reflectivity of feelings (34) provides an illustration. Note 3.2.1. states that "Feelings may be unreflective or reflective. In the former case, they may only be inferred, with certainty, from knowledge of the relationship between the person's wants and beliefs and, probabilistically, from various symptoms. In the latter case they may also be described and talked about by the person who harbors them" (35). Smedslund goes on in Corollary 3.2.6.: "If P in C at t has an unreflective feeling, then P in C at t cannot describe and talk about that feeling" (36). The epistemological status of "unreflective feelings", however, remains questionable: how do we know about the existence or characteristics of a person's unreflective feelings without consulting the person in question? If we are interested in a person's feelings, we are faced with the choice of whether or not to present our inferences and interpretations - based on, in Smedslund's terms, on our "knowledge of the relationship between the person's wants and beliefs" and "various symptoms" - to him, to provide him with an opportunity to respond to our suggestions and thus to change the status of

unreflective feelings into reflective, or communicable, ones.

4. Is common sense transcultural and stable?

Smedslund suggests that his system of commonsense psychology is both transcultural and stable over time. "In view of the relatively high approximate translatability among most human languages", he ventures (37), "it may perhaps be surmised that the present system is at least approximately transcultural". As for stability, Smedslund argues that "(t)here are two reasons for believing that the present system must be relatively stable. The first is that societal changes must always involve considerable translatability in order to preserve the conditions for orderly interaction and communication. The second is that the concepts described in the present system appear to be of such a fundamental nature that it is hard to see how they could change very much" (38). Paradoxically, however, Smedslund adds to both statements (i.e., transculturality and stability) the rejoinder that they "must be investigated in actual cases" (39). This addition would, again, seem to refer the entire system back to

empirical confirmation - which seems to be in diametrical opposition to Smedslund's original aim.

Smedslund's advocacy of a commonsense psychology which can be explicated non-empirically - or, for the present purposes, without reference to actual cases of communicative interaction - seems distinctly at odds with his initial argument about the unreliability of psychological laws: "The illusion that one is looking for hitherto unknown empirical laws is maintained through refraining from gathering the necessary antecedent information. In contradistinction to the above research strategy of psychologists, a layperson who is asked to predict another person's behavior in a given situation will naturally try to obtain the information necessary for doing so. This will include trying to find out what the person wants, what options he or she sees, how the situation is perceived, what remote consequences and what norms are taken to be relevant, and so on" (40).

Valsiner (41) suggests that the commonsense foundation of psychology sought by Smedslund is determined by historical rather than logical necessity: "It is argued that the theorems are amenable to change during cultural restructuration

periods - first, the meanings of concepts in culture change, and that results in the change in the content of the theorems. The similarity of common sense theorems with those of geometry can therefore only be formal, but not substantial" (42). In the context of communicative interaction, the difference between logical and historical necessity is a decisive one. The former are independent of communicative practices, whereas the latter is determined by the vicissitudes of communicative interaction and the agreements wrought by means of negotiation. As Valsiner (43) puts it, Smedslund

expects the interpersonal dialogue to reveal 'the conceptual system of psychological relevance underlying the cultural order'. The emphasis is clearly on the hope that dialogue can clarify the ideal picture of Platonic shadows, made fuzzy by the 'noise' of the circumstances of human interaction and its particular contexts. -- An alternative view of the 'interpersonal hermeneutic spiral' is that 'theorems' of common sense are constructed through joint efforts of the experimenter and the informant (psychotherapist and the patient), where the investigator (therapist) dominates the joint construction process.

Smedslund's reply to Valsiner seems to highlight the root of the problem with his notion of common sense: "Since I can agree completely with the above, it appears that the difference between Valsiner and myself does not reside in a dichotomous opposition developmental - not-developmental, but rather in the

degree of emphasis on stability vs. change" (44). "While I acknowledge the possibility and occurrence of slow and piecemeal changes", he goes on, "I must insist on emphasizing the importance of stability as the normal state. - - Without an extensive stability in the shared rule-system (the meaning of words and acts in context = the system of implications - common sense), the task of socializing babies, the managing of daily face-to-face interactions, and the maintaining of societies would be impossible. Orderly communication and interaction presupposes a shared rule system that can be taken for granted" (45).

While this is undoubtedly true in most practical interactions, Smedslund's formulation does not solve the basic epistemological problem of demonstrating the suggested distinction between what is given and what is constructed by the participants in interactive situations.

"Particular interactions", Smedslund maintains, "may change the behavior of the participants, but it cannot change the meanings of ordinary words and nonverbal rules in the society to which they belong" (46). But Smedslund's position remains ambiguous: if it is accepted - as Smedslund seems to do in principle - that meanings and rules are socially

constructed, they are liable to change through changes which take place in particular interactions. It is obvious that the basis of a language must remain at least partly stable in order for communication to be possible at all, but it does not follow that a specific proportion of meanings and rules remain static and predetermined. This is paradoxical against the background of Smedslund's emphasis of the centrality of communication between participants in an investigation as the basis of psychological knowledge (47).

A related problem is brought out by the exchange between Jones (48) and Smedslund (49). Jones (50) defends empiricism in psychology by stating that although observations of behaviour tend to reveal culture-bound and situation-bound regularities and reflect changing historical circumstances, such observations may still lead to eventual discovery of universally valid regularities of behaviour. Smedslund maintains in his comment (51) that a "suitable scientific language" (52) as opposed to ordinary language must be constructed if adequate psychological theories are to be formalized.

Seen from the viewpoint of communicative interaction, the distinction between ordinary language and a

separate, "scientific" language appears problematic. If legitimate psychological knowledge entails a feedback system between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated, the language used in the construction of "universally valid regularities of behavior" must at least be translatable into some language understood by both, or all, of the participants in the investigation - otherwise no agreement or disagreement on the inferences or interpretations suggested by the investigator is possible.

5. Proving non-empirical theorems by empirical means:
the weakness in Smedslund' method

The above criticism seems pertinent to the problem of common sense in general: its substantive content is, in any given context, so ephemeral as to defy reliable explication. Smedslund (53) has tried to pre-empt protests of this persuasion by pointing out that "by taking into account the comments of participants in interviews, there is a possibility of improving the explications. This sort of research proceeds through a process that may be characterized as an interpersonal hermeneutic spiral. The goal is

to arrive at ever more precise explications of the conceptual system of psychological relevance underlying a cultural order" (54) and, by way of conclusion, that "(t)he system of common sense theorems or rules is used as a kind of implicit calculus in every interaction between people, yet it has until now remained masked by the contextual flexibility and richness in ordinary language" (55).

