Chapter 3

Social Construction Without Dualism

Repairing the Ruptures and Making Connections

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'Tis written: "In the beginning was the Word!"
Here now I'm balked! Who'll put me in accord?
It is impossible, the Word so high to prize,
I must translate it otherwise
If I am rightly by the spirit taught.
'Tis written: In the beginning was the Thought!
Consider well that line, the first you see,
That your pen not write too hastily!
Is it then Thought that works, creative, hour by hour?
Thus should it stand: In the beginning was the power!
Yet even while I write this word, I falter,
For something warns me, this too I shall alter.
The Spirit's helping me! I see now what I need
And write assured: In the beginning was the Deed!

—Goethe, Faust

The little frog was colored pink.
What do a pinky froggie think?
I'll tell you what the froggie thunk.
He thunk ka chunk, ka chunk, ka chunk.

—Walt Kelly

What sort of book is this? *Socially Constructing Communication*? We are more accustomed to titles like these: *The Social Construction of the Person* (Gergen & Davis, 1985), *The Social Construction of Emotions* (Harré, 1987), and "The Social Construction of Remembering and Forgetting" (Shotter, 1990). Encountering these titles we know what to expect. They will challenge the idea that we can usefully answer questions of the form: "What really is a person?" "What are the

basic human emotions?" or "How does memory really work?" Then we expect to find a micro analysis showing how such phenomena are socially constructed in communication. Finally, we will encounter insights that come from that micro analysis. However, the title of this volume seems paradoxical. How can communication socially construct communication, if that which is constructed is the same thing that does the constructing?

A foundational response to the paradox would be to ask, is the title "really" a paradox, and how can we resolve it? If we cannot resolve it, then the title is nonsense. However, a social constructionist response, following Wittgenstein (1953) would be to ask, "In what language game[1] is the title a paradox?" Is that a productive language game to play or is there a more useful alternative? I argue that the title is paradoxical in any language game informed by dualism. In the course of this chapter I argue that dualism is a trap that does not merely make this title appear paradoxical, it threatens the coherence of social constructionist work. It would be paradoxical if I took the position that this chapter provides final resolutions to problems in communication inquiry. What I mean to offer are ideas in the form of useful "tools" for inquiry, not propositions meant to correspond with reality (Cronen, 2001). As I am sure the reader is aware, the subtitle, *Catching Ourselves in the Act,* is overtly paradoxical in appearance. I address its significance in the course of this chapter.

Before proceeding, a caveat is in order. I am concerned that we work hard to hone the most productive tools for our work and test them in the course of inquiry. The idea of social construction runs against the grain of dominant intellectual traditions. Over the years, challenges to the "quest for certainty" (Dewey, 1929/1960b, p. 3) arise, offer productive insights and then are ignored, lost, or assimilated into the dominant forms of talk.[2] One way to keep our tradition alive is to produce

work that is clearly coherent within our own language games and thereby makes the most profitable use of our commitment to social construction.

This chapter is organized into six parts: In the first part, human communication is identified as the primary process of social construction. Communication is then distinguished from other forms of interaction. The second part of the chapter focuses on dualism. It contains a brief sketch showing the deep instantiation of dualistic thinking in the Western intellectual tradition, followed by identification of the central problems common to all dualistic understandings. The chapter then proceeds to explore specific problems for social constructionist work in communication. The third section examines the action–meaning dualism, and the fourth part examines the instrumental–artistic dualism. The fifth section develops the continuity alternative to dualism, and the final part describes one way to work with the continuity perspective by means of an interview method called "circular questions."

Human Communication: The Primary Process of Social Construction

To understand why the title of this volume is sensible in a social construction-ist language game we need to look more closely at the word *communication.* Leeds-Hurwitz (this volume) observed the tendency for the word *social* to drop out of the phrase *social construction.* That is highly problematic for communica-tion scholars. If we think identities, institutions, and emotions are made real in the doings of persons together, then we want to attend carefully to how we understand communication—the primary social construction process. Dewey offered two important claims about the centrality of communication. One was that it is a distinctive *human, social* process. He called attention to the fact that the word *communication* is closely related to the word *community.* Everything that lives does so by interaction with its environment (Dewey, 1925/1958). However, not all interaction is communication (Dewey, 1922/1960a; Dewey & Bentley, 1949). What makes communication different? We may say that bees are "social" but only by metaphorical extension—they interact. In human relationships, there is something quite different than the fixed, mechanical exchange of signals in a bee colony. Dewey (1925/1958) contrasted a mechanical transaction to his close observations of young children. He said that at first, the child simply coordinates with a parenting figure. However, as the child develops, he or she starts to notice how his or her own actions create a response in the other. In Dewey's words the child begins to "take an interest." The child recognizes him or herself as a location from which actions emanate in response to another person. The child recognizes that his or her behaviors lead to those responses of the other who is taking the child into account[3] as a human actor, not reacting mechanically like

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[1]In Wittgenstein's (1953) later work, a "language game" is a pattern of practice organized by rules. The game may be fairly stable over time, such as a religious ritual or the game of chess. It may also be an emergent game such as those that are constituted in a new relationship. In such games the rules are developing and changing as it is played and new games are being developed.

[2]This is not the place for a long historical discussion, but we can note here the way the fledgling communication discipline of the 1910s through 1960s focused on its connections to Aristotle and Plato. Rhetoricians for the most part ignored the tradition of sophists such as Gorgias and Pro-tagoras until recent times. John Dewey (1922/1960a, 1925/1958) offered a highly developed social constructionist position, explicitly arguing that social institutions, emotions, ways of thinking and identities are as much products of social conditions as internal combustion engines. However, by the time of his death in 1952, his work was mostly ignored, superceded by the behaviorist move-ment (Westbrook, 1991). Leeds-Hurwitz (this volume) provided telling examples of how Berger and Luckmann's (1966) focus on everyday social interaction was frequently transformed into an explora-tion of what individuals do in their heads. Systemic family therapists are usually surprised to find that Dewey (1922/1960a) provided a powerful critique of psychoanalytic work, arguing that social results were by them transformed into psychic causes. The social construction of emotion movement is a recreation of Dewey's argument that, "Romantic love as it exists today ... is as definitely a sign of specific social conditions as are big battle ships" (p. 153).

[3]Only three creatures seem to be able to identify the self among others in the world, orangutans, chimpanzees, and humans.

a vending machine reacting to the push of a button. Thus, the child recognizes the other as a source of responsive action. In contemporary vocabulary, this is called *positioning* (see the essays in Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). What happens is that "the assemblage of organic beings transforms sequence and coexistence into participation" (Dewey, 1925/1958, p. 175). The child learns to respond with anticipation of the other, informed by grasping the standpoint of the other person in the sequence. Dewey then observes that each action is modified, indeed formed in part, by the other's action. This mutual in-forming is what John Shotter (1993) called *joint action*. The observable action, said Dewey (1925/1958), "is not an 'expression' of something antecedent, much less expression of antecedent thought. It is communication; the establishment of cooperation in an activity" (p. 179). Where is thought in this process? Dewey (1922/1960a) said our ways of thinking are formed and used *in* this process.[4]

There is another feature of human interaction that makes human communication distinctive. That is the flexibility of our means of communication. Words do not have fixed meanings, nor do musical sounds, rhythms, or gestures. They come to have meaning and change meaning in the course of communication. This flexibility gives our human communities much more diversity than bands of chimps.[5] So, too, does our capacity for creating various sentence-level grammars that provide flexible forms for organizing words in various ways. Here, said Dewey (1925/1958), is the place to look for the creation of meaning. Not in individual heads, nor in the relationship of signals to objects, but in the way persons come into coordinated action creating meaning and ways of making it in joint action.[6]

How does this view of communication affect the seeming puzzle of the book title? Look at the way I phrased the paradoxical interpretation: "How can communication construct communication if the thing constructed is the same thing that does the constructing?" If communication is a particular "thing" that we do among other things, then this is indeed a paradox. But, consider the language game invoked by that way of phrasing the problem. Here we have a prime example of what Wittgenstein (1953) meant when he wrote, "a whole cloud of philosophy condensed in a drop of grammar" (p. 222). In the game I have invoked we speak of communication as thing-like and distinct from other phenomena. A dualist identifies separate, bounded objects in the domains of

mind or world. We are invited by dualistic game-playing to form clear definitions of each object, and then discover whether their changes are correlated.[7] Remember the demonstrations of Newtonian Principles from high school physics? One billiard ball, say the cue ball, strikes another ball—that is, it affects the ball. The cue ball may be affected by still another ball, moved, dented, and so on. However, it does not affect itself. When communication is treated as a bounded "thing," then any change in it must come from an outside source. Those outside entities proposed as explanations for how the communication process changes have included, "class," "organizational structure," "gender," and the like. These then become the primary foci of inquiry, not communication. This takes us swiftly out of the social construction orientation.[8] *Communication* is what Dewey (1925/1958), following James, called a "double-barreled" term. It properly describes both the active exercise of abilities and the management of observable events through such exercise.

