

Western Canadian Theoretical Psychology (WCTP) 2018

September 13-16, 2018

[Star of the North Retreat Centre](#), 3A St. Vital Avenue, St Albert, AB T8N 1K1

Thursday, September 13

6:00PM Evening Reception at the Star of the North
Hosted by Floyd Dunphy, Cor Baerveldt, and Evan Shillabeer

Friday, September 14

8:00AM Breakfast (Star of the North Dining Room)

9:00AM Paper Randy G. Tonks: **Finding Depth in Cultural Psychology**

Screening Michael MacDonald: **Anarchist Erotica: ethnofiction as posthuman cartography**

12:00PM Lunch (Star of the North Dining Room)

1:00PM Paper Michael MacDonald: **Anarchist Erotica: ethnofiction as posthuman cartography**

Paper Richard Kover: **Trolls, Tweets and Tirades: The Emptying Out of Political Discourse in the Digital Age**

Respondents Vickie Richard and Paul Kinasevych

5:00PM Dinner [Luisa's Pasta & Pizza House](#),
8, 104, Perron St, St. Albert, AB T8N 1E4

Saturday, September 15

8:00AM Breakfast (Star of the North Dining Room)

9:00AM Discussion Matthew Unger and Colin Bakker: **On the WCTP Volume**
Matt and Colin will start a discussion on possibilities for a WCTP publication.

Short Paper Review *Speakers from previous years will discuss how their papers contribute to the Depth theme in 15-minute talks.*

William E. Smythe (absent): **C. G. Jung's Red Book as an Entry into Depth**

Chris Peet (absent): **Asceticism, the Axial Age, and the End of the World: Toward a Psychology with World-Historical Depth**

Chris Peet and William E. Smythe: **On Depth**

Matthew Unger: **Depth via *The Idiot*: Ricoeur, Phenomenology and Depth of Symbolic Experience**

Colin Bakker: **Thomas Mann's *Descent into Hell***

Brad Piekkola: **Towards Depth in Culture and Psychology**

Jeff Stepnisky: **Depth Spherology**

Cor Baerveldt and Floyd Dunphy: **WCTP and the Movement of Depth**

Respondent *Evan Shillabeer*

12:00PM Lunch (Star of the North Dining Room)

1:00PM Paper Jim Cresswell: **On Realism & the Epistemology of Earnest Irony**

Paper Floyd Dunphy and Cor Baerveldt: **Solidarity, Therapeutics and the Movement of Depth**

Respondent *Andy Scott*

5:00PM Dinner [Central Social Hall](#), 525 St Albert Trail #280, St. Albert, AB T8N 4J8

Sunday, September 16

8:00AM Breakfast (Star of the North Dining Room)

Abstracts

C. G. Jung's *Red Book* as an Entry into Depth

William E. Smythe

The series of visionary experiences that C. G. Jung documented in the recently published *The Red Book* (2009) began with a confrontation between what he called “the spirit of the time” and “the spirit of the depths.” This expressed the tension that Jung experienced between the surface world of his professional and personal commitments, on the one hand, and a more soulful life that he felt was calling to him in midlife, on the other. Jung entered

this unexplored realm of psychological experience via the personal act of letting himself “drop” into his unconscious, which was accompanied by a more public dropping of professional and academic commitments in the wake of his break with Freud in 1913. What emerged from Jung’s intense work of self-exploration was a rich tapestry of symbolic expressions that tapped into a deep cultural background of shared symbolic forms expressive of Christian, Germanic and archaic mythological influences. This work can be understood hermeneutically as an effort to bring to expression forms of deeply shared background understanding that defy conceptual analysis. One hundred years following this initial attempt, Jung’s hermeneutic approach still yields valuable insights for fostering new forms of inter-cultural understanding.

Asceticism, the Axial Age, and the End of the World: Toward a Psychology with World-Historical Depth

Chris Peet
(no abstract)

On Depth

Chris Peet and William E. Smythe

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 ‘criterial’ for depth.