Smedslund's defence of his position is quite instructive in the present context. In his emphasis on dialogue between the investigator and the people whose responses are being used as evidence for the hypothesis in question, he actually comes tantalizingly close to the heart of the matter, yet ultimately failing to grasp the fundamental flaw in the whole of his development of the notion of common sense as a basis of psychological knowledge. As Valsiner (56) puts it, Smedslund "resorts to the use of social consensus as the criterion of accuracy in his explications. However, social consensus on some issue illustrates similarity in construction of cultural objects, and need not immediately verify our reconstruction of some underlying rules, which might not exist in a stable form in principle".

Smedslund's empirical demonstration of statistically significant support for a set of behavioral theorems mainly serves to betray his reliance on some particular, universal content pertaining to the dynamics of human conduct - a notion which he, if his introductory statements to "Psycho-logic" (57) are anything to go by, sets out to challenge. Insofar as it is accepted that the content of what Smedslund terms common sense psychology and what may more legitimately be called psychological rules is constructed by negotiation and agreement within a network of communicative interaction, any vagueness, imprecision and variance observed in such content is not merely a minor and potentially correctable empirical imperfection in an otherwise sound hypothesis, but a necessary and intrinsic feature of the dynamics of any system of communicative interaction; as such contents are, by definition, constructed through negotiation and agreement - however explicit or implicit - in a given network of interaction, they are necessarily subject to re-evaluation and revision, or, as the case may be, further endorsement.

6. Common sense: underlying structure vs. social construction

Smedslund's attempts to establish as epistemologically legitimate psychological knowledge a set of universal, substantive theorems, by empirical means are not only bound to remain imprecise; they are logically beside the point, and incapable of resolving the epistemological problems at hand. They lend no support to the argument for the importance of common sense as the basis of psychological knowledge. Despite his assertions to the contrary, Smedslund has not shown why statistical consensus, or near-consensus, about the correctness or incorrectness of certain behavioural theorems should in principle raise those theorems above the contingent, the historical, and the local. Such a consensus may, of course, be used as a possible alternative in the search for satisfactory reasons for someone's conduct in a particular situation, but it seems quite unwarranted to present a consensus achieved in some social context as authoritative with regard to some - let alone every - other context, or, as the case may be, to any context.

The status of common sense as a basis for psychological knowledge would thus appear highly

questionable. It is undoubtedly true that, as Smedslund puts it, a common ground of accepted presuppositions is necessary for all communication, collaboration, and social life; but the suggestion of some permanent, autonomous and universal content to this common ground seems unfounded. Smedslund's quest for "ever more precise explications of the conceptual system of psychological relevance underlying a cultural order" seems thus tantamount to chasing the proverbial rainbow's end. There is no conceptual system underlying the cultural order which could be precisely revealed; as soon as such a system is explicated in a communicative context - or as it is consciously, or unconsciously, constructed - it is liable to become questioned and subjected to eventual endorsement, revision, or replacement. It enters the sphere of negotiation, evaluation, and choice; and while it may be elected for a further "term of office", so to speak, it seems quite misleading to refer to it in the Smedslundian terms of "ever more precise explications". If there is such a system of theorems, it is bound to float upon the surface of communicative interaction and is subject to continuous, or intermittent, re-evaluation according to whatever criteria are applicable in the particular social context at the particular time - and it seems rather bold to suggest that such criteria could be

precisely explicated without reference to the particular network of communicative interaction at work in each case. To choose some particular set of such commonsense theorems theoretically applicable at some arbitrary point in time as a, or the, "true", "real", or "basic" set of theorems amounts, for all practical and theoretical purposes, to precisely the same thing that the proponents of the common sense notion set out to criticize - i.e. the traditional empirical-objectivist approach to the study of human conduct.

This is not to say that there is no possibility of a precise explication of a common ground of consensual beliefs or theorems underlying human conduct in a particular social context, but rather that the precise explication of that common ground takes place - quite exactly, unambiguously and univocally - at the point in time, and location, when and where it is decided that an agreement has been reached. That particular moment, and location, is the only point where precise explication of beliefs, assumptions, or theorems can take place. As soon as doubt sets in and the basic assumptions underlying the current agreement - as well as the relevance of the goals of the project of practical action it may have entailed - become questioned, that explication becomes

obsolete once more, and its status is transformed into one of historical interest only. The substantive content of the current set of theorems is something else again, and its investigation must begin anew from square one.

7. The identification of semantic tautologies in psychological investigations

Smedslund's defence of common sense as a substantive basis for psychological knowledge is useful in underlining the persistence of objectivist notions of the study of human conduct. His argument is convincing only insofar as it concerns semantic tautologies or conceptual overlap between purportedly empirical variables; it is certainly cogent to show that some of what have passed for empirical investigations are in fact misguided attempts to corroborate logically necessary truths by empirical means. This point has been made by several others; for example, Gergen (58) states that "All reasonable propositions declaring a functional relationship between the stimulus world and the psychological domain, or between the latter domain and subsequent

action, are true by definition. --- such statements are necessary derivatives of the definitional structure". Shotter (59) puts the same case by demonstrating the conceptual circularity of a (supposedly) empirical study. In effect, the criticisms bring out what their proponents regard as instances of conceptual circularity in what is being offered as an empirical finding.

While the relevance of showing that some empirical results are not really empirical, but simply demonstrations of a necessary logical relationship between synonymous, overlapping or inter-dependent concepts is obvious enough, it is difficult to see how it could amount to any substantive development in the understanding of what people do and why they do it. It is undoubtedly a good thing that such circularities are exposed and purged from empirical investigations; it seems, however, that we are left with nothing but a demonstration of the circularity that a circularity is a circularity. Some would-be empirical studies are not empirical; they are pseudo-studies based on conceptual confusion. This is a sound point. It seems, however, unlikely that all psychological problems could be explained away by means of conceptual analysis. There are genuine problems which require empirical solutions - i.e.

ones based on communicative interaction between the relevant participants as opposed to a semantic investigation performed by the psychologist on his own. For example, emotional problems experienced and expressed by a person who comes to the psychologist for therapeutic help are real enough, and while they may well involve various kinds of conceptual confusion, it seems improbable that they would be resolved solely by means of demonstrating their semantic circularity. This, however, is itself an empirical problem.

