

Western Canadian Theoretical Psychology (WCTP) 2014
Sept. 25 – Sept. 28
Paul's Motor Inn, Victoria, BC

Program

Sept 25 (Thursday)

Arrival and dinner

Sept 26 (Friday)

Morning

- Iris Gordon (University of Victoria): Summary of last year's discussion
- Jeff Stepnisky (MacEwan University): Atmosphere: A Depth Concept

Afternoon

- Chris Peet (King's University) and Bill Smythe (University of Regina): On Depth
- Kate Slaney, Snjezana Huerta, Kirby Maguire & Donna Tafreshi (Simon Fraser University): On Validity in Psychological Discourse: Exploring Implications for the Utility of the Concept
- Depth in Culture: Day 1 Panel Discussion
Bruce Alexander, Angelina Baydala, Charles Lemery, Evan Shillabeer

Sept 27 (Saturday)

Morning

- Marvin McDonald (Trinity Western University) & Peter White (Private Practice):
Intentional Living as Vocation: Horizons Toward Deep Culture
- Colin Bakker (Independent Scholar): Personality and Pedagogy in *The Magic Mountain*

Afternoon

- Floyd Dunphy (University of British Columbia), Cor Baerveldt (University of Alberta) & Basia Ellis (University of Calgary): From Thick Description to Depth in Culture
- Depth in Culture: Day 2 Panel Discussion
Bill Smythe, Randall Tonks, Jack Martin, Brad Piekolla, Vickie Richard

Sept 28 (Sunday) – Business meeting

Jeff Stepnisky: Atmosphere: A Depth concept

In this paper I try to develop a social theory of depth through the concept of atmosphere. I draw on two theorists. First, developing arguments presented at WCTP in 2012 I rely on Peter Sloterdijk's description of interpersonal bubbles as shared atmospheres that are felt rather than clearly articulated. The depth of atmosphere resides in its ever-present inarticulability. Second, I rely upon a book written by Italian group psychoanalyst Claudio Neri: *Group*. In addition to describing shared unconscious atmospheres, Neri describes some of the mechanisms by which such atmospheres are created. Neri thus helps us not only to appreciate atmospheric depth but also to describe some of the conditions within which such depth is created.

Chris Peet and Bill Smythe: On Depth

What is 'depth in culture'? We argue the irreducibly metaphorical nature of 'depth' entails it cannot be approached through a logical analysis of conceptual material for which 'necessary and sufficient conditions' can be ascertained, but that its 'aspectual shape' can be described through exploration of experiential material. Using three examples to explore the question, we describe phenomenological, hermeneutic, inter-cultural, and dynamic aspects that we propose are 'criteria' for depth.

Kate Slaney, Snjezana Huerta, Kirby Maguire & Donna Tafreshi (Simon Fraser University): On Validity in Psychological Discourse: Exploring Implications for the Utility of the Concept

There are currently in use within the discourse of psychological science numerous conceptions of validity, including, but not limited to, those born out of psychometric theory and practice. Included in this list are 'internal,' 'external,' 'construct,' 'face,' 'content,' 'convergent,' 'discriminant,' 'consequential,' and 'ecological' validities, as well as many more. In fact, it seems that as psychological science develops new and specialized research procedures to address increasingly specific questions, more and more varieties of validity are created. In a recent study, Newton and Shaw (2013) identified 122 distinct validity terms appearing in the titles of articles published between 2005 and 2010 in 22 educational and psychological measurement journals. We suspect that even this list does not fully represent the validity terms currently at play in psychological discourse and that novel concepts will continue to appear in published research.

Given the multitude of validity concepts and the diversity of roles implied by their use within psychological discourse, we believe psychological researchers would benefit well from a classification system according to which the different types of validities may be grouped and organized. This would allow researcher to, among other things, better determine where a given type or types should be used and how different types of validity relate to one another. To this end, we have recently embarked on a historical and conceptual analysis of the concept of

'validity' as it has been and is used in disciplinary psychology. Our overarching objective is to map the large set of (pseudo-)technical validity concepts onto the ordinary concept of 'validity' in order to provide a framework for distinguishing coherent (not coherent), useful (not useful), etc. senses of validity such that psychological research findings that reference one or more of these senses are more clearly positioned both within the discipline and beyond.

As we are at the beginning stages of this research, the current proposal is for a relatively open-ended conversation session in which we will present the general outline of the project and elicit dialogue and feedback on several core issues around which our research questions are oriented. We also invite session attendees to comment on the broader implications of using technical language in psychological research for the accessibility and relevance of psychological research findings for the public at large.