Let us unpack the dualist orientation in social thought a little further. The inquirer identifies properties of the mind such as primary sensory impressions, cognitive plans, feelings, intentions, personal constructs, depending on the particular dualist theory employed. Each is defined and treated as a possession inside the "mind." They somehow affect each other and then magically combine to produce something quite different—behavior. This is how dualism is allied with mentalism in the social disciplines.[9] Mentalist models do not combine elements internally, but rather relate them by statistical association, typically in the forms of multiple regression or logistical regression formulas.

This way of thinking is at the heart of the well-worn transmission model of communication that appears at the beginning of so many text books. That model seems so simple, obvious, and innocent. However, it directs the student to a way of talking about communication that is directly opposed to a social construction point of view (Pearce, 1994a).[10] In the transmission model a sender's "ideas" are, through a magical operation never explained, "encoded" into a "message" that is sent through a "channel." The message is then somehow "decoded" by a receiver into something else—something mental.

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[4]For a similar argument from the view point of sociology see Winch (1970).

[5]If Dewey had our current data on chimp bands he would easily have recognized that they form a sort of community, each with some distinctive characteristics. Committed to evolutionary ideas he would have seen the continuities with humans as to be expected. However, the next feature of human communication, its great flexibility, allows for human communities to be much more diverse and complex.

[6]In his last major work Dewey (Dewey & Bentley, 1949) drew a valuable distinction between interaction and transaction. Human communication clearly falls into the domain of transaction.

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[7]As I show, the problem of how to show the connections among things is an intrinsic problem for dualism.

[8]Of course, these topics can be pursued in a social construction orientation. However, they must be understood as ways of acting created and sustained inside the communication process. A social construction orientation would look for the ways communication processes create these secondary *processes* thereby giving communication particular form at particular moments.

[9]Of course not all dualists embrace mentalist ideas. Behaviorism rejects any appeal to internal processes and embraces a deterministic stimulus/response orientation.

[10]For a fuller treatment of this point the reader should consult Pearce (1994). Pearce provided for a highly readable treatment of this critique that students can easily grasp.

Social construction does not "resolve" the paradoxical interpretation of the title. It sets it aside as an artifact of an unprofitable way of talking about communication. It treats the seeming paradox of the book title as analogous to the "Know thy self" paradox and its avoidance: "How can the self know the self, if the self that is known is the same self that does the knowing?" Dewey (cited in Lamont, 1959, p. 39) and Mead (1934/1956) set aside this paradox in a way now familiar to social constructionists and symbolic interactionists. Dewey and Mead described identity as a process—something we *do*, not some*thing* we have. Mead introduced the distinction between the "I," the locus of activity, and the "me" which is the family of stories about the self that can be learned and told in the process of communication. Thus, there is nothing more mysterious about a person having the ability to tell a story about him or herself than there is about the person's ability to tell a story about someone else.

At the center of this constructionist way of talking is a claim implicit in Dewey's foregoing account of communication. Dewey (1916/1966) made that claim explicit in his book *Democracy and Education*. There he said, "Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, by communication, but it may be fairly said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication" (p. 4; italics in original).

These are important ideas. Communication is the primary social process. Through ways of communicating we make identities, relationships, and institutions. But wait! This last sentence can be as misleading as it is common. Those ways of communicating are not just *about* other things, relationships, identities, cultures, and institutions. They *are* our relationships, identities, cultures, and institutions. Relationships *are* the ways each person acts into the actions of the other. An organization *is* the way persons engage in joint action. They exist *in* communication.[11]

The foregoing is a claim that most social constructionists would affirm. But there is a fundamental commitment in social constructionist work that is less well represented in communication research. That is the more radical claim that meaning, perceiving, recalling, thinking, movement, and feeling are all integral dimensions of communication and constructed *in* the process of communication, not separate mental states or phenomena used in the process of communication. Social construction is not only alternative to foundational thought, but also alternative to any form of mentalism or cognitivism (Gergen, 1985a). The dualist retains the idea of a mental realm that "contains" ideas, ways of thinking, perceptions, intentions, and so on, that are "decoded" and "encoded" Indeed, that was the point when Gergen (1985b) first made the highly valuable distinction between "constructivism" and "constructionism." What he did was to clearly distinguish the work of "constructivist" inquirers like Kelly (1955) and Delia (1975) who placed primary emphasis on cognitive processes that influence

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[11]In this way Sigman (1995) distinguished the "consequentiality" of communication from the idea that communication has "consequences."

communication, from "constructionist" inquirers. The later group includes his own work, and others such as Harré (1979, 1984), Shotter (1984) and the coordinated management of meaning (CMM) team of Pearce, Cronen and their associates. Constructionists all place primary emphasis on communication and all rejected mentalism. As the reader can now see, the little poem about the pink frog and the weighty words of Goethe at the beginning of this chapter have much in common, but Kelly's pink frog poem has more profound implications. Goethe's poem points to the primacy of the deed. Walt Kelly's poem makes a stronger and more specific claim: The sounds we make are not about our thoughts, they are integral to our thoughts.

The Fundamental Problems of Dualism

In the interest of getting our house in order, I elaborate on the dualistic commitment by looking at its origins. I confine my account to dualism as it applies to thought, meaning, and action. Then I briefly discuss the relatively recent source of its alternative.

Dualism's Long Tradition: What We Are Up Against

The dualist orientation may be traceable to Plato's insistence on clear definitions. His idea involved ripping a term out of the context of its use, a technique he seems to have taken from his mentor Socrates (Ong, 1982). Plato's early dialogue *Euthyphro* (Hamilton & Cairns, 1961) provides a clear example of the technique. Socrates admonishes Euthyphro to tell him what "piety" itself really is, not the various ways people use the word. In contemporary vocabulary he is asking for a definition of the underlying "concept."[12] Aristotle's work, although having important metaphysical differences from his teacher Plato, retains a dualistic orientation (Dewey & Bentley, 1949). There are primary "substances" that are uniquely what they are. To use language logically, we must use it consistent with the dualistic metaphysical outlook[13] in which words stand for specified things.

The dualistic outlook on language continues in the writings of Augustine and in the Port Royal Logic. At the start of the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein (1953) attributed the notion of "ostensive definition" to Augustine. In Augustine's view words have meaning by virtue of pointing to the objects they represent. Later, in the highly influential Port-Royal Logic (*The Art of Thinking*,

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[12]Plato, of course, would have said he was searching for the "form" of piety.

[13]Aristotle's account of *praxis*, while of continuing value in many ways, was still derived from his account of the natural world. For example, his *enthymeme* is, he said, "is a sort of syllogism" (Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 1355a9) and the syllogism requires clear, independent classes and subclasses (see Aristotle, *Analytica Priora*).

1662, cited in Baker & Hacker, 1984), pointing is extended to include the way a word points to an internal mental object. The Port-Royal Logic claims that if our reflections on our thoughts referred to ourselves alone, we would not need words or signs, but conveying thoughts to others requires that thoughts be accompanied by signs. Here is the beginning of the transmission model of communication. Hobbes (1651/1914) had earlier made this same claim in *Leviathan.*

Descartes, often called the father of modern European philosophy, provided the prototype of modern dualism. It is based on his claim that there are three independent, primary substances: God–Mind–Body. The mind–body dualism remains the most influential. On the side of body is all that is observable behavior, including communication. Just how mind is related to body in such a way that it can affect behavior is unclear. In a bit of reasoning similar to some of Plato's ideas, Descartes claimed that certainty can be found only in the domain of the mind. We can be wrong about having a body because our senses could be inaccurate. However, to doubt we have a mind is self-contradictory.