8. Concluding remarks

It may be concluded that what is non-empirical about Smedslund's common sense psychology is devoid of substantive content and, conversely, that the part of his common sense psychology which has substantive content is not non-empirical. The more ambitious of Smedslund's projects - i.e. the explication of a body of substantive common sense theorems - remains unconvincing for two major reasons: first, he fails to differentiate clearly between logical and semantic necessity on the one hand and socially constructed substantive rules on the other; and second, he fails

to substantiate his assertion that the substantive content of the axioms and theorems which make up his system of non-empirical psychology are both trans-cultural and stable over time. The latter reason seems to derive from Smedslund's implicit assumption that any consensus on a set of psychological theorems is a reflection of some underlying, independent system instead of being an agreement on acceptable rules of conduct applicable in a particular context. The notion of common sense does not solve the epistemological problems involved in the production of psychological knowledge.

NOTES

- (1) See Smedslund (1970), (1978 a), (1978 b), (1979), (1980 a), (1980 b), (1982 a), (1982 b), (1985), (1986), (1987) and (1988).
- (2) Smedslund (1988), p.6.
- (3) Smedslund (1988).
- (4) Ibid., p.9.
- (5) Ibid., p.66.
- (6) Ibid., p.101.
- (7) Cf. Smedslund 1988, p. 2: "I will simply conclude that the notion of studying objective events, taken from physics, simply does not fit psychology. Objective events occur independently of persons, whereas psychological events occur for persons."
- (8) Cf. Smedslund 1988, p. 2: "Objective psychology, dealing with externally defined situations and behaviors, is out of touch with what exists for people simply because, as was already pointed out, there are no stable bridges between the objective and the subjective. Subjective psychology is concerned with situations and behaviors as they exist for persons, and, therefore, has to be concerned with the understanding of meanings."
- (9) Ibid., p.6.
- (10) smedslund (1982 a), p.299.
- (11) Smedslund (1988), p.5.
- (12) Smedslund (1987), p.44.
- (13) Smedslund (1982 a), p.299.
- (14) Ibid., p.300.
- (15) Derived from Bandura (1977).
- (16) Smedslund (1982 a), p.302.
- (17) Ibid.

- (18) Smedslund (1982 b) .
- (19) Smedslund (1982 a) .
- (20) Smedslund (1982 b) - his italics.
- (21) Ibid.
- (22) Smedslund (1988) , p.104.
- (23) Ibid.
- (24) Ibid. p.31.
- (25) Ibid.
- (26) Ibid., p.66.
- (27) Ibid.
- (28) Ibid.
- (29) Ibid., p.52.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) Ibid., p.49.
- (32) Jones (1980) has, however, questioned the a priori status of a number of Smedslund's theorems, including the one quoted here.
- (33) Smedslund (1988) , p.49.
- (34) Ibid., p.37.
- (35) Ibid.
- (36) Ibid.
- (37) Ibid., p.102.
- (38) Ibid., p.105.
- (39) Ibid.
- (40) Ibid., p.3.
- (41) Valsiner (1985) .
- (42) Ibid., p.107.
- (43) Ibid., p.101.

- (44) Smedslund (1986), p.91 - his italics.
- (45) Ibid.
- (46) Ibid., p.92.
- (47) Ibid., p.93.
- (48) Jones (1980).
- (49) Smedslund (1980 b).
- (50) Jones (1980).
- (51) Smedslund (1980 b).
- (52) Ibid., p. 231.
- (53) Smedslund (1982 a).
- (54) Ibid., p.304.
- (55) Ibid., p.305.
- (56) Valsiner (1985), p.101 - his italics.
- (57) Smedslund (1988, pp. 2-3.)
- (58) Gergen (1987 b), p.122.
- (59) Shotter (1981).

Chapter Seven

AGREEMENT AS A CRITERION OF VALIDITY:
PRECONDITIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

1. The Story So Far

In the preceding three chapters, I tried to show that the positions of Habermas, Grünbaum and Smedslund on the validation of psychological interpretations are based on epistemological inconsistencies. The view which emerges from these considerations is, I think, this: objections to the view that agreement between the investigator and the person or persons whose conduct is being investigated is indeed both a necessary and a sufficient criterion of the validity of psychological propositions should, in order for them to be relevant, be introduced into the network of communicative interaction at hand as statements the validity of which could be assessed within the context of that communicative network according to whatever criteria of justification are currently applicable. We would possibly want to apply our particular - and undoubtedly highly sophisticated - criteria, but so would, presumably, everybody else. All local networks of communicative interaction entertain some criteria of justification of validity claims, and it is hardly viable to expect that our system of criteria should be accepted as universal

before we have argued for its superiority within some context of communicative interaction, however advanced we may think it is. This observation seems particularly apposite with regard to Habermas.

While this conclusion seems inescapable, its implications for the notions of knowledge, explanation and understanding of the motive forces of conduct warrant further elaboration. I will try to draw out some of these implications in this chapter.

2. Habermas and Garfinkel: Universal vs. Local Agreements

It seems useful at this point to refer once more to Habermas - this time, to his critique of Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (1). Habermas, as might be expected, expresses doubts about Garfinkel's liberal conception of rationality which he seems to regard as theoretically barren.

"The radical self-application of this methodological

critique leads to the conclusion that interpretive sciences must give up the claim to produce objective knowledge at all. The insight that interpretation of an action context presupposes participation in, and constructive influence upon, this context merely brings a dilemma to consciousness", Habermas argues (2); "it does not resolve it".

According to Habermas, the adoption of the ethnomethodological perspective leads to the conclusion that "(t)he universality of the claim to truth is an illusion; what is accepted as true at any given time is a matter of convention" (3).

Here, the vulnerability of Habermas's emphasis of the universal characteristics of rationality makes its presence felt; Garfinkel's position of concentrating on the justification by means of accountability of every organized setting seems, if "weaker" than Habermas's theoretical notion of a universal rationality, epistemologically the better grounded.