**Marvin McDonald (Trinity Western University) & Peter White (Private Practice):
Intentional Living as Vocation: Horizons Toward Deep Culture**

Conversations around depth of culture require a table setting broad and rich enough to invite adherents of all cultures and communities of discourse. Our humanity requires an openness and commitment to authentic listening and to vigorous, mutually responsible, exchange of ideas. Charles Taylor in his vast corpus has set a table for us that distills such conversations. Rather than rehearsing Taylor's story we propose to move forward, in the spirit of Taylor, with two foci: vocation as authentic quest and as movement toward flourishing. A simple way to share these foci is to do so through the presentation of lives. For us today, let us consider the lives of Emmanuel Lévinas, Victor Frankl, Jean Vanier and Martin Buber.

These four embody vibrant vocations both in their lives and their writings. When observing vocation, we are glimpsing life journeys as they take shape with a focus on the "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." In the lived example of these four, we discover multiple opportunities to honour such a quest. In particular we see in them, four strands of vocational being: openness to revelation, reception of revelation, openness to the other, and risk to self (Bill and Chris). These summons unfolded over decades in community and global engagement. In witnessing their legacy we see individuals who risked becoming themselves and thus touched and transformed the lives of others. Of specific value is a rich documentary record of the mutual influence that their lives in community had upon culture.

The enduring invitation of these four lives helps to establish a horizon for depth of culture. A salient characteristic of their invitation to vocational living is their intentionality. In what follows, we want endeavor to listen deeply to their invitation; our personal and communal aspirations, diverse as they are, warrant such deep listening.

Colin Bakker (Independent Scholar): Personality and Pedagogy in *The Magic Mountain*

Hans Castorp is an unremarkable hero. Thomas Mann makes the point repeatedly in his novel *The Magic Mountain*. Even so, Hans Castorp centres the compelling story of desire and ideas, where his personal formation organizes the various streams of cultural influence present in the population of his colleagues-in-illness at a sanatorium high in the mountains. In *The Magic Mountain*, the same moments of expression establish new depths in Hans Castorp's unoriginal personality, as well as renew cultural trends as they cross the threshold between epochs that is the First World War. The genre of *bildungsroman*, of which this novel is an example, is discussed by M.M. Bakhtin along the lines of Goethe's account of creativity. According to Bakhtin, Goethe describes how the individual or unique can be a creative expression of historical necessity by looking for visible traces of activity through time. In the genre of the *bildungsroman*, the hero and the cultural background both emerge as a result of the incorporation of real historical time into the plot and the construction of the hero. I read both texts for insight into problems of originality of personhood, and note that pedagogical relationships are at the core of the development of both human personality and cultural forms.

Floyd Dunphy (University of British Columbia), Cor Baerveldt (University of Alberta) & Basia Ellis (University of Calgary): From Thick description to depth in culture

In this symposium we will start off from our conclusion last year that in order to get at 'depth' in culture we need a *thick description* of concrete material practices that is both critical and reflective. The idea of thick description entails that any particular cultural expression can only be meaningfully captured by a description that also includes the *lived context* in which that expression emerges. However, the method of thick description, as developed particularly in anthropology, relies heavily on the accounts of cultural experts or informants. We will first raise the question whether a full explication of cultural practices based on expert accounts can truly reveal the depth of lived cultural experience. Subsequently, in order to develop methodological guidelines for the inquiry of depth in culture, we will take an important cue from the philologist and literary critic Erich Auerbach (1892-1957), who showed that in spite of the obvious literary qualities of both, the presentation of Old Testament figures like Abraham and Isaac displays a depth not found in Homer's *Odyssey*. Whereas Homer presents us with a narrative that is 'mere foreground', the depth of Old Testament figures comes out not in the explicit detail of description and the full explication of meanings and intentions, but rather in the way "certain parts are brought into high relief, while others are left obscure" and by the "suggestive influence of the unexpressed, 'background' quality." We will show that for 'depth' to be revealed in cultural expression, this 'background' needs to remain largely non-explicated, while still being allowed to express itself in a tacit way. Indeed, expressive depth requires a delicate *foreground/background dialectics*, without which we would be confronted either with a "uniformly objective present" or with mere obscurity. 'Deep' description is a way of allowing that what remains unsaid to express itself in a perpetually provisional way through that what is said. As a critical note, we will argue that by disregarding the concrete historical reality of the people and events described, present-day semiotic accounts of cultural expression, just like the old Greek style allegorizations of

Hebraic narratives, tend to let all cultural expression evaporate into “mere signs”. As an alternative, we propose the outlines of a *figural* account of concrete material practice that is both historical and fully embodied, yet at the same time fundamentally open-ended.