John Locke provided only a partial answer to the mind–body divide in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* There he said that material stimuli from outside of us register on our minds. These are, in his system, simple, independent sensations. They become associated to produce ideas.

> Because being intended to express nothing but the power in things to produce in the mind such a sensation, that sensation, when it is produced, cannot but be the effect of that power. So the paper I write on, having the power in light ... to produce in men the sensation which I call white, it cannot but be the effect of such a power in something without the mind; since the mind has not the power to produce any such idea itself ... the simple idea is real and adequate. (Locke, 1639/1963, p. 511)

Each person, Locke said, uses sounds as signs of internal conceptions to stand as marks for ideas in the mind whereby they may be conveyed from one to another. The influence of this point of view, that simple, independent associations make up ideas, has been great.[14]

Saussure, the founder of semiotics, continues in this tradition. His *Course in General Linguistics* (Saussure, 1916/1971) is striking. Saussure wrote:

> Mental facts (concepts) are associated with representations of the linguistic sounds(sound images) that are used for their expression. A given concept unlocks a corresponding sound image in the brain; This purely *psychological* phenomenon is followed in turn by a physiological process: the brain transmits an impulse corresponding to the image to the organ used in producing sound. (pp. 11f)

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[14]This work of Locke's is the foundation of all associational psychology.

The physiology of Saussure's account has been euphemistically described as "quaint" by Baker and Hacker (1980).

Perhaps the most powerful nearly contemporary expression of the meaning–language dualism is in Wittgenstein's (1921/1971) early work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* In that work, Wittgenstein said he was trying to save logic from confusion. The core of his "Picture Theory" is that each expression must be a picture of a clear, determinate state of affairs. He ended this early work with the admonition that we must remain silent about that of which we cannot speak clearly.

In summary, what does this dualistic view amount to?

1. Communication, the academic home for inquiry into the primary social process, is a marginal discipline. The important things, "ideas" can be studied separately from it. How ideas are to be disseminated by communication is the concern of second-rate minds.

2. "A language is a public code in which concepts or thoughts may be encoded" (Baker & Hacker, 1984, p. 19). In other words, signs whether words, gestures, grunts, or whatever, are representational—they literally re-present something else whether an outside object or an internal stimulus, idea, or feeling.

3. Thinking is internal and individual. Internal ideas, perceptions and sensations are independent of language.

This way of thinking is so deeply ingrained, could there be anything wrong with it? To begin, consider the platypus. Does it fit the concept "mammal" or not? It lays eggs, and then it suckles its young—without nipples. At first, biologists called it a primitive mammal (Burrel, 1974). However, there in nothing primitive about this highly adapted, complex creature. Of course, what is wrong is the idea that living things must fit into neat, independent classes. Here is another clue closer to our academic concerns: At the very beginning of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus,* he said that although his Picture Theory of language saves logic from confusion, it leaves out the most important things in human life. These most important things include feelings, hopes, intentions, longings, artistic urges, and moments of inspiration. These are not determinate states of things about which we can speak clearly. They are, he said, matters that cannot be pictured, only shown (Edwards, 1985).

The Enigmas of Dualism

William James was a profound critic of dualism. At various points in has career he offered different ways of distinguishing kinds of theories. Two of these are

important here. One way was to differentiate between "thick ones and thin ones" and another was between "dualistic theories" and "continuity theories" (James, 1909/1996b). By thick ones he meant those that take seriously the rich, "messy," changing details of lived experience as opposed to those that reduce experience to a few neat abstract concepts. By dualistic theory he meant the tradition of Plato, Locke, and Descartes that I already described. By contrast, continuity theory took the position, informed by Darwin's way of thinking, that the objects of inquiry are in an evolving process of forming each other from within. He cautioned that those who want neat, final, elegant accounts would not like his ideas. However, he thought that his pluralistic way of working was closer to the rough and tumble, messy, and often muddled affair that life can be (James, 1909/1996b).

James further argued that not only did the traditional pursuit of neat, elegant theory miss the character of life, but also that dualistic theory was internally, irretrievably incoherent. Dualism, he said, turns any account of the *relationships* among entities subject to a logical regress. How can one entity, such as thought, influence a feeling or a behavior?

> How shall an influence influence? How shall a relation relate? Any conjunctive relation between two phenomenal experiences *a* and *b*, must . . . be itself a third entity; and as such, instead of bridging the one original chasm; it can only create two smaller chasms, each to be freshly bridged. . . . These new relations are but two more entities which require to be hitched in turn (James, 1909/1996b, pp. 69–70)

The problem of infinite regress in dualistic systems was identified earlier by Hume. In *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume (1748/1963) came to the skeptical conclusion that science can never finally answer questions because such gaps between particular observations can never finally be filled. On the matter of human morality, he also came to the conclusion implied by the confluence of empiricism and dualism that it is impossible to derive an "ought" claim from a factual claim about what "is" (see Hume's 1739/1963, *Treatise of Human Nature*). "Ought" claims are not about real, observable phenomena in the world.

The contemporary overuse of statistics is a product of dualistic thinking. Statistical associations are, in Rom Harré's (1973) felicitous phrase, "surrogates for necessity" (p. 358). Probabilities stand in place of connections that cannot be observed. All basic statistics depend on the independence assumption. Two variables may be correlated with each other, but they cannot be part of each other. This is especially problematic in regression equations. Raush, Barry, Hertel, and Swain (1974) were the first to observe that in conversation each contribution

enters into the formation of the next. Thus, we would violate the independence assumption if statistics are applied to a sequential analysis of talk.

Another problem is that dualism is "molecular." Because it demands independent entities, it must reduce the analysis to independent, typically small units. This means that our feel for life as a flow, and, indeed all movement, must be treated as an illusion. The idea of an episode as other than a static frame becomes impossible. We become stuck in Zeno's classic "paradox of the arrow" (Mazur, 2007, p. 4). Zeno bid us to consider the flight of an arrow. He said that at Moment 1 the arrow is exactly at one particular point in its path and no other. At Moment 2, it is exactly at the next point along the path and no other, and so on. There for the movement of the arrow is wholly composed of moments of nonmovement! This problem was not resolved until Galileo developed the idea of instantaneous velocity.

I next show how the basic rules of dualist language games threaten the coherence of work in communication. I focus on two dualisms in particular. Those are the action–meaning dualism and the instrumental–artistic dualism.

Dualism I: Action–Meaning

This action–meaning dualism is, of course, a rephrasing of Descartes' "mind–body" dualism. I explore its implications in two ways. First, I show that any account of meaning that retains the vestiges of dualism will make that account of meaning problematic. This is especially so for the constructionist orientation (Gergen & Semin, 1990). This chapter thus extends the critique of symbol models presented by John Stewart (1995). Once a social constructionist gives a referential account of meaning, dualism enters the picture. That is, words, gestures, nonverbal sound, are said to be meaningful to the extent that they refer to something else. Consider Pines' basic account of semiotics as an example (Pines, 1982, cited in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). Pines said the method of semiotics is first, to separate an act, called the "signifier, "from its meaning, called "the signified." For example, when a man offers a woman a rose, the signifier is the act of giving the rose, but the signified is romance. A sign, then, has two parts: the visible part or signifier, and the absent part, or signified. In this account the dualism is clear. The signifier is external behavior and the signified is an internal meaning. This is fully consistent with Saussure's account cited earlier.[15]

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[15]I am well aware that some proponents of semiotics have worked to modify it to make it more compatible with our contemporary ideas about communication and to avoid the problems described below. These are summarized by Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) in her overview of the strengths, limitations, and developments in semiotics. How successful this has been is a judgment I leave to the reader.

Second, I show that the dualist separation of meaning and action has serious moral consequence. Matters of what constitutes the good and the virtuous do not qualify as determinate states. In a dualistic account they are at best internal matters that are not internally related to behavior. Our academic tendency, of course, is to set these problems aside, to look at so-called mental phenomena first, and deal with behavior by invoking Scarlet O'Hara's alternative, "I'll think about that tomorrow."