In exactly the ways that a setting is organized, it consists of member's methods for making evident that setting's ways as clear, coherent, planful, consistent, chosen, knowable, uniform, reproducible connections - i.e., rational connections. In exactly the way that persons are members to organized affairs, they are engaged in serious and practical work of detecting, demonstrating, persuading through displays in the ordinary occasions of their interactions the appearances of consistent, coherent,

clear, chosen, planful arrangements. (4)

It is unclear why Habermas should find Garfinkel's version of rationality so suspect; after all, agreements on the criteria of acceptable justifications must, presumably, be recognized by some local networks of interaction, if they are supposed to wield universal applicability. "How can this type of research into universals be carried out at all if social-scientific interpretations are context dependent in the same way as everyday interpretations?" Habermas asks (5). The answer, it seems, may be located somewhere between "social-scientific" and "everyday" interpretations; as opposed to Garfinkel, Habermas wishes to maintain a categorical distinction between the two forms of justification - a distinction which seems quite fragile. "Garfinkel treats standards of rationality like all other conventions, as the result of contingent interpretive practices that can be described but not systematically evaluated on the basis of the standards intuitively applied by participants themselves", Habermas writes (6); "(t)he ethnomethodologically enlightened sociologist regards validity claims that point beyond local, temporal, and cultural boundaries as something that participants merely take to be universal." Again, Habermas betrays the objectivist residue in his

thinking. Even if validity claims did point beyond local, temporal and cultural boundaries, what would be the difference, in epistemological terms, between "taking something to be universal" and "something being universal"? If truth is available to us only in the form of propositions, as Habermas has argued in his consensus theory of truth, there is no difference between the substantive content of the two expressions. Habermas goes on:

Garfinkel -- has to reserve for the ethnomethodologist the privileged position of a "disinterested" observer who watches how those immediately involved formulate their utterances in such a way that others can understand them and how they interpret as intelligible the utterances of others. The ethnomethodologist who credits himself with this position, claims his own statements standards of validity that a fortiori lie outside the domain of those applied by the participants themselves. If he does not credit himself with such an extramundane position, he cannot claim a theoretical status for his statements. At best he can allow for an additional type of criterion of validity that function in their own ways in the various departments of life. (7)

The same comment seems to apply here as above: Habermas does not seem to be prepared to argue for his criteria of rationality within the network of communicative interaction to which he refers. His largely misplaced critique of Garfinkel suggests that he has failed to make an explicit choice between the first-person, participatory position and the

position of a third-person observer.

In the words of Bernstein (8), it may be concluded that "(b)y constantly leading us to think that what we really need is some sort of theory in order to ground communication and conversation, Habermas is making the same sorts of mistakes that philosophers have always made in their desperate (and failed) attempts to discover real constraints and foundations", failing "to realize that he is just giving expression to the old positivist hope that we can come up with determinate rules which will once and for all tell us (in principle) what will count as legitimate and illegitimate (or meaningless) discourse" (9).

Given the inescapable inconsistencies in Habermas's theory of communicative action, this conclusion seems justified.

There is, however, one more point to be made on Habermas in relation to psychological epistemology, and an important one at that. Habermas has outlined a world in which the truth of propositions is to be assessed on the basis of consensual agreement as opposed to correspondence with the objective reality. This world - a world of argumentation - is empty of

substantive propositions until such propositions are introduced; it is merely a method of validation of substantive propositions. Habermas has first constructed a method and then proceeded to introduce a set of substantive propositions - i.e., his theory of communicative action - into it. If he is faithful to such essential features of his method as the distinction between action oriented to success (qua one-directional communicative interaction) and action oriented to reaching understanding (qua two-directional communicative interaction), his emphasis of the universal nature of the concepts of communicative rationality and communicative competence should perhaps be seen as rhetorical rather than substantive elements. If this is the case, we should perhaps not make too much of the apparent inconsistency between these aspects of Habermas's theory. Certain passages by Habermas may in fact be interpreted in this vein - to wit:

We cannot simultaneously assert a proposition or defend a theory and nevertheless anticipate that its validity-claims will be refuted in the future. Only in the performative attitude can we put forward assertions, and this attitude compels us (with the gentle but irresistible force of transcendental necessity) to advance a claim that bursts all local and temporal limits, transcends all cultural and historical bounds. (10)

3. Agreement as a Necessary and Sufficient Criterion

The arguments I have summoned so far should lend credence to the proposition that agreement between the investigator and the person whose conduct is being investigated is a necessary criterion of epistemologically legitimate psychological knowledge. If instances of conduct may not be understood without reference to the meanings the person ascribes to what he does, and if a person's meaning may only be established by means of two-directional communicative interaction, an agreement on the interpretation of his conduct seems a necessary precondition of the validity of that interpretation.

But is agreement a sufficient criterion of the validity of an interpretation?

This is a crucial question for the epistemology of psychology. Before we venture a straight answer, we must first remind ourselves of the practical setting in which psychological knowledge is produced. An investigator tries to accumulate evidence for his hypothesis. That evidence is provided by the other participants in the investigation through a process of communicative interaction which involves the

presence or absence of feedback on the basic assumptions and purpose of the investigation and on the meaning of the responses provided by the other participants in the context of the investigation. Finally, the investigator reports his results to the larger community of investigators for discussion and evaluation of their significance. If the production of acceptable psychological propositions takes place in terms of two-directional communicative interaction, we would expect a report on an agreement between the participants in an investigation on the validity of the resulting proposition or interpretation.

Let us consider the situation in terms of our position in relation to the network of interaction within which a particular psychological proposition is being validated. If we are participants in that network of interaction, we would, presumably, present our arguments for and against the suggested proposition about the motive forces underlying our conduct until a satisfactory formulation is reached, or until the interaction is discontinued without an agreement on such a formulation. From this vantage point, it does seem as if agreement indeed were not only a necessary but also a sufficient criterion of the validity of the proposition at hand: when we

present our arguments for and against the suggested proposition, we, presumably, make use of and try to explicate all the relevant information available to us, including any lingering and vague doubts we may be aware of. Any external factors enter the process of argumentation only as propositions proffered by the participants. When our objections, suggestions and doubts have been accommodated to a sufficient extent, we no longer have reason to disagree with the suggested proposition. In short: if we count ourselves as competent participants in an investigation, it follows that the agreement which we finally endorse is a sufficient criterion of the validity of the current proposition in this particular context. If we do not count ourselves as competent participants in an investigation, we should not endorse the agreement. In this case, no agreement results, and no knowlegde is produced.

If, on the other hand, we are participants in the community of investigators to whom the resulting proposition is reported but not in the network of interaction in which the evidence for the proposition is constructed, the locus of agreement or disagreement on the validity of the proposition shifts: now it is the community of investigators which presents arguments for and against the validity

of the proposition. It may be concluded that the agreement reported by the original investigator is based on - to borrow Habermas's terminology - systematically distorted communication or the communicative incompetence of the participants, and that the agreement would therefore be illegitimate; but, if we maintain the two-directional mode of communicative interaction in relation to the original network of interaction, we would have to refer back to that network and establish the validity of the agreement from the first-person, participatory position, and the process would start anew.

