

Western Canadian Theoretical Psychology (WCTP) 2017

October 12-15

Star of the North Retreat Centre, 3A St. Vital Ave, St. Albert, AB

October 12 (Thursday)

- Reception at Floyd Dunphy's home (Suite 104-9316 82nd Ave NW)

October 13 (Friday)

Morning

- Jeff Stepnisky (MacEwan University): Depth Spherology
- Colin Bakker (Independent scholar): Thomas Mann's Descent into Hell

Afternoon

- Kate Slaney (Simon Fraser University): "Explanation" in ordinary language
- Aaron Garcia (Simon Fraser University): Construct Validity Theory and the Problem of Progress
- Valery Chirkov (University of Saskatchewan): The Paradigm War Continues: Statistical Positivism versus Critical Scientific Realism in Psychological Research

Dinner, 6:30 pm - Luisa's Pasta and Pizza House (104-8 Perron St, St. Albert)

October 14 (Saturday)

Morning

- Paper with panel discussion: Wolfgang Giegerich on depth
- Presenter: John Hoedl (private practice)
- Discussants: Angelina Baydala, Meredith Oenning-Hodgson, Jim Chalmers, Holly Slavik

Afternoon

- Floyd Dunphy (UBC) & Cor Baerveldt (University of Alberta): Therapeutic Depth: Filiation and Vocational Calling
- Evan Shillabeer (University of Alberta) & Cor Baerveldt (University of Alberta): Reimagining skill development in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development
- Vickie Richard (University of Alberta): Going Deep: An exercise in faith

Dinner, 6:30 pm: Critical Mass Brewing (24 Perron St, St Albert)

October 15 (Sunday) – Business meeting

- Depth publication: Randy Tonks (Camosun College)
- A new theme?
- Location of WCTP 2018?

Abstracts

Jeff Stepnisky (MacEwan University): Depth Spherology

In the opening pages of the second volume of his Spheres trilogy, *Globes*, Peter Sloterdijk writes: "Space is deeper than time and the old deeper than the new." Space is deep, or at least potentially deep, because it is rich in atmospheres produced through intimate human co-mingling. The old is deeper than the new because the richest moments of human interaction draw down into the present, actualize, our origins as spatial beings – creatures that live together within dense, world-constituting enclosures. In this paper, following the development of Sloterdijk's trilogy I describe three instances in the development of depth spherology. In *Bubbles* depth is given through the participation in dense, sweet interiors. In *Globes*, depth journeys are enabled through the elaboration of over-sized cosmologies that at once put depth at a distance, and at the same time redefine it as the most perfect reunion with the all-encompassing Other. In *Foams*, depth is found in the multi-faceted practices of self-making and self-expression encountered in the one-person apartment, and related modern architectural innovations.

Colin Bakker (independent scholar): Thomas Mann's Descent into Hell

The prospective reader of Thomas Mann's *Joseph and his Brothers* must first wade through a 45 page prelude aptly entitled 'Descent into Hell'. It is ostensibly an introduction, in Mann's authorial voice, to his project of re-telling those old stories as they *really* happened. That is, his project is to plumb their origins in the bottomless well of the past and then to write them as *realistic history*. The reader who takes this introduction at face value will certainly throw the novel against the wall in frustration as Mann weaves a philosophy of history with the 'actual' history of the ancient near-east and even a pseudo-gnostic flight into metaphysical speculation. One who has any inkling of Mann's characteristic irony will either return to the chapter after skipping ahead, or, in enduring, will hope to obtain some kind of pleasure or understanding from this dizzying text. The present paper delves into some of the ironies of the chapter, including its central implication that finding any rest in history depends the kind of playful confusion of fact and illusion that Mann provokes in his reader. All of this is a prelude to Mann's introduction of a young man sitting in the moonlight, on the edge of a well, entertaining just the same sort of dubious ideas that the reader was compelled to accept 'on the way down'.

Kate Slaney (Simon Fraser University)

It is generally accepted that the primary task of the scientist is to provide explanations; however, it is not always fully transparent from how the term 'explanation' is used in the nonphilosophical discourse what exactly this involves. Additional layers of complexity are added when one considers the domain of psychological science, which is broad in scope and complex in its ontological considerations. In a paper previously submitted to *Theory & Psychology*, I and my coauthors aimed to provide an ordinary language analysis of the concept 'explanation' in order to flesh out the implications for the notion of psychological explanation and what role(s) it might meaningfully play in psychological science. We argued that a) 'explanation' is akin to a family resemblance concept and should not be constrained to a single limited use; b) the subject matter of psychology is such that it calls for multiple forms of explanation; and c) what are oftentimes presented as causal accounts of psychological phenomena might be better understood as descriptive, teleological, or meaning explanations. For the current proposal, I would like to present the broad

strokes of the argument presented in the paper, as well as the reviewers' critical feedback and our responses to these. The objective is to elicit feedback from the group on how best to revise the paper so as to address the issues addressed by the reviewers while maintaining the original objective of the argument we intended to advance.