Dualist Threats to a Useful Account of Meaning

The idea that a symbol gets its meaning by its reference to a signifier seems innocent enough, and consistent with the long intellectual tradition sketched here. However, this understanding generates problems, as discussed here:

How Can We Learn the Name of an Object? This becomes problematic because referential systems typically are time static.[16] How does a child learn the meaning of a word? Can't we point to things and name them, or use flashcards with pictures on one side and a word on the other? Speech and language pathologists used to rely on this to work with patients with aphasia. The idea that a word gets its meaning by the way it points to some observable object is called *ostensive definition* and working with a child or an adult patient this way is called *ostensive teaching*. However, we now recognize that a child or adult patient must first understand patterns of communication practice before ostensive teaching can be effective. A symbol can be a sign only in the context of a practice (Wilson, 1999).

Look at what a baby must be able to do in order to be taught by the ostensive model. The baby must know how to orient to the teaching situation in a particular way. He or she must know how to focus attention on the object that is to be named and to re-adjust its focus from the teacher to the object. The baby must know how to deal with the pattern of sounds and movements involved. The baby must learn what to recall in order to manage the next moment of the game. He or she must have mastered how to give and take turns. He or she must grasp the idea of testing learning and how to show his or her emerging grasp. The baby must tell the difference between a positive trial and a failure by the way the "teacher" responds and how to adjust his or her efforts. In other words, the baby must already know a great deal that is more basic than the connection of a word with an object. The baby must know how to engage in language games.

That learning of patterns is achieved as parents or other caregivers communicate with the baby (Dewey, 1925/1958; Wittgenstein, 1953; Wilson, 1999). Consider the game of peek-a-boo. An infant in a crib struggles to lift its head up

and see over the bumper pads. A parent in the room sees this and says "peek!" The baby has no intention of playing a game. The little arms have simply given out, but the parent says, "all gone baby, where is baby?" If the baby gets up again the parent may say, "There is baby, peek!" and so on. Through simple games like peek-a-boo and less-ritualized interactions, the baby learns game-playing abilities. With those abilities, the baby can learn many things, including how to use a word (Becker, 1971; Bruner, 1990). As game-playing ability evolves, the child takes a new orientation to what is going on. As Dewey (1916/1966, p. 31) said, the child "takes an interest" in the actions of him or herself in coordination with others. The baby anticipates the other's action as responsive to his or her own and vice versa. The baby understands the activity of both "as placed in the same inclusive situation" (p. 30). The baby is no longer just interacting, he or she is communicating—forming community.

In adult communication, we still have to create context in order to make sense of language. How should I read this notice posted in Heathrow Airport? If I pay attention to the arrangement of the words into separate lines, and if I fail to notice the vehicles moving though the airport helping disabled passengers, I might think the following sign is meant to be heeded by giant battery powered robot passengers who carry cars and trucks through the airport:

> **No electric passenger**
> **carrying vehicles**
> **allowed beyond this point** .

Here again is illustrated the primacy of interactive game playing. Or, as Bateson (1979) said, "Without context words have no meaning at all" (p. 15).

I submit that the model of language learning based on the prior learning of game playing immediately crosses the meaning–action divide. Meaning is formed in responsive action, and social communication is prior to language.[17]

How Can We Know the Correct Signifier to Use? Once we assume that there is a mental "thing" that must be related to a linguistic symbol, we open the question, "How can one know that one is using the right sign for the mental object?" This dualistic set up seems to imply that we must learn criteria to tell when a sign is properly employed (Edwards, 1985). Of course, as James (1909/1996b) said, learning criteria only opens two more gaps. How can one know that the right criteria are being employed for the particular mental phenomenon? How can one know that the criteria are properly related to the signifier? This begins an infinite regress.

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[16]Even in the case of Peirce semiotic view, the projected future is not taken into account.

[17]Harré and Tissaw (2005) suggested making a distinction between primary language games and secondary language games. The primary language games create the abilities for developing secondary ones.

In addition to the regress problem, learning rules or criteria for use will not be adequate for another reason. Suppose we investigate the "meanings" that persons have for the symbol "American flag." By what rule or criterion does a person connect the signifier "flag" to the right internal referent in different contexts? Why can't just about anything be associated with the sign? Wittgenstein (1953) discussed the intrinsic problem of thinking that a rule can act like a signpost and tell us how to follow it. Parents know only too well that a clever child can find ways to justify a bewildering array of behaviors as consistent with a rule he or she has been given. Even in the courtroom a rule of law must be interpreted in light of a past practices and the details of a particular case. As Dewey (1929/1960b) said, "Practical activity deals with individualized and unique situations, which are never exactly duplicable, and about which, accordingly, no complete assurance is possible. All activity, moreover, involves change" (p. 6).

The problem of associating symbols with referents cannot be solved even by recourse to mental images. No image fully determines how to use it. Harré and Tissaw (2005) referred us to Newton's decisions about how many colors are in the spectrum. Besides his nonconscious choice to avoid names for all the blends, he quite consciously chose to add a seventh name on the grounds that seven is a more Godly number than six. Generations of science teachers who followed have taught us to see seven colors ever since.

The problem of correct connection between symbol and referent is especially acute in the case of a sensation such as pain. When, for example, a woman holds her head and grimaces, saying she is in awful pain, it makes no sense to respond, "Are you sure you are?" or "How do you know that?" No criteria are involved. The holding of the head and grimacing are not representations of the pain, they are *aspects of the pain behavior.* Said another way, they are *continuous* with the sensation, not independent representations of it. When a baby cries, he or she is not symbolizing the pain, the baby is doing pain behavior in part by showing/avowing it. We teach children how to go on from the pain in different ways, saying "I have a pain" rather than crying (Wittgenstein, 1953). Notice that neither the crying nor the words are proofs of pain. They are aspects of it.

If we move our attention to discuss more abstract matters, the continuity of thought and language is even clearer. In the poem by Walt Kelly at the start of this chapter, it is adduced that the brain activities of the pink frog's thoughts are continuous with its environment, its senses, and the sounds it makes responding to its environment. Try this little thought experiment: Think about going to an orchard with a loved one on a warm spring day. You pick an apple and bite into it. It is sweet and it crunches as you bite into it. You smile at your loved one and make the sound "Mmmmm." Now, can you think through this without words? Of course, you can. The way we think is formed

in the experience. We learn a way of talking about that experience as another way of having it. Reporting the experience in language really is a representation—a re-presentation of it by other means. (Representation is one of many things we can do with language, not its primary nature.) Now, consider an idea discussed earlier: "Language games are prior to ostensive learning." Try to think about that idea without any words—impossible! The experience of thinking this way is intrinsically linguistic.

HOW CAN INTERSUBJECTIVITY BE ACHIEVED? From a dualistic point of view, communication should work best when each party to a conversation knows what the others "really mean." In other words, we want to know how their words match their thoughts. As I show later, this is really a pseudoproblem. It arises because of a dualistic view of communication, and is irresolvable within such games. However, the inside–outside or symbol-meaning dualism is so deeply entrenched in our ways of thinking, that even those who say they are committed to a social construction orientation sometimes treat the problem as "real."

In 2006, I was conducting a teleconference with graduate student practitioners, all of whom affirm the social construction position. One student asked: "How can I be confident that I really understand what my client is thinking or feeling?" This student was an experienced clinician. He was concerned with developing his ability to join with clients to create a relationship in which new ways of living are created. He was neither concerned with whether a client is being fully honest, nor was he concerned about the adequacy of his interviewing skills. His concern was more fundamental and strikes at the heart of the question, "How is communication possible, especially communication about the most important and personal things in our lives?" Communication inquirers typically call this the "intersubjectivity" problem. Asked another way, "How can one mind know another?" The clinician's idea is that in order to join with a client it is necessary to somehow get inside the mind of the client. However, individual minds seem to be radically separate. The fear is that we are not able to penetrate the private meanings of others. Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) cited anthropologist David Schneider (cited in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993) as repeating the old adage that social action requires commonality of understanding. This not only flies in the face of the data (Harris, Cronen, & McNamee, 1979), but also creates another paradox. We must have common understandings for social action, but we cannot create meanings together until we engage in communication.