All this, of course, only applies if we wish to produce epistemologically valid knowledge about the motive forces underlying people's conduct. This requires the adoption of the two-directional mode of communicative interaction. Pragmatically useful information on other people's behaviour may be produced in a one-directional setting, but that, I take it, is not our present concern.

I am thus prepared to suggest that agreement between the investigator and the other participants in the investigation is both a necessary and a sufficient criterion of psychological propositions. Obviously, this does not mean that local agreements should be

accepted as universals; they are arguments in that process of negotiation and agreement in which propositions about people's conduct are validated. This is the function of all agreements, and we locate ourselves within some network of communicative interaction within which valid propositions are constructed.

Bhaskar's (11) objections to the notion of agreement as a criterion of validity are instructive here. "But agreement between agent and investigator hardly seems either a necessary or sufficient criterion for an adequate interpretation", Bhaskar notes (12). "Rather, it would seem that the adequacy of any interpretation, or more generally of any act of self-understanding, can only be shown, in relation to the point of interpretation (or understanding), in the always more or less contingently circumscribed context of an agent's self-formation, that is, his total developing life activity (and not just, pace Habermas, his discourse)" (13).

The problem, it seems, focuses again on the epistemological status of the "total developing life activity" of the agent. Does not that activity also present itself to the participants in the investigation in the guise of communicative

expressions which are essentially negotiable and corrigible? While I have supported the view that in the end, the rational understanding of the motive forces of conduct sinks back into the only intermittently explicated background of the social and material practices of a community, the point of psychological knowledge surely is that it is based on such explications negotiated intersubjectively - and it does not resolve the problems to introduce into the negotiation external factors which cannot be subjected to validation by means of communicative interaction. Bhaskar's objection seems quite beside point here.

4. Agreements as Necessarily Local

As I pointed out above, a consensus is a consensus: if counter-arguments are no longer forthcoming from participants, the agreement is legitimate - and, conversely, if the agreement is legitimate, counter-arguments are no longer forthcoming. We cannot make an epistemologically justified distinction between an

agreement reached with enthusiasm and one reached grudgingly: if all the participants in a network of interaction say yes, an agreement has been reached. At this point, the central issue is the decision among the participants to subject their agreement to criticism from outside their current network or community - i.e., to extend the network of interaction, which would open the agreement to argumentation once more. If we are outside that network of interaction, the agreement is not our agreement, and we have no particular reason - or possibility, for that matter - to endorse it. We may wish to emphasize the importance of particular criteria of legitimate agreements, but such criteria bear no relevance to the network of interaction as long as we remain outside.

All agreements are necessarily local from the viewpoint of the participants in the process of interaction within which that agreement is negotiated. It may be that the same propositions are regarded as acceptable in other interactive networks of which we do not know, but, if we have an agreement, that agreement is necessarily local. If we are observing an agreement from outside the network of interaction within which it has been or is being negotiated and reached and if we have reason to

believe that the validity claims upon which the agreement is based are insufficient, we should enter that network of interaction and challenge the agreement with our arguments. If this challenge is welcomed, the case is re-opened, negotiations begin anew, and the potentially resulting revised agreement is still local, but now it is closer by one vote to the theoretical notion of universal consensus and the merging of the notions of "objective" and "intersubjective" truth.

When local agreements are entered into a process of validation with other local agreements and if a common agreement is reached, the degree of universality of the agreements involved is increased. This may include variations of revision and compromise from simple observation of agreement between agreements to the abandonment in toto of one or another of the agreements by its original supporters and the adoption of the competing one, or an altogether new one. If no agreement is reached and negotiations are discontinued, the agreements remain local, and valid in the local context as long as no counter-arguments are brought forward. As long as no communicative interaction between different localities takes place, statements pertaining to the validity of an agreement currently in force in

another locality are valid only in the context of the locality in which such statements are expressed.

I might add that all potential and actual participants in interactions in which agreements are negotiated should make sure that their participation in the process of argumentation is as astute and uncompromising as possible, but, as there are no objective criteria of knowing whether this actually is the case, the function of such an exhortation would be primarily dramaturgical. We must take it for granted that if we endorse an agreement on the validity of a psychological proposition, we do so for sound reasons. Otherwise we would not agree.

5. What if no agreement is reached?

It is clear that, in real life, explicit agreements on unambiguously defined psychological propositions are rare. In most cases, agreements are probably more or less tacit, temporary and ambiguous. It is equally clear that all negotiations do not end in agreement. The interaction may be discontinued due to explicit or implicit disagreement, pressure of time

or other pragmatic concerns. Heritage (14) describes discontinuation due to disagreement:

In their most complete form, the politics of these disjunctures involve procedures through which the very attempt by each party to uphold his alternative depiction of the state of affairs is treated by the other as grounds for discounting the depiction. Thus, in the case of A's conviction that someone is persistently following him, B's assertion that this is not the case may be sufficient for A to conclude that B is 'in on the plot'. Whilst that conclusion is, in turn, sufficient to confirm B's conclusion that A is paranoid. -- Under these circumstances, a potentially endless cycle of assertion and counter-assertion is potentiated which permits no means of resolution. Under these conditions, the relationship between community membership and subscription to particular ways of depicting real world events is vividly displayed.

If negotiation ends in disagreement, no valid proposition emerges. The participants must seek criteria of justification elsewhere - possibly in another network of communicative interaction or merely in the more ephemeral and tacit consensus inherent in a larger and more loosely defined framework of reference, i.e. a culture or, as Harré (15) points out, a moral order. As the consensus becomes more and more implicit when we relate ourselves to larger frameworks of reference, we can no longer speak in terms of epistemologically valid knowledge.

6. The Status of Theoretical Languages in the Production of Psychological Knowledge

It might be objected that the conclusions I have reached so far make it impossible to justify any theoretical language in psychology. While such an objection is understandable, I do not think it holds. Even if we may have to concede that the concepts employed in understanding people's conduct must, ultimately, be defined, legitimated and endorsed within each network of communicative interaction, it is clear that - given the basic assumptions of the present study - there is at least a preliminary conceptual framework which we cannot ignore or escape and which we have to defend when the language of understanding conduct is negotiated in the community in which we are involved.