Aaron Garcia (Simon Fraser University): Construct Validity Theory and the Problem of Progress

In 1955, Cronbach and Meehl proposed construct validity theory (CVT) as a framework for narrowing the gap between the presumed “behavioral knowledge” of psychological research and the lower tiers of Comte’s “pyramid of the sciences.” To this end, Cronbach and Meehl proposed that constructs are to be iteratively proposed, elaborated and re-evaluated while taking into consideration the “nomological network” of associations that constitute and define them. However, questions regarding the verisimilitude of proposed constructs and nomologicals is rarely improved due to issues such as underdetermination or explanatory gaps in the networks proposed. In the present work, the author will explore whether an account of scientific progress is possible, one grounded on the cumulation of knowledge of constructs and nomologicals, should the realist and reductionist assumptions implicated by the CVT framework not be retained.

Valery Chirkov (University of Saskatchewan): The Paradigm War Continues: Statistical Positivism versus Critical Scientific Realism in Psychological Research

Statistical positivism or *statistism* is a research paradigm rooted in the shallow realist ontology and extreme empiricist epistemology that uses statistical methods as the primary methodology to answer the main questions of scientific inquiry about the nature and essence of the reality under investigation. This paradigm has been abandoned in most of the sciences, but finds its last refuge in some domains of psychological studies. In this presentation, I will provide the main theoretical propositions of this paradigm, illustrate them with an empirical example, and use this example to highlight limitations and weakness of such thinking for psychological investigations. As an alternative to it, I will present the *scientific realism* paradigm, also *critical realism*, or *critical scientific realism*, that is rooted in the deep realist ontology, social constructionist epistemology, and critical methodological multiplism as methodology. The realist paradigm targets unobservable generative causal mechanisms as the primary objectives of its investigation. After outlining the main proposition of this paradigm, I will provide an example of its utilization and outline its major advantages in comparison to statistical positivism. A special emphasis will be made regarding serious damage that the statistical positivist reasoning does to student education by diverting future researchers from a creative and innovative thinking toward scientific discoveries.

John Hoedl: Wolfgang Giegerich on Depth

Paper with discussants:

Angelina Baydala, Meredith Oenning-Hodgson, Jim Chalmers, Holly Slavik

The modifier: “depth,” when applied to psychology, is generally meant to distinguish one general approach to psychology from another. Along these lines, “regular” psychology includes approaches such as CBT, Behavioral Psychology, Transactional, Reality Therapy, and so on. This is the domain of what is called “ego psychology,” and its concern is with what Jung called “civil man.” Depth psychology, on the other hand, implies the inclusion of a “deeper” non-ego realm of the psyche, what Freud and Jung, among others, termed

the unconscious. Wolfgang Giegerich, the German psychological theorist and Jungian psychoanalyst, has now pushed off from Jung's notion of the unconscious and has claimed, in effect, that this kind of depth psychology is no longer deep enough. For Giegerich, a modern depth psychology is incommensurate with any intimation of a reified or hypothesized unconscious, which is seen as a clinging to a bygone metaphysical oriented stage of consciousness. Giegerich is adamant that psychology must remain literally the study of 'soul,' but because the 'soul' has long left this realm of a pre-modern metaphysical status behind, its depth can now only be logical, syntactical, and methodological. This talk will explore Giegerich's new understanding of psychology, his move "with and beyond Jung," and his rethinking psychological depth.

Floyd Dunphy (UBC) and Cor Baerveldt (University of Alberta): Therapeutic Depth: Filiation and Vocational Calling

There's something missing. And for some of us there has been something missing for a very long time. Our collective at WCTP first gave breath to these words back in 2012. And the answer that came at that time was that it was something akin to a "depth" that was missing. Another idea was also in orbit around this newly-minted articulation of depth: solidarity. Although nascent, there was in that moment an emerging awareness that something was missing that we all thought loosely approximated depth. At the same time there was also emerging in our midst a feeling of a sort of solidarity. But a solidarity of who and what? When one looked round the table one saw a diverse representation that roughly covered-off the many related but not identical social stations of our associational polity: fully-tenured veteran faculty, fully-tenured faculty who have moved on from their post, fresh-faced new hires, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students at every level, and also non-academic contributors. A real hodgepodge. There was round about this table a growing interdisciplinary and inter-vocational representation and the question was asked whether an entity such as WCTP could ever function as a kind of "guild," for those for whom this group represented something of a solidarity. Could an entity such as WCTP, or any entity for that matter, ever be capable of functioning as a formal affiliation for those both in and on the margins of an academy in transition?