Depth via *The Idiot*: Ricoeur, Phenomenology and Depth of Symbolic Experience

Matthew Unger

Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot* is a peculiar novel – it is meandering and inconsistent as it was written serially in order for the author to support his gambling habit. Yet, it retains much of the themes that Dostoyevsky explored in his later novels, particularly *The Brother’s Karamzov*. There are moments of inspiration and autobiographical fulcrums that this novel, and the rest of his career, hinges upon that give it a significance that belies its faults. These moments in writing and living coalesce in a recursive expression of how Paul Ricoeur engaged in what he saw to be the limitations of an eidetic phenomenology in the later 1950’s. Particularly, Ricoeur saw that while reflective philosophy is important for

understanding experience, the richness of human experience cannot be ascertained by bracketing. Rather, as is shown by his engagement in the possibility of evil in human experience we cannot begin in transcendental experience, but the contingency and messiness of human experiences of fault. By comparing Ricoeur's burgeoning philosophy of symbolism with Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, we can explore precisely what Ricoeur believed to be missing in reflective philosophy. If by depth we understand a certain predisposition towards *listening* to the fullness of experience, then phenomenologically informed hermeneutics gives us a window into symbols that have resonance within an archeology of consciousness, a genealogy of discourse, and an ontology of meaning. This chapter explores this triumvirate of themes with recourse to an important recurrent symbol in the novel Holbein's Dead Christ in the Tomb.

Thomas Mann's *Descent into Hell*

Colin Bakker

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 to a re-telling those old stories as they *really* happened and so discusses the search for their origins in the 'deep well of the past'. 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 sort of gnostic flight into metaphysical speculation. It all presents the reader with a conundrum: to be satisfied with 'conditional pseudo-beginnings' in myth, as were our ancient protagonists, or to be 'lured ever backward' in the search for historical origins, from illusion to illusion, into immeasurable depths of the past. The 'Descent into Hell' is aptly named; for its difficulty, for its implication that even historical understanding - and the mode of life which draws on it - is based on illusory foundations, but primarily because the reader with a sense for Mann's characteristic irony will endure and maybe even enjoy it, will struggle and worry over it, and will finally be rewarded by the serene opening of the narrative proper. A warm spring evening finds 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'. His example might, over the next thousand pages, remind the reader that a kind of fidelity to the history may be possible, after all.

Towards Depth in Psychology

Brad Piekola

Culture and psychology are categories that specify phenomena of human life that can be differentiated from each other and that can lead to their reification as ontologically separate. Culture is then referred to material phenomena like tools and industry as well as objective, societal phenomena like customs, laws, art, and knowledge. As external to individuals, culture was transmitted to individuals and assumed psychological form as beliefs, attitudes, concepts, and social interaction processes. Culture and individual were conceived of as separate yet interacting. A distinction is made between culture as objective, and external to individuals, and culture as subjective, having been appropriated and internalized. The idea of subjective culture has been connected, by some, with a notion of 'deep culture.' Deep culture is a matter of cultural programming and learning and supports shared meanings about what it is to be human and how one should comport oneself.

In this paper it is argued that it is only through individuals that culture achieves depth, not in the sense of subjectivity but in terms of concreteness. Furthermore, it is only through culture that an individual achieves psychological depth, transcending their innate biology by appropriating cultural processes. Culture shapes the human individual but humans, historically, have created the cultures that subsequent generations appropriate. Individual and culture are mutually constitutive, and it is in that reciprocity that depth in culture is to be found. Developmentally, newborns are connected to their physical environment for maintaining their existence (breathing and eating) but they are immediately subjected to their cultural milieu which they adapt to and coordinate with. Culture that does not connect with living beings is, itself, dead. We retain traces of ancient civilizations and their cultures, but they are empty, shallow, and inert. Deep culture, therefore, is culture in the concrete as it is carried and promoted through human living.

Depth Spherology

Jeff Stepnisky

In this paper I examine philosopher Peter Sloterdijk's *Spheres* (2011, 2014, 2016) trilogy to develop a theory of depth grounded in the spatial character of human beings. In the *Spheres* trilogy, Sloterdijk argues that human beings experience and constitute themselves within spheres. These spheres are the necessary product of human comingling. They are cultural, spiritual, and material enclosures that both express the relational character of human being (we are always in the world with and through others) and provide the "atmospheric" conditions that allow people to continue on with one another in the world. While not automatically deep, in this paper I argue that Sloterdijk's concept of the sphere allows us to

identify the kinds of spaces that are deep, and that allow for the cultivation of depth. I do this by reviewing each of the sphere forms identified in Sloterdijk's trilogy. In the discussion of *Bubbles* (2011) I argue that spheres are deep when they have a "dense" and "sweet" atmosphere that connects the present to primordial moments of sphere formation. In the discussion of *Globes* (2014) I describe the limits of sphere formation, especially as they were encountered in classical and medieval thought. This section of the paper also reveals that while depth can have positive qualities, such as providing for the authentic encounter between self and other, it can also have negative, suffocating, depressive qualities. Finally, in the review of *Foams* (2016) I describe how the concept of depth can be recovered in the contemporary, postmodern moment. There, following Sloterdijk, I consider how individual selves can create the spatial conditions for the cultivation of personal depth.