The conceptual framework to which we must commit ourselves if we accept the basic tenets of the present study may be expected to be based on conscious reasons as opposed to unconscious causes, on wants as opposed to needs, on intersubjective agreement and disagreement as opposed to objective determination, and on the understanding of truth as the winning proposition in a process of argumentation

as opposed to correspondence to an independent reality. These concepts are intimately linked to the projects to which we have chosen to commit ourselves in whatever it is that we experience as the world; and as the number and nature of potential projects in the world is in principle indeterminate, any attempts to determine particular criteria of understanding people's conduct independently of their commitment to particular projects are bound to remain ultimately uninformative.

While we cannot justify any pretensions to the effect that our theoretical language and conceptual system - i.e., our particular brand of rationality - should be accepted as universally valid, it is with the support of that language and those concepts that we face other rationalities. The notion of universal validity without reference to intersubjective agreement is surely senseless. We should, however, see clearly that, ultimately, our theoretical language has a normative basis: it is couched in our commitment to particular goals, particular teams of work and particular communities of interaction - and we have to accept that there is no objective guarantee of the justification of such commitments. From time to time, we make choices, and discover that we have made choices. Our most fundamental choice is our

abandonment of solipsism, i.e., our acceptance of the notion that other people exist in their own right and that our conduct is to an unknown extent dependent on other people's conduct.

If our theoretical language is not accepted by other communities, there is no independent court of appeal. We must try to make our theory more convincing and argue for it better - if, that is, we for some reason want to make it acceptable and applicable to other communities. Our theoretical language is based on the conceptual system which we rely on to render our experience and activities understandable. As Harré (16) puts it, "(a) person is a being who has learned a theory in terms of which his or her experience is ordered". We must, presumably, be prepared to expect that this is the case with other people also. When we investigate the motive forces underlying other people's conduct, our theoretical language is liable to become modified: it has to accommodate the theoretical language employed by the other participants in the investigation. People give us their version; we give them ours. Comments on these versions are exchanged; some of the concepts employed in the original versions retain their relevance, while others are dropped or replaced by more powerful ones. This, I think, is how theoretical languages in

psychology develop; and it would be quite uninformative to aspire to a universal theoretical language which would encompass all possible categories of conduct and the motive forces which underlie them. We go in equipped with the theory we consider cogent, and emerge with a modified and, it is to be hoped, an improved version. Taylor (17) encapsulates the consequences of this view as follows:

It may not just be that to understand a certain explanation one has to sharpen one's intuitions, it may be that one has to change one's orientation - if not in adopting another orientation, at least in giving one's own in a way which allows for greater comprehension of others. Thus, in the sciences of man insofar as they are hermeneutical there can be a valid response to 'I don't understand' which takes the form, not only 'develop your intuitions', but more radically 'change yourself'. This puts an end to any aspiration to a value-free or 'ideology-free' science of man. A study of the science of man is inseparable from an examination of the options between which men must choose.

7. Objectivity, Relativism and Intersubjectivity

The notion of local agreement as a both necessary and sufficient criterion of epistemologically valid knowledge about the motive forces underlying people's conduct - which I have argued for above - raises the problem of relativity and objectivity in psychological knowledge. This issue must be dealt with briefly.

Barnes and Bloor (18) put the case for what they term epistemological relativism thus:

Our equivalence postulate is that all beliefs are on a par with one another with respect to the causes of their credibility. It is not that all beliefs are equally true or equally false, but that regardless of truth and falsity the fact of their credibility is to be seen as equally problematic. The position we shall defend is that the incidence of all beliefs without exception calls for empirical investigation and must be accounted for by finding the specific, local causes of their credibility.

For all practical purposes, these remarks seem quite congruent with the notion of psychological knowledge produced in the two-directional mode of communicative interaction - the validity of propositions hinges on their being subjected to assessment in (local) communicative networks, i.e., to intersubjective evaluation. In the production of psychological

knowledge, as I tried to point out above, this intersubjectivity is at work both within the network of interaction in which evidence for the investigator's hypothesis is being provided by the other participant(s) in the investigation and outside of it, namely in the community of investigators.

Rorty (19) elaborates on the necessary context-dependence of this intersubjectivity: "To say that truth and reference are 'relative to a conceptual scheme' sounds as if it were saying something more than this, but it is not, as long as 'our conceptual scheme' is taken as simply a reference to what we believe now - the collection of views which make up our present-day culture."

In this sense, the difference between "objectivity" and "intersubjectivity" is that the proponents of objective knowledge refer to some argument which is supposed to have privileged authority and which is somehow exempt from the process of negotiation and agreement in a community. That kind of unquestioned authority is certainly anathema to the rational production of knowledge through communicative interaction.

For the purposes of a psychology based on two-directional communicative interaction, the notion of objectivity is nothing more - or less, for that matter - than a limit value of intersubjectivity: it is a state of affairs in which argumentation has, at least for the present, drawn to a close, and all members of the relevant community agree on the validity of a particular interpretation. The coordinates of reality are defined in terms of intersubjective agreement in an at least potentially finite social context. Reference to some external criteria independent of the vicissitudes of communicative interaction is a contradiction in terms: such a reference becomes a statement to be discussed within a network of interaction as soon as it is expressed. There is nothing beyond the boundary of the prevailing intersubjective agreement that could be known. The notion of an infinitely extensible intersubjectivity can, I think, render obsolete and irrelevant the concepts of universal applicability of propositions on the one hand and relativism on the other: universality, in other words, is reducible to a limit value of intersubjective agreement initially based on relativistic, local agreements.

I give the last word on this issue, and in this chapter, to Rorty (20):

"Relativism" is the view that every belief on a certain topic, or perhaps about any topic, is as good as every other. No one holds this view. Except for the occasional cooperative freshman, one cannot find anybody who says that two incompatible opinions on an important topic are equally good. The philosophers who get called relativists are those who say that the grounds for choosing between opinions are less algorithmic than had been thought. ...So the real issue is not between people who think one view is not as good as another and people who do not. It is between those who think our culture, or purpose, or intuitions cannot be supported except conversationally, and people who still hope for other sorts of support."