Perhaps not ironically, this group's solidarity was first forged out of a collective feeling of professional alienation. A liminal group of psychologists banded together because they felt something was missing: in their academic departments, amongst fellow academics and indeed at large in their shared academic fields of inquiry. And now in 2017, we want to pose this question anew. Is there a collective sense again in our own moment that there is something missing as it was at the outset of this group? And shall we at this moment in time gather around a set of practices and approaches that we have provisionally identified as suggestive of depth? Whereas the original group bore the disciplinary markers of the then practices of psychology, today's group includes this original moment but also a more imprecise smattering of disciplinary practices and approaches both within and without the formal disciplinarity of psychology. In short, the group demographics have changed, migrated, and disseminated out past the disciplinary margins of the originary moment that inaugurated this group.

Can there be an affiliation, indeed, a filiation, that is both inclusive of and transgressive of conventional institutional boundaries? If there is, as we indeed wager, then is there also an attending calling, a prophetic speaking even, that calls out across affiliation, across departmental and disciplinary allegiance, across institutional boundary and practice to include others who may take up a rightful, and vocational, occupation round this table at which we now sit? This year we will attempt to think through the promise of just such a filiation. Arguing from our own experience, we wonder whether such a filiation is characteristic of what we have been calling depth all along? With this connection between filiation and depth tentatively in hand, we

will push our thinking still further this year and risk everything in an attempt to think the connection between this kind of a filiation in terms of a new form of what we might provisionally call “Therapeutics of Depth.” Our wager is just that, a wager, we risk, we attempt an advent, a discovery, indeed a visitation of a new kind of therapeutic that will call into question all of our previous notions of how depth could become complicit in that which can be thought of as “therapeutic,” and perhaps more controversially, that which is “psychological.” Indeed, there is something missing, and perhaps it has taken us five patient years of sustained attention to arrive at just precisely what it was that was missing this entire time. And perhaps our entire enterprise of depth was a grand wager, an itinerant risk, in order to approach what we now see was missing the whole time: the psychological.

Evan Shillabeer (University of Alberta) and Cor Baerveldt (University of Alberta): Reimagining skill development in Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky’s ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD) has largely been interpreted in a way that prioritizes the internalization of concepts and semiotic mediation. These accounts provide a view of concept development that involves both *generalization* and *abstraction* from the world; however, this perspective on the ZPD struggles to articulate a model of cultivating expertise within a particular cultural domain; rather than enabling us to understand how individuals become more differently skilled within a particular domain, the traditional understanding of the ZPD only conveys how individuals acquire a standardized competence within a particular cultural domain. In this paper, we will re-imagine Vygotsky’s ZPD in light of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology and Dreyfus’ theory of skill acquisition. In doing so, we intend to provide a new perspective concerning skill development in the ZPD that prioritizes the embodied acquisition of dispositions rather than the internalization of standardized rules and procedures.

Vickie Richard (University of Alberta): Going Deep: An Exercise in Faith

Over the summer, an opportunity to take up Cor and Floyd’s work on depth in culture presented itself. While working on a narrative study, I revisited an interview with one of my participants, James. As I re-read the transcript, suddenly, a deceptively mundane moment in our exchange seized my attention. I was struck with the inchoate but powerful sense that that moment arrested something... big. Kind of frightening. And perhaps even personally compromising.

I was immediately apprehensive that in looking into that moment more deeply, I would find something looking back at me.

Around the same time, an exercise in lateral reading brought me – rather serendipitously – to Stephen Greenblatt’s 1980 *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. It echoed the sense the interview evoked. Going on faith, I heeded the call; equipped with two focal points, I moved recursively between the interview moment and Greenblatt, adopting a disposition shaped by the seven values elaborated by Cor and Floyd at WCTP 2016.

In this paper, I will discuss what I found looking back at me when I attempted to go deep. I offer this account in the hope that – in all its coarse particularities – it might add texture to our ongoing discussion of Depth in Culture.