The "knowing other minds" problem is based on the idea that each person has a private, inner sanctum, a mind, within which she or he has private meanings in a private language that can be represented but not fully disclosed. Wittgenstein (1953), in his later philosophy, attacked the possibility of a private language in two ways. First, as discussed earlier, he argued that only through the responsiveness of others are meanings formed. His second line of attack was

through his famous "beetle-in-the-box" simile. With it Wittgenstein illustrated the paradox created by the traditional dualistic view:

> Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: We will call it a 'beetle.' No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says that he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle. Here, it would be quite possible to have something different in his box. One may even imagine such a thing constantly changing. But suppose the word 'beetle' had a use in these people's language. If so, would it not be used as the name of the thing? The thing in the box has no place in the language game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty. (p. 293)

In this simile the box is analogous to the mind as a container of things, and the beetle is analogous to a "thing' contained in the mind such as a feeling of pain. Wittgenstein is careful about the conclusion he is trying to draw. He said that the 'pain' "is not a *something,* but it is not a *nothing* either" (p. 304). He said his point is that a nothing would serve just as well *if* we remain in the grammar of the traditional view of language, mind, and meaning. Yet clearly, the "pain" (or emotion, or idea) is relevant; it is not a nothing. It only appears irrelevant when the intellectual game we are playing treats mind as a container, and its contents as "thing-like," separated from physical being, and having an existence of its own unique kind.

The problems of theoretical coherence posed by the foregoing question is serious. But, perhaps even more serious, are the problems dualism poses for our ability to connect with the world of embodied social practice in a morally responsible way.

Dualism's Threat to the Social Significance of Our Work

Earlier in this chapter I cautioned that our intellectual tendency is to put aside the problem of action and focus on meaning. That is easy to do if meaning and action are considered separate phenomena and if there is no account of how one is related to the other. Consider what happened to social psychology. From the 1940s to the early 1970s hundreds of articles in front-line journals addressed the question of how best to measure "attitudes." This same preoccupation may be found in quantitative communication research between 1960 and the early 1970s. It took about 30 years before scholars began to take seriously the fact that attitudes do not seem to predict behavior very well. The response in psychology was to introduce the variable "behavioral intentions" into regression formulas. However, intentions are still mental phenomena. In a truly bizarre move, some argued that attitude measures were fine, but behavior was the problem. Behavior is so variable across particular times and conditions that we should not expect the fine formulas to predict such fluctuating stuff!

Is this preference for looking inside the mental box a habit that still affects social constructionists in communication? Consider this: The present volume is in part the product of the National Communication Association 2006 summer conference. Attendees were mostly committed to social construction as a productive direction for their careers. Through the 4 days of the conference, a particular antiphonal pattern was repeated with some frequency. A position statement would be suggested emphasizing social construction as an approach to "meaning." This would evoke the response that "action" was a better, more encompassing emphasis. Such an exchange did not start debate between the two ways of expressing our focus. It was typically agreed that action, more specifically, social action, was the better way to explain our focus.

The Moral Problem in the Meaning–Action Dualism

During the conference, keynote speaker, John Stewart, initiated a discussion about the German philosopher Heidegger. I agree with Stewart that there are some provocative ideas for social constructionists in Heidegger's writing. However, as we discussed at the workshop, Heidegger is a highly problematic figure. His career shows the pull of a deeply instantiated intellectual tradition that directs attention to thinking and away from the material world of action. William James (1909/1996) would probably say that Heidegger's later work exhibited a "vicious intellectualism" (p. 218). As Heidegger's work progressed he became more firmly focused on the care and solicitude of being and language itself as opposed to concern for real living persons (Bernstein, 1986). In the domain of real persons in social action, Heidegger became a committed Nazi who aspired to be Hitler's chief philosopher. Heidegger's career is a dreadful and informative tale. It shows how treating meaning in a way that is not intrinsic to action can result in consequences more serious than intellectual confusion.[18]

Heidegger is hardly an isolated case. A recent book on the Stalin period of the Soviet Union provides additional examples (Hellbeck, 2006). It is a series of case studies based on the diaries of intelligent, educated persons living through that period, who continued to support Stalin. The mass killing that came with forced collectivization, the executions of dissenters, and the slave labor camps all amounted to the slaughter of millions. However, they kept silent, not only because of fear, but through complex rationalization. By intellectually situating

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[18]Reflecting on my own work developing the theory coordinated management of meaning (CMM) it is not difficult to trace a struggle to overcome the meaning—action divide. Earlier CMM work discriminated "constitutive" from "regulate" rules, and through 1980 included a major cognitive feature, "constructs," without a clear indication of how such were related to action.

everything in the larger picture of class struggle, the slaughter of millions became a "particular" not to be confused with the greater intellectual abstraction. It is all for the good of "the people." Clearly, it was for the good of some abstract people who did not exist.

The Problem of Agency and Its Moral Implications

Why is it that one person speaks to another? Why don't both just stand there? From a dualistic account there must be some outside impetus to start a movement. That was the case in Aristotle's system. In his work, some outside force (the "efficient cause") had to start every kind of change. Newton's physics shares this idea that all things are in a natural state of rest until some event or force from outside kicks things into motion. In communication and psychology the idea that an outside agency must initiate the process of social actions appears in the form of appeals to a cognitive state like "dissonance" (Festinger, 1957), a physical need like hunger, or an unfulfilled basic function like the need for social inclusion (Wright, 1976). In Berger and Calabrese's (1975) theory, an over-arching law of behavior drives us to reduce uncertainty by communicating in certain ways under the condition of uncertainty. Such explanations are required by dualism. Once thinking and perceiving are disconnected from action, then some outside force must be invoked to account for action.

Even with his commitment to evolutionary thought, James remained in the grip of the idea that some outside force was needed to explain personal commitment to a course of action. A glaring inconsistency in James' pragmatism that Dewey (1922/1960a, 1925/1958) pointed out was that James resorted to "voluntarism," an act of willing, to account for activity. James' (1898/1956) struggles with his own religious faith took him back to the intra-psychic, "will to believe." This internalizing led to a narrow, individualist form of the pragmatic test of an idea—its effectiveness. James' justification for his religious faith nearly comes to this: If it works for me and makes me feel good, then it is useful (James, 1897/1956). In this example, we can see the close connection between the problem of agency and the moral character of action. James' position is a very problematic moral stance when we consider what has made some of the monsters of history feel good.

If the "cause" of behaviors lies outside of communication processes, then the focus of moral inquiry must be largely outside the micro processes of social construction. We must hold accountable individual "will," internal drives, or natural drives, but not the interactive processes of social construction. However, that is what the originator of the phrase "social construction" cautioned against.

Gergen and McNamee (1999) argued that a moral position must be developed based on relational responsibility formed in communication.[19]

Intentionality is another pseudoproblem, a consequence of playing inquiry games with a dualistic point of view. It is quite inconsistent with social construction, which finds its account of action and its moral compass inside the *living* micro processes of communication. Pearce (1994b), commenting on social construction inquiry in communication, warned that when research shifts to an exclusive third person perspective, and the doings of persons reduced to objectified "texts," we lose the ability to account for agency. And without agency there is no responsibility.

Dualism 2: Instrumental–Artistic

The dualistic "urge" has left us with a tendency to "chop up" the communication process. The family of semiotic approaches includes an interest in organizing communication practices into separate codes (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). Aesthetic codes are said to be applicable to certain objects including painting, photography, sculpture, architecture, and literature. In other words, the aesthetic domain is composed of certain objects (external things) that require a semiotic code of representations (internal experience and external reports) appropriate to them. This separation of codes makes it difficult to inquire into the *process* of social action when everyday interactions include encounters with such objects.

By contrast, Dewey (1925/1958, 1934a) argued for the unity of communication. All communication has, in his words, an "instrumental and a consummatory" dimension (Dewey, 1925/1958, p. 202). He said music is organized sound, dance is organized motion, and painting and sculpture are organized shapes and colors. Thus, all communication will have an integral artistic dimension. The art of a simple greeting may be simple and prosaic, but that is part of its meaning. The same words with a lilting voice and a smile may mean something very different. Consider a board meeting in an organization. It takes place in a room with large paintings. The chairperson directs attention to a stern, brooding oil painting of the company's founder exactly at the point when the managers in attendance are reminded that they are part of a family. As the managers look to the painting, several of them think, "Yeah, a distant, controlling, unfeeling, family." This leads to particular interpretations of what the chairperson says, and particular ways to respond.

The relationship between the aesthetic and the social is, however, more profound than the possible role of aesthetic objects in social action (see Cronen

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[19]Similarly, CMM (Cronen, 1995, 2004; Pearce & Cronen, 1980) takes the position that the logic of social action formed in communication is, fundamentally, a moral logic.