NOTES

- (1) Habermas (1984), pp. 124-131.
- (2) Ibid., p. 126.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Garfinkel (1967), p. 34.
- (5) Habermas (1984), p. 128.
- (6) Ibid., p. 129.
- (7) Ibid., p. 129-130.
- (8) Bernstein (1986), p. 79.
- (9) Ibid., p. 80.
- (10) Habermas (1982), p. 277.
- (11) Bhaskar (1982).
- (12) Ibid., p. 293.
- (13) Ibid.
- (14) Heritage (1984), pp. 218-219.
- (15) Harré (1983), p. 244-246.
- (16) Ibid., p. 20.
- (17) Taylor (1979), pp. 67-68.
- (18) Barnes and Bloor (1982), p. 23.
- (19) Rorty (1980 a), p. 276.
- (20) Rorty (1980 b), p. 727.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUDING REMARKS: BEYOND PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

I have argued that agreement between the investigator and the person or persons whose conduct is being investigated is the basic epistemological criterion of valid psychological propositions. In the previous chapter, I concluded that agreement is both a necessary and a sufficient criterion if the investigation is based on the two-directional mode of communicative interaction and if the investigator locates himself in a first-person, participatory position. This, I wish to suggest, is how epistemologically valid psychological knowledge is produced.

It needs to be asked what, if anything, makes the present argument relevant to psychological knowledge as opposed to knowledge in general. Does the principle of local agreement not extend to all truth-claims based on two-directional communicative interaction - regardless of discipline?

This question leads us to a discussion of the distinction between the "natural sciences" and the "human sciences" which, as I noted in Chapter One, is often held responsible for the conceptual confusion typical of the production of psychological knowledge.

I wish to argue that this distinction cannot be sustained on epistemological grounds. It is not a matter of an a priori distinction between natural objects and human subjects, but of different modes of communication between participants in an investigation. Objectification constructs objects; subjectification constructs subjects. Harré (1) elucidates the matter as follows:

I have argued throughout that persons are the product of a certain kind of work done on beings who are merely animate by nature. The work is essentially the teaching of a theory to that being in terms of which it can conceive of itself. The possession of such a theory and the exact form that its self-conception takes is intimately bound up with the language it learns and with the social rights it can conceive of itself as having. Persons can be "grown" from any kind of being capable of learning such a theory. Some suitable beings may be inanimate, though I have confined my discussion in this work only to the growing of persons on animate beings. Animate or inanimate, to be in possession of certain theories by means of which reflexive discourse can be formulated, and to have certain rights to the public display of those skills and knowledge. It is not to be embodied in any particular way.

In other words, we must choose the mode of communicative interaction in which we relate to entities around us, and it is this choice between modes of communication that determines the identity of the "other", not any a priori definition. If this observation is justifiable, it means that there is no categorical distinction between psychological

knowledge and other modes of knowledge constructed by means of communicative interaction. Distinctions appear through communicative practices. If an investigator believes that he can achieve two-directional communicative interaction with a block of stone and acts as if messages were conveyed between them, that block of stone is certainly a participating subject in the context of that particular network of interaction. The "animistic" practices of "primitive societies" (2) are a relevant example. Outsiders may dismiss them as absurd, but being outsiders, and thus not participants in the network of communicative interaction at hand, they are in no position to know.

I will sum up the implications of the argument I have defended in this thesis as briefly as possible. As Gergen (3) says, psychological "research must be viewed primarily as a rhetorical implement. Its chief function is to lend power (persuasive impact, appeal, felicity) to the theoretical language". In the context of a psychology - or any discipline - based on two-directional communicative interaction, this observation seems sound enough. The role of research is to provide arguments for the Rortyan conversation in which reality is continuously constructed.

Empirical results may be used as an argument in the process of negotiation of the coordinates of the practical reality of participants, but only as one argument among others. Shotter (4) characterizes what he terms a practical-descriptive psychology as an enterprise "which describes (or instructs) people in the ways in which people can tell (or instruct) one another in how to do things - including the ways in which they describe themselves and their psychological states to themselves". The objective of such a psychology would be "to increase people's personal powers of responsible action; not to increase people's mastery over other people but their mastery over their own possible ways of life" (5).

It is clear that the task of epistemology ends here, and commitment to a particular form of life, and a particular community, begins. As the coordinates of reality constructed by means of an investigation based on two-directional communicative interaction merge into the sphere of practical action, communicative rationality gradually dissolves into irrationality, and what was for a while explicit gradually becomes implicit - until it is brought back into the sphere of rational argumentation for a fresh assessment. This is the point where knowledge dissolves into belief, myth, tradition and convention

- and, more metaphorically, where consciousness meets the unconscious. "Our rules do not create new meanings, our conventions do not dictate to us what has sense and what has not. We create new meanings, determine the limits of sense by what we do with our language. Grammar is a free creation of the human mind. It may seem to force our hand. But in fact nothing forces our hand except our own determination." (6)

NOTES

(1) Harré (1983), p. 265.

(2) Cf. Winch (1970).

(3) Gergen (1982), p. 102.

(4) Shotter (1984), p. xii.

(5) Ibid., p. 49.

(6) Baker and Hacker (1984, p. 166).

REFERENCES

- Ayer, A.J. (1967): Can There Be A Private Language? In Morick, H. (ed.): Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 82-96.
- Baker, G. & Hacker, P.M.S. (1984): Wittgenstein: Meaning and Understanding. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bandura, A. (1977): Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. Psychol. Rev. 84, pp. 191-215.
- Barnes, B. & Bloor, D. (1982): Relativism, Rationalism and the Sociology of Knowledge. In Hollis, M. & Lukes, S. (eds.): Rationality and Relativism. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Baumrind, D. (1964): Some thoughts on ethics and research: After reading Milgram's "Behavioral Study of Obedience". Amer. Psychologist 19, pp. 421-423.
- Bernstein, R. (1986): Philosophical Profiles: Essays in the Pragmatic Mode. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Blakar, R.M. (1984): Communication: A Social Perspective on Clinical Issues. Oslo: Universitetsförlaget.

- Coulter, J. (1979): *The Social Construction of Mind*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Coulter, J. (1983): *Rethinking Cognitive Theory*. London: MacMillan.
- Eagle, M. (1973): *Validation of Motivational Formulations, Acknowledgment as a Criterion*. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Science* 2, pp. 265-275.
- Freud, S. (1900): *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Standard Edition 4, 5. New York: Norton, 1953.
- Freud, S. (1909): *Analysis of a phobia in a five-year-old boy*. Standard Edition 10, 4, pp. 1-149. New York: Norton, 1955.
- Freud, S. (1925/1926): *Inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety*. In Richards, A. (ed.): *On Psychopathology*. The Pelican Freud Library Vol. 10. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967): *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Gauld, A. & Shotter, J. (1977): *Human Action and its Psychological Investigation*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Gergen, K.J. (1982): *Toward Transformation in Social Knowledge*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Gergen, K.J. (1985): *Social Constructionist Inquiry: Context and Implications*. In Gergen, K.J. & Davis, K.E. (eds.): *The Social Construction of the Person*.