WCTP and the Movement of Depth

Floyd Dunphy and Cor Baerveldt

Ever since its inception, now almost three decades ago, WCTP has not simply been yet another professional institution, but has rather developed into a way of being-together that allowed for sharing at a level deeper than mere academic debate. The first conference in 1989 started conventionally enough, with formal presentations and discussion of papers, but unexpectedly developed by the second day into a free-flowing conversation revolving around a deeply shared concern with psychology's insidious positivism and its inability to address real psychological questions (Smythe, 1998, p. 13). A couple of years later this concern would find a new articulation in the realization that something important was missing in psychology: "We felt that the discipline had essentially lost the person in many of its methodological practices and theoretical conceptualizations, and we were concerned to address the problem in some way" (ibid). WCTP has met every single year since that first conference, adopting the round-table conversational format inaugurated by the Center of Advanced Study in Theoretical Psychology, yet in that period its composition has changed dramatically. Many of us find ourselves in the margins of psychology as an institution, and just as many don't identify with the discipline as such. Still, the question of "the psychological" has remained an issue, if only implicitly, at the heart of many conversations, finding a more recent articulation in the realization that what is truly missing is something we tentatively came to call 'depth' and that what is vocationally bringing us together is not mere institutional affiliation, but a filiative bond, borne out of a shared concern with a dimension of mundane everyday experience that is lost in a discipline still weighed down by the heavy burden of an outdated metaphysics and with an overly epistemic approach to psychological life.

However, 'depth' cannot simply provide a new foundationalism and part of our work has been to actively work against 'vulgar' conceptions of depth, e.g. as that what is hidden, more fundamental, or available only to a privileged few. Depth 'inheres', if anywhere, in a

certain mode of engagement with the everyday, a ‘mood’ or ‘disposedness’ that opens up or deepens the sites we concern ourselves with, rather than flattening them out or merely making them point at another, more ultimate reality. The movement of depth requires a ‘weak’ or figural hermeneutics, a dynamic relation of accord between real material and historical moments and even a sense of ‘prophetic’ calling that embraces this weakness and is therefore liberating and therapeutic. Rather than theorizing depth or holding it to foundational criteria, as WCTP we have a unique yet contingent opportunity to practice it, precisely by heeding the call of depth and cultivating the dispositions that allow it to open up for us. In this chapter we will sketch out the rough contours of such a weak hermeneutics and tie it to the dispositions we believe are conducive to the movement of depth. We will show that this movement is not a method, but rather a precarious form of solidarity.

Finding Depth in Cultural Psychology

Randal G. Tonks

This chapter searches for depth in cultural psychology in three principal ways: interpretive, comparative, and synthetic depth (Wachtel, 2014). First, a detailed analysis of depth is made regarding specific interpretations of mind and culture for each of three important models of cultural psychology. Second a comparative analysis of depth through juxtaposition is made, showing how each model gives “perspective” to the others (Foehl, 2014). Third, prospects for the synthesis of these views is developed, giving rise to an additional deepening of understanding and *pleromatization* in the broader field of cultural psychology (Valsiner, 2014). Beginning with a brief history of cultural psychology from its rise in 19th century German *völkerpsychologie* through to the many forms it has taken since the 1990s (Shweder, 1990; Bruner, 1990; Cole, 1996; Jahoda, 2012), this account culminates with the recent publication of two handbooks of *Cultural Psychology*; one, as an empirical social science (Kitayama & Cohen, 2007) and the other as an interpretive human science (Valsiner, 2012). In looking for depth, this chapter provides an analysis in the more traditional form of the field, rather than empirical “cross-cultural” approach (Shweder, 2007; Tonks, 2014) by providing a detailed examination of the definitive works of Cole’s (1996) *activity theory* and Valsiner’s (2014) *organon model*. Rounding out and deepening these contemporary perspectives, Erikson’s (1950) *psycho-analytical* account is also presented, together showing depth in the areas of: phylogentic (evolutionary) and ontogenic (lifespan) development, the archeology of mind through the “formal” interpretation of “organ modes”, the impact of culture on self (ego and body), the meaning making of objects and geographic locations, the temporal depth of both past (history) and future (intentional) thinking, the role of joint action (mutuality) in both internalization (through imagination) and externalization of action (play, work and ritual), and through theoretical critique and dialectical integration (Paranjpe, 1998).