& Szivos, 2002).[20] If music is organized sound, then there is a music to the everyday communication in which we are engaged. If dance is organized movement, then there is a dance-like quality to our movements and gestures. The aesthetic dimension may not be the most important point of focus for a particular inquiry, but it is always present. In an earlier essay (Cronen, 1995), I briefly reported the case of a couple considering divorce. When interviewed, each spouse had nothing but praise for the other's supportiveness, responsibility, help with the children, intelligence, and so on. The interviewer became convinced, as did we observing behind one-way glass, that they were sincere. The interviewer met with the therapy team and me during a break. Able to think of nothing else, I suggested playing back the video of the couple at a faster speed and without sound to look at the nonverbal features. It was the clumsiest looking "dance" you could image. They could not seem to even take each other's hand without fumbling. We sent the interviewer back with the idea to ask aesthetic questions starting with this one: "When was the last time the two of you created a truly beautiful, moving moment together?" The couple looked at each other and laughed nervously. After years together they could think of only one such moment—about a year before they married! The problem here was their inability to achieve a relationship that was artistic as well as instrumental.

Dewey (1934a, 1934b) argued that life without art, that is without the ability to create moments of joy and excitement that move us, is not fully human life. This, he said, holds for our work lives as well as our personal lives. A good work situation is not simply one in which a person totals up achievements on a ledger. A good work environment is one in which the rhythms of activity include moments that Dewey (1925/1958, 1934a) termed *consummatory experiences*. In such moments, diverse and often scattered elements of experience are unified in a powerfully moving way. Such an experience not only unites diverse strands of activity, but also opens new possibilities for the future. What makes a poem moving? In just a few words it produces a new way of integrating experience such that we can see aspects of our life possibilities in new ways. Of course, once we say that new ways of living are opened, we enter into the moral domain: How will we live? How should we live?

Mark Merswa (2006) studied a unit of an organization in which employees report great on-the-job stress caused by unexpected assignments with nearly impossible deadlines. Yet, the turnover rate for employees was very low. One of the features of the work experience that Merswa documented is the way employees worked together intensely during these times of stress. When a deadline was met, they had an immense, powerful feeling of accomplishment. They talked about how impossible the task was, how stressed they were, how well they worked

together, and how impossible it would be for things to function in the larger organization without them. Accomplishing the task included elevated, perhaps even unhealthy stress. The resolution of that stress by meeting the deadline elevated fairly routine, not highly paid work to a consummatory moment. That moment made unified sense of what they undergo. It integrated their experience with stories of who they are as a team, and their worth as individuals. The experience took the work group in certain future directions. Their relationships with each other were sustained and developed. Their disinterest in finding new forms of employment persisted. Their stories about management's bad planning and how they must save it from itself was reconstituted.

Perhaps you are thinking, are these ways of moving into the future really good? Undergoing high stress and accepting low pay does not seem like optimal employment. My claim is not that consummatory experiences always point into the future in ways that open up *new* affordances. Some moments, like this one, may be highly restrictive and, as a form of life, surely questionable.

The Continuity Alternative

Darwin's mode of explanation gave James a way to escape the regress problem in dualism. Darwin's work was highly empirical. It depended on detailed observation and description, in other words, "thick" description. It also showed ways of dealing with difference without making sharp dichotomous moves. In evolution, a new species is distinct from its ancestors, but not discontinuous from them. Of course, we can identify and distinguish a person from a chimp, but that does not deny the fact that we have about 98% of our DNA in common. By focusing on evolutionary process, one focuses on the connections created in the process of life. In James' (1909/1996) words:

> No mere external go-between can logically connect. What occurs must be more intimate. The hooking [of one entity to another] must be a penetration, a possession. The relation must *involve* the terms, each must involve *it*, and merging thus their being in it, they must somehow merge their beings in each other (p. 70)

Notice James' emphasis here. The connections are aspects of the phenomena created inside the process.

How do we learn to think? We do so in the process of acting with others, and later, by extension, with books, games, mass media, and so on. Dewey (1896) applied the idea that each event enters into formation of the next in order to critique the reflex arc. Consider the example of a lioness chasing prey. Some of the lioness' ability to hunt (that part which is learned) is formed inside the process of hunting. Dewey suggested that we look closely at the process of the

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[20]This essay is currently published only in Danish. An English version is available from the first author.

hunt. He focused on the lioness' perceptions. Is a perception a response to what the prey does or is it a stimulus to action or both? The lioness knows what to look for. She does not observe her world and then wonder whether these passive observations have anything to do with finding food. Perceptions are skilled responses integral to an activity. As Mead (1938/1972) observed, a perception has within it all the elements of an act. It is done in a certain way in anticipation of what will come next. Only particular features of the prey's behaviors have a role in the forming coordination guiding the lioness. The lioness must know how to observe in a way that is anticipatory. The same can be said for the prey. Dewey's analysis is highly suggestive in several important ways:

1. The lioness uses an evolving pattern of coordination to adjust her actions.

2. The significance of a behavior depends on the pattern of action in which it participates. A stimulus is only such in light of a response and vice versa.

3. Perception, memory, movement, and recall are integral aspects of the action.

4. The lioness, like her prey, acts into the actions of the prey, informed by experience and instinct. To the extent that what the lioness does depends on experience in addition to instinct, that experience is interactive, not intra-psychic. It is informed by the prey's moves as well as her responses to them.

Mead (1938/1972) said the most important contribution of evolutionary thought for pragmatism was this: Change should be explained inside the dynamics of natural systems. The inquirer does not appeal to forces or objects outside the natural system. For example, consider the evolution of plants in an atmosphere that is rich in carbon dioxide but poor in oxygen. This was very good for plants. Plants take in carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. This opened up the possibility for, but did not mechanically cause, the evolution of animals. Evolution is a branching, not a ladder reaching for any preset end. Each evolutionary move creates affordances and constraints for the future—not a linear causation. A change, such as a large and lateralized brain, may do much more than solve particular survival problems. It can open all sorts of new possibilities, none of them fully determined. Notice how consistent this is with a social construction point of view. What pragmatist social constructionists did was to bring evolutionary ways of thinking into the social domain. Let us again summarize for a moment.

1. Change occurs inside the dynamics of a process. This includes ways of thinking, perceiving, feeling, and recalling.

2. Interacting beings act into each other's actions mutually in-forming (forming from inside) those actions. Thus, no action can be understood on its own, out of context.

3. The communication process is a complex one involving the active coordination of perception, thinking, feeling, moving, recalling. Each must be understood in the context of the process.

4. The processes of life are never finished. Perfections are dead ends (see Cronen, 1995).

5. The logic of change is created inside the process of change.

6. All features of a living interaction point into the future.

A continuity account of communication must include two reflexively interrelated dimensions. There must be an account of the persons in communication whose abilities are formed and forming inside the communication. These abilities embrace the integration of aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual abilities. To be coherent, such a theory must also treat responsive actions mutually informing the abilities of the other.

The Continuity Account of Meaningful Action: The Brain, Thought, and Behavior Dimension

At this point it is useful to extend the statement of the continuity position focusing on the neurophysiological dimension of joint action. Nothing in Wittgenstein, Dewey, or James precludes investigation of our embodiment (Harré & Tissaw, 2005). What is precluded is the idea that such knowledge will give us predictive power for situated social action. In the continuity perspective, images and ideas are not mental "things" we have in our heads that must be somehow related to material, embodied things. Language, feeling, perception, recall, and behavior are aspects of a unified process by which persons are connected in the world including the formation of human relationships. At a particular moment of lived experience a person acts into the complexity of the other's actions. Neurological activity (habits created in social experience) functions to organize perceptions, memory, feeling, and thinking into coherent behavior. This ability *may* (but not always does) include within it creating a mental image, or internal language as tools to guide the social process of expression (Wittgenstein, 1953). Of course, we need not always use images, and inner language is not always part of the process. For example, we have learned so well how to exchange greetings

that we do not have to reflectively rehearse, "Hi, how are ya?" when we meet a friend. We simply have learned to do this and typically, we grasp the meaning "in a flash" (Wittgenstein, 1953). We do not decode or translate one mental object into another. In nanoseconds we employ complex habits to act responsively and protectively (Calvin, 1997). That learned responsiveness includes emotional and aesthetic responses that are part of the coherence of life.