- New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Giddens, A. (1985): Jurgen Habermas. In Skinner, Q. (ed.): The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959): The Presentation of Self in
- Goffman, E. (1974): Frame Analysis. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1981): Forms of Talk. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Grünbaum, A. (1984): The Foundations of Psychoanalysis. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Habermas, J. (1970): Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence. *Inquiry*, 13.
- Habermas, J. (1972): Knowledge and Human Interests. London: Heinemann.
- Habermas, J. (1973): A Postscript to Knowledge and Human Interests. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 3, pp. 157-169.
- Habermas, J. (1979): Communication and the Evolution of Society. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1982): A Reply to My Critics. In Thompson, J.B. & Held, D. (eds.): Habermas - Critical Debates. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. (1984): The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Trans. by Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Harre, R. (1979): *Social Being*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harre, R. (1983): *Personal Being*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Blackwell.
- Harre, R. (1987): Personal communication, Nov. 5, 1987.
- Harre, R. & Secord, P. (1972): *The Explanation of Social Behaviour*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harre, R., Clarke, D. & De Carlo, N. (1985): *Motives and Mechanisms: An Introduction to the Psychology of Action*. London and New York: Methuen.
- Heritage, J. (1984): *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hesse, M. (1981): *Habermas's Consensus Theory of Truth*. *Proceedings of the 1978 Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association* 2, pp. 373-396.
- Hesse, M. (1982): *Science and Objectivity*. In Thompson, J.B. & Held, D. (eds.): *Habermas - Critical Debates*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- Horton, R. (1970): *African Traditional Thought and Western Science*. In Wilson, B. (ed.): *Rationality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Jones, A.J.I. (1980): *Psychology and "ordinary language" - a critique of Smedslund*. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 21, pp. 225-229.
- McGinn, C. (1984): *Wittgenstein on Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mead, G.H. (1962): *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Milgram, S. (1964): Issues in the study of obedience: A reply to Baumrind. *Amer. Psychologist* 19, pp. 848-852.
- Milgram, S. (1974): *Obedience to Authority*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Milgram, S. (1977): *The Individual in a Social World. Essays and Experiments*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Pearce, W. Barnett (1989): *Communication and the Human Condition*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Pearce, W. B. & Cronen, V.E. (1980): *Communication, Action and Meaning*. New York: Praeger.
- Ricoeur, P. (1970): *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1981): *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rommetveit, R. (1979): On the relationship between children's mastery of Piagetian cognitive operations and their semantic competence. In Rommetveit, R. and Blakar, M. (eds.): *Studies of Language, Thought and Verbal Communication*. London: Academic Press.
- Rorty, R. (1980 a): *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rorty, R. (1980 b): *Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism*. *Proceedings and Addresses of the*

- American Philosophical Association 53, pp. 719-738.
- Sainsbury, M. (1987): Meaning, Communication and Understanding in the Classroom. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, King's College, University of London.
- Searle, J. (1969): Speech Acts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shotter, J. (1980): Action, joint action, and intentionality. In Brenner, M. (ed.): The Structure of Action. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Shotter, J. (1981): Critical Notice: Are Fincham and Schulz's findings empirical findings? British Journal of Social Psychology 20, pp. 121-123.
- Shotter, J. (1984): Social Accountability and Selfhood. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Shotter, J. (1986): The Social Construction of an Us: Problems of Accountability and Narratology. In Burnett, R., McGhee, P. & Clarke, D. (eds.): Accounting for Personal Relationships: Social Representations of Interpersonal Links. London: Methuen.
- Smedslund, J. (1970): Circular reaction between understanding and logic. Scand. J. of Psychology 11, pp. 217-219.
- Smedslund, J. (1978 a): Bandura's theory of self-efficacy: A set of common sense theorems. Scand. J. of Psychol. 19, pp. 1-14.
- Smedslund, J. (1978 b): Some psychological theories are

- not empirical: Reply to Bandura. *Scand. J. of Psychol.* 19, pp. 101-102.
- Smedslund, J. (1979): Between the Analytic and the Arbitrary: A Case Study in Psychological Research. *Scand. J. of Psychol.* 20, pp. 129-140.
- Smedslund, J. (1980 a): Analyzing the Primary Code: From Empiricism to Apriorism. In Olson, D.R. (ed.): *The Social Foundations of Language and Thought. Essays in Honor of J.R. Bruner.* New York: Norton.
- Smedslund, J. (1980 b): From ordinary to scientific language. Reply to Jones. *Scand. J. of Psychology* 21, pp. 231-233.
- Smedslund, J. (1982 a): Revising explications of common sense through dialogue: Thirty-six psychological theorems. *Scand. J. of Psychol.* 23, pp. 299-305.
- Smedslund, J. (1982 b): Common sense as psychosocial reality: A reply to Sjoberg. *Scand. J. of Psychol.* 23, pp. 79-82.
- Smedslund, J. (1985): Necessarily True Cultural Psychologies. In Gergen, K.J. & Davis, K.E. (eds.): *The Social Construction of the Person.* New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Smedslund, J. (1986): How stable is common sense psychology and can it be transcended? Reply to Valsiner. *Scand. J. of Psychology* 27, pp. 91-94.
- Smedslund, J. (1987): The epistemic status of

- interitem correlations in Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire: The a priori versus the empirical in psychological data. *Scand. J. of Psychology* 28, pp. 42-55.
- Smedslund, J. (1988): *Psycho-Logic*. Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.
- Spence, D.P. (1982): *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth*. New York: Norton.
- Spence, D.P. (1987): *The Freudian Metaphor*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Taylor, C. (1964): *The Explanation of Behaviour*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Taylor, C. (1979): Interpretation and the Sciences of Man. In Rabinow, P. & Sullivan, W.M. (eds.): *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Thompson, J.B. (1982): Universal pragmatics. In Thompson, J.B. & Held, D. (eds.): *Habermas: Critical Debates*. London: MacMillan.
- Winch, P. (1958): *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Winch, P. (1970): Understanding a primitive society. In Wilson, B. (ed.): *Rationality*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953): *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (1969): On Certainty. Oxford:
Blackwell.

Wright, G.H. von (1971): Explanation and Understanding.
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.