Anarchist Erotica: ethnofiction as posthuman cartography

Michael MacDonald

Anarchist Erotica (47m02 s) is a docufiction film that seeks to understand the existential effect that Tom and Gary's Decentralized Dance Party (DDP) has had on party-goers around the world. The film follows Haley and Georgie as they wake up in a hotel room the morning after their first anniversary and work through ideological difference that threaten to break them apart. Committed to a transformed world, but beaten down by the pessimism she sees around her, Haley escapes into her memories of the DDP while she slowly retreats from the world. Georgie remains Haley's way out, but will she take it?

The film works through three registers: an ethnographic register with a script written from ethnographic fieldwork; the documentary register with footage shot of the Decentralized Dance Party during the 2016 New Year's Eve Part in Vancouver, BC presented as Haley's memories; a philosophical register where philosopher Marie-Eve Morin responds, as the narrator and philosopher, to the development of the story.

Because a film works with light and sound, an academic filmmaker has different tools than a writer and the affordance of these tools need to be theorized. Affects, effects, and concepts are chained together in complex formations for the production of a viewing experience. These experiences, in the best cases, should be informed by ethnographic data. Therefore, the screening will be followed by a short discussion of the history of docufiction film, the current dearth of theory, and my positioning it as a form of posthuman cartography. By drawing on Rosi Braidotti, Bruno Latour, and Franco Berardi I intend to sketch out how film, in this case docufiction, can be used to do complex ethnographic work of the complex cybernetic social systems that constitute our contemporary experience.

Against Depth: The Phantasm in Deconstruction

Robert Trumbull

Of all the things deconstruction inherited from psychoanalysis, it would seem that a certain version of Freudian "depth psychology" would be chief among them. To many of Derrida's early readers, deconstruction even appeared as a kind of psychoanalysis of the text, uncovering what had been repressed in the history of philosophy since Plato.

While he argued against this, later in Derrida's work the difference between deconstruction and psychoanalysis took on even greater importance, as he increasingly began to mobilize a certain concept of the "phantasm" in order to describe what it is that deconstruction

deconstructs. In his very late works, he would use this term to designate the essentially fictional dimension of a fantasy deconstruction contests by showing its untenability. As I show, building off much of his previous work on Freud (most notably, *Archive Fever*), it was in this period that Derrida would decisively differentiate the conception of the phantasm in deconstruction and the logic of fantasy in Freud. In so doing, Derrida showed that deconstruction in fact effects a radical break with psychoanalysis and its fundamental orientation towards what lies beneath the surface of fantasy or the symptom. Thus, in the late Seminars, Derrida demonstrates that the dissolution of the phantasm in deconstruction entails *not* grasping the more fundamental ground underlying the fictional fantasy, but rather thinking the absence of all ground.

My paper argues that this line of thought then forms a crucial resource for deconstruction. While it necessitates revisiting many of the seminal concepts of deconstruction (*différance*, trace, spacing, and so on) from this perspective—a task which I will take up in the longer version of this paper—it equally allows deconstruction to show how and why the thought of primary substrate in the tradition, in psychoanalysis, and beyond remains a philosopheme to be contested.

Trolls, Tweets and Tirades: The Emptying Out of Political Discourse in the Digital Age

Richard Kover

The information revolution has often been heralded not only as a technological revolution but as a political one as well. The spread and accessibility of information afforded by digital technology is held to open new vistas of democratic possibility and herald the emergence of a global ‘electronic agora.’ Such enthusiastic and optimistic pronouncements, however, tend to overlook Marshal McLuhan’s old adage that “the medium is the message” and the ways in which different media are not simply neutral vehicles of communication but actively shape and alter what is communicated and transform the contours of both the collective and interior life of the subject. Hence the link between communication and communal or political life has always been a close one. Hannah Arendt saw the cornerstone of Athenian politics and democracy as lying in the face to face public encounter between citizens. Others have argued that the introduction of the printing press and the spread of near universal literacy was an essential condition for the emergence of contemporary democratic institutions in the West. The following paper will examine how digital media shapes communication and informs certain models of community and subjectivity and ask whether the emergence of such digital subjectivities and communities re-inforces or poses a threat to democratic life. Drawing on Nicolas Carr’s discussion of the difference between printed and digital literacy, Sherry Turkle’s examination of the link

between social media and intersubjective development and Byung-Chul Han's text, "In the Swarm," this paper will argue that digital media promotes social atomism, superficial intellectual and social engagement and a consumptive rather than participatory model of citizenship, all of which present considerable challenges to the foundations of democratic life.