We do not reject the usefulness of reflections or of the creation of principles to guide us. These are important things we learn to *do*, not hidden processes behind all social action. We can learn the habits of recalling an image or reflecting on a principle before speaking under particular circumstances.

The Continuity Account of Meaningful Action: The Joint Action Dimension

In this perspective, a conversation is not a sequence of "messages," each following the other like a string of beads. Earlier in this chapter I presented Dewey's (1922/1960a) account of communication as "joint action" (Shotter, 1993). Now we can describe the continuity of the joint action idea and the ideas about thinking and feeling described earlier. Each person's contribution to a conversation in-forms the emerging action in three interrelated ways:

1. The way conversants respond is in-formed by their understanding of
   a. the emerging context,
   b. the previous utterance/action, and
   c. anticipation of Other's next response.

2. The abilities of both conversants are developed by the activity of forming responses in situated action.

3. The abilities of both conversants are reflexively in-formed by the responses of the other.[21]

4. Each action points into the future creating affordances and constraints for the next moment of action.

Now we need to consider how images and mental rehearsals enter into this responsive joint action. When we rehearse words silently, we are doing something that is a phase of a learned, unified process. We have all had the experience of thinking through some language, only to find that when we actually utter the

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[21]CMM theory's heuristic model (Cronen, 2004; Cronen & Szivos, 2001) provides one way of analyzing data in light of this complex reflexive action. See especially the place of "logical forces" in the model.

words to another or write them down on paper, the internally rehearsed language is often inadequate to the public moment. For example, sometimes we think we know just how to write a certain part of a paper. However, when we begin to actually substantialize those thoughts on the computer screen, we sometimes find that our ideas are still being formed as we attend to the way one sentence must follow another, how the words are arranged and how that sentence will open and close ways of following it with another sentence. What we write, including how we are thinking is being formed in the process of utterance. The same holds true for oral performance. Thinking and feeling are *substantialized* into public behavior and *realized* as meaningful in the responses of others (Calvin, 1997; Cronen, 1995). Recall Pine's account of a man offering a woman a rose. Isn't it a bit silly to say what that the man is doing is representing romance to her with the signifier rose? What is obvious to both is that the man is romancing her, acting into her actions with words, gestures, and a rose!

The Place of Nonconscious Habits in the Continuity Account.

In one of his best known essays, James (1904) argued that consciousness is not something we have, but rather something we do. Otherwise, we would have to accept the nonsensical idea that we can be conscious, but not of anything at all. Dewey adopted and developed this position. He discussed consciousness as "organized habits of action" (Dewey, 1922/1960a; see also Wittgenstein, 1953) that are learned in interaction with the environment and with other persons. We learn forms of consciousness in social action for social action (Dewey, 1922/1960a). In communication, we are especially concerned with reflective consciousness, or the ability to explain our own behaviors. In systemic, social constructionist inquiry, we treat consciousness as the ability to tell a story about connections in the abilities we use. We may also learn not to tell a story about certain connections. For example, Myrna Cronen (personal communication, 1998) reported a case in speech and language pathology in which her student clinician was working with a problem of language delay. The young mother talked very little to her child. She said she just somehow felt silly talking to the child and did not know why. Cronen gave her student clinician some suggestions about what to ask. The young mother said that when she was a child, her mother had made fun of her for talking to her dolls when they could not talk back. Of course, sometimes it is facilitating to *not* reflect on certain habits at particular times. This is evident in language games as diverse as learning an athletic skill and falling in love.[22]

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[22]This treatment is very different than the Freudian view in which the unconscious is treated as a separate domain that affects the conscious domain thus providing causal explanations of behavior (Bouveresse, 1995).

Meaningful Action, Continuity, and the "Ability Model"

From a continuity perspective, meaning is treated as an *ability to do something with others* under material conditions. Abilities form inside the process of joint action. Harré and Tissaw (2005) offered the useful analogy of a car's engine to illuminate the ability model of meaning, contrasting it with the container model. Suppose you buy a new car and you say to a friend that its engine has 285 horsepower. You open the hood and your friend asks, "Where is the horsepower you say it has? Is it inside that long shiny thing?" Here the grammatical form has led your friend astray. Generating horsepower, like using and forming meaning, is an ability the car can manifest under particular conditions. It is not something material or immaterial contained inside the car. Similarly, meanings and ideas are not things inside our heads that need to be represented and expressed, any more than horsepower is inside the car waiting to be released. Meanings and ideas, like feelings and recollections, are things we can do responding to others in situated action. It is tempting to be distracted from this continuous way of thinking by the common experience, "It's right on the tip of my tongue." From this we traditionally infer that the word must be "in there." But this is only one way to talk about the experience. Instead of saying, "I can't find the words I want," say "I can't quite form my response."

Frequently Raised Questions About Communication and Social Construction.

This extended account of the continuity position allows us to respond to several important questions that are typically raised in communication theory and to do so from a social construction point of view.

Is Language an Independent Area of Study? Given how much attention is given to language in both philosophy and social research, it is important to ask whether language is an independent object of study. Wittgenstein (1953) said it is not. The line between language and nonlanguage is indistinct. Any effort spent trying to establish criteria that precisely separates language from nonlanguage is wasted.

Wittgenstein offered the example of a stone mason working with an apprentice. Their exchanges about what the apprentice should pass to the mason is made up of only a few words and hardly any full sentences. However, there is much use of gesturing, nonverbal sounds, and orientation by glance. These are meaningful, and indeed central to the success of the work. The work is well coordinated. The apprentice is learning. These behaviors are meaningful because the two individuals know how to go on. They know how to coordinate. To analyze such an exchange requires a method that integrates movements, feelings, grunts, and glances into the process of communication. A far better distinction is that between meaning and nonsense. That distinction is easy to make. We are making nonsense when others do not know how to go on from what we have said (Wittgenstein, 1953).

How Can Meaning Have Stability and How Can It Change? If meaning is use, how does the meaning of language, gestures, or music have any stability? As we have seen, stability cannot come from recalling principles or images correctly because these do not determine their own application. Even repetition will not guarantee the next application. Wittgenstein, like Dewey gave a social response to this seeming problem. Rules[23] are created as the abilities of an indivdual are substantialized into public expression, and realized in the responses of others. In Wittgenstein's phrase, we know the meaning when we know how to "go on." Dewey (1925/1958) expressed it this way: "to know the meaning is to come into agreement in action" (p. 179). In this responsive way, individuals together create and recreate meaning as they act together. Meaning is thus interpersonal and never final or finished.

Cronen and Lang (1994) reported a case in which a young man was troubled by his inability to connect with his male peers. He reported an incident at his boarding school in which his classmates were planning a prank. He did not feel as though he fit in and so did not join them. The interviewer focused on the term *unable* and the young man's story. The interviewer reframes nonparticipation as a "heroic choice," choosing to do the right thing. The conversation continues making new stories about nonparticipation and creating ambiguity about whether what the young man did was a choice, "showing" the others he did not approve of their prank, or an inability beyond his control. Change comes as we act into a situation. It is unavoidable. Intervention is acting into the situation with the goal of opening up new possibilities and closing others. In other words, the interviewer is joining with the young man in communication to reconstruct the process in which they are engaged—a coordinated management of meaning. Here the goal of the interviewer was to destabilize meaning in order to open new possibilities.

To understand meaning is to examine the communicative practices among persons, not representations in individual's heads. We must be as interested in how meaning is actively made somewhat stable under differing conditions just as we are interested in change. In this way, meanings are *not* used *for* social construction, rather the conjoint management of meaning *is* social construction. A further implication that should be emphasized is that meaning has a future as well as a past and a present. As James (1912/1996a) said, meaning has a "more

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[23]In my judgment, using a "rule" (in Wittgenstein's sense of that term) encompasses what Dewey called a set of "habits." That is because following a rule requires complex socially learned habits of perception, recall, feeling, thought, and so on. This author knows of nothing in Wittgenstein's later writing that is inconsistent with this interpretation. The focus on "rules" or on the complex "habits" involved in using them seems complimentary.

to come" dimension and thus continuity across contributions to social actions as well as across personal and public processes.