On Realism & the Epistemology of Earnest Irony

Jim Cresswell

Like Chirkov, I challenge a naïve correspondence approach to scientific claims, which is that one can unproblematically describe reality as if taking an objective view from nowhere. My position differs from Chirkov insofar as I take an approach I have called 'expressive realism' that challenges his critical realism. Expressive realism addresses how the realities that humans constitute in language enable uniquely human ontologies that constitute the depth of human experience. That is, language enables worlds of experience that humans constitute in the expression of it. Depth comes to play insofar as expressed realities are not subject to whimsical dynamism because they extend beyond individual proclivities or small groups and these are what Chirkov seeks to address. A challenge, however, is that realities are not constant and removed from in situ human action like power and authority. Expressive realism means that the human ontologies of social scientists are not easily shed or separated from power and authority. How do social scientists articulate expressed realities considering such challenges?

Although the objective view from nowhere is not possible, Bakhtin made a curious comment about how laughter reveals what is real. This comment is curious because Bakhtin took what we have called an expressive realist position, yet he referred to laughter as being the oldest language that is unique in its ability to reveal what is true. This claim was not well developed, but looking to authors like Bernstein and Rorty paint a picture of something I call 'earnest irony'. Earnest Irony offers an articulation of Bakhtin's work that opens how to articulate what is deeply real to people. Ironic laughter involves the inversion of what one takes to be true – something is funny when an inversion or surprise occurs and so laughter inverts what is taken to be real by a community when such reality is brought into question. Irony involves distancing from the serious commitment to an expressed reality. The result is that humility and lack of commitment to dogmatic certitude is part of irony. In the practice of science enables the serendipity and innovation that occurs in the context of discovery by taking status quo realities less seriously.

As an example, I discuss the non-ironic mode of mainstream psychology and the current tensions entailed in the literature of replication failure in standard areas like priming. Innovation and deep insight are not possible in this context because the expressed realism of statistical positivism is taken seriously. An ironic mode allows for one to play with ideas and so can reveal what is wrong with the methods and the presupposed reality expressed within them. As another example, I discuss work in theoretical psychology where laughter can be destructive when there is no earnestness to it. That is, irony without earnestness is a kind of cynicism that entails no commitment to something mattering beyond one's own work. This approach can be the meaningless game-play that can come with the collapse of metanarratives that stands in contrast to an ironic mode entailing earnest commitment. I show how theoretical psychology can involve no destabilization or authentic laughter because inversion of what is real in a community does not happen. Theoretical Psychology that takes itself too seriously and cannot address the real and engages no other in its cynical mode.

Solidarity, Therapeutics and the Movement of Depth

Cor Baerveldt and Floyd Dunphy

When WCTP embarked on the journey of 'depth in culture', five years ago, two self-reflective moments, issues, or questions with regard to depth came up for us right away. First, there was our shared sense that 'something' was missing in the discipline, presumably 'the' discipline of Psychology, something, though, that perhaps had never really been there in the first place. By tentatively calling this 'something' *depth*, we were able to engage in an iterative and recursive process that, in the course of a couple of years, came full circle in the realization that depth is what we always already took to be the psychological. Might our suspicion that psychology lacks 'depth' actually imply that it has been unable to articulate the nature of the psychological altogether? For us, any answer to this question hinges critically on psychology's ability to address the life-of-everyday. Does psychology reveal anything about people's mundane, everyday lives beyond the trivial and the obvious, something genuinely psychological, indeed, something deeper than what is merely taken for granted as part of life, or even rationally explained? And what mode of engagement would help elucidate such psychological depth? A second question that came up for us, was what brings us together, here, in this space, around this table. For us, it was clear that this could not merely be a matter of institutional affiliation. Finding ourselves institutionally both inside and outside of the discipline of psychology and sharing, if anything, a precarious and marginal vocational identity, we found ourselves at odds with the idea of institutional affiliation and instead strongly in accord with Augustine's understanding of real community or *civitas* as those who gather around common objects of

love and care. Something clearly mattered to us, even though we were working to articulate what it was and this is what brought us together and forged the bonds of solidarity and filiation rather than affiliation. For us, those two moments were always connected and in patiently drawing out the implications of this connection we were able to characterize the movement of depth as a form of solidarity, of being-here and being-with and thus also a form of therapeutics. Understanding one's own place of calling from within a region is therapeutic. Two years ago we shared our growing conviction that the practice and disposition of depth should take the form of a calling, a vocational or even a prophetic calling. Auerbach's figural hermeneutics had helped us to see how a genuine relation of accord between two real historical moments collapses space and time in a way that prophetically, yet always provisionally, points to a 'promise' without ultimate fulfillment. This year we want to show how a shift from the providential to the provisional, which is the movement of depth as a 'weak' hermeneutics, is inherently therapeutic, as it liberates us from the heavy burden of metaphysics and eschatology and restores the meaning of our real everyday lives to life itself.