How Can We Understand Intentionality in Communication? In the Darwinian perspective that animates continuity thinking, living creatures are in constant motion, adapting and accommodating to other features of the environment (including members of their own species), while other features of the environment adapt and accommodate to them. Thus, all action is intentional in the basic sense that it points beyond itself. The termination of adaptation and accommodation is the end of life. In a continuity perspective we do *not* have to ask *why* persons move, think, talk, perceive, recall, and so on. What we need to explain is how action takes the forms we observe. Meaningful action always has intentionality: It points beyond the moment into the future.

But how do we learn to form the "ends-in-view," to use Dewey's (1925/1958) felicitous phrase, that are created and changed inside the communication process? This is important, because in a social construction orientation, ends are not outside communication to be attained by it. They are created inside communication forming new possibilities and requirements therein. How do we learn to have intentions in light of these socially constructed ends? Consider the case of a mother who puts her finger in her baby's hand. The baby has a reflex that requires it to grab the finger. However, the parent is unlikely to say, "good reflex" (although a doctor may say that in an episode of examination). The parent may say, "Oh, baby has my finger." When the baby's attention is diverted it lets go, so the parent says, "I have it back, "and then repeats the process. What the parent is doing is creating a practice for teaching the child how to have intentions.

Notice how the continuity perspective, through its integration of feelings, thoughts, and actions, reconnects communication to the moral area. Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, in McKeon, 1966) said that one of the factors that makes the arts of *praxis* unique, in addition to their contingent character, is their moral dimension. He said that the reason we study such arts is to make life better. Meanings, including those powerful consummatory moments described earlier, always point into the future. That is the moral question: How shall we go on living together?

Is Social Construction a Solipsistic Approach to Communication? It is possible to create a version of social construction that is solipsistic. However, that is not necessary. Social construction can be realist without being objectivist. Again, Dewey and Wittgenstein are in accord about this. Dewey (1922/1960a; 1929/1960b) endorsed an "experimental" attitude. He said that the ideas we create must be tested in action. Such tests will never determine a final true description of reality. But, they will provide data we can use to make informed choices. Using Newtonian science we would have disasters in space exploration. This does not mean science will give us a final vocabulary for a true world picture.

Today, physicists are in radical disagreement about theories and their relationships. Wittgenstein (1969) had a similar kind of response to his colleague E. G. Moore's Cartesian-style argument that he could not be sure there was a wall in front of him. All he could know was that he had a thought in his head that there was a wall. Wittgenstein responded like this: Why doesn't he try walking though it? If he tries a few times he will find that all his data supports the idea that there is a wall and none will contradict it. It is dualism, not social construction, that tends most strongly toward solipsism.

Can we "make good" on these ideas in rigorous inquiry? In no way is it asserted that there can be only one way to do so. Here I present one method of data collection that is consistent with the social constructionist orientation. It is presented to illustrate the possibilities. It is called "circular questions" and been used and developed by practitioners in many countries for nearly 30 years.

Methodological Implications for Social Construction

One method of gathering data that is consistent with a nondualistic, social construction orientation is "circular questions." This is a method of interviewing first developed by the Milan Associates (1977) and further developed by others, including Tomm (1987, 1988), Jones and Asen (2000), Boscolo and Bertando (2002), Cronen and Lang (1994), and Hedges (2005). It has been applied in such diverse domains as intercultural communication research, family therapy, and many others. The fundamental ideas of circular question are these: Persons live in relationship to others. Relationships are the communication processes that people live. Ways of feeling, thinking, perceiving, and so on, are constructed in relationships. To understand an idea, a feeling, or an utterance we need to explore how it functions in lived experience with others, including the interviewer who joins with the system for particular reasons. The focus of this kind of interviewing is on how meaningful action is created, sustained, and changed moment by moment in *joint* action. This focus on temporality is consistent with William James' (1890/1950) cautionary story of the "psychology fallacy." To commit this fallacy is to make the mistake of thinking that the principles that seem adequate to explain a finished product are adequate to explain the process by which the product was brought into existence.

Circular questions are circular in three basic ways: First, they focus on making connections among the persons involved. When interviewing a working group, for example, questions are asked that connect persons to each other and their activities. The interviewer literally circles around the group making these connections. Second, they make connections in time. The interviewer makes circular connections among the past, present and future. Third, the interviewer makes circular connections among person positions connecting and moving persons from

first or second person to third person, and from speaking for their own position to speaking as the voice of the family, group, or other reference point.

Three Kinds of Circularity

MAKING CIRCULAR CONNECTIONS AMONG PARTICIPANTS. This is done in a way consistent with an interactive view of language and meaning. Comparisons among persons are often made like this: "Who appears most disturbed when John gets to watch the television program he wants?" "Who is next most disturbed?" "Who is most likely to play the role of peacemaker when there is disagreement over what to watch?" "What is your story about your father watching television all evening?" "Father, what is your story about that?" When circular questions are used with two or more respondents, questions like these are followed by asking a different person whether he or she agrees with the response. It is important that connections among persons are made in light of the sequence of action. This is investigated by asking such questions as, "After mother tries to find a compromise, what happens next, who speaks next?" "How does he or she sound?" "What does he or she say?"

MAKING CIRCULAR CONNECTIONS IN TIME. Circularity in time is very important. Every utterance has a past, a presence, and a projection into the future (Dewey, 1925/1958). Pointing beyond the moment of utterance is intrinsic to the meaning of the utterance itself. An interviewer may compare the past to the present by asking the sister a question like this: "What is your relationship with your mother like now, compared to how it was before your brother watched so much 'awful stuff,' " "If things continue as they have been, what will your relationship to your father be like in 5 years?" The use of time-oriented questions should not be limited to how the past compares to the present. Those interviewed can also be asked to imagine a future based on the assumption that present patterns continue. Questions can circle back from the present or anticipated future to an earlier time. A person's hopes for a better future might be developed with a series of questions. The developing story about the future could then be connected to the present via questions like this one: "A year from now, what would you want your father to be saying about you to his friends?" Comparisons across different persons' stories are very useful. For example, "Your brother describes a period of time in which he says you became more violent during family disagreements. How would you describe that same period of time?"

To facilitate making connections in time among individuals it is useful to elicit detailed accounts of crucial episodes in a form like a play script. This allows for a closer look at how meaning is evolving. It is my experience in working with therapists and consultants that taking the temporality of action clearly into account suggests ways of understanding that are obscured by a time-static account of relationships. With a detailed account of an episode one can ask, "What was

the first thing you noticed when your son came home late?" Such a question allows exploration of what the parent has learned to notice within all the detail of the son's appearance. The interviewer might turn to the son and ask, "When your mother sees you come in and says, 'You are late and who have you been with?' what idea do you have about what she is doing?" Here are three other possible questions addressed to the daughter, "What would be the best thing you could hear from your mother when you come home a little late?" "How would your relationship be different if she asked that question?" "How would your life be in 5 years from now if your mother never asked this kind of question?"

MAKING CIRCULAR CONNECTIONS IN POSITION. Position refers to whether a conversant acts from first- or second-person directly engaged position in a conversation, or acts from a third-person, observer-like role. Inviting someone to take a different position than is his or her usual custom encourages new ways of thinking, feeling, and attending. Suppose Jones, a salesman, often argues with his manager Smith. Salespersons Wilson and Taylor typically stay silent and do not enter into the ongoing arguments. The consultant, however, thinks that Wilson and Taylor are affected by the arguments. The consultant decides to move the manager and Jones from the first- and second-person positions of direct participants in the arguments to third-person positions. The consultant might ask Wilson questions such as the following: "Who do you think is most concerned when your manager and Jones argue?" "What is your idea about how the Sales Department will be in 2 years if they continue to argue?" Then to Taylor, "Do you agree with Wilson that the Sales Department will be more ———— if the arguing continues?" The consultant is trying, by means of such questions, to have the manager and Jones listen to accounts of their arguments from third-person positions.

Position also refers to the question, for whom is a conversant speaking? The consultant might have noticed that the manager, Smith, often speaks with the voice of the organization in arguments with Jones. For example, "Look, Jones, it is a long held tradition in this company ————." Jones then invokes the voice of the experienced salesperson like this: "People like me who have spent a lot of time on the road talking to real clients know ————." The consultant might invite Jones or one of the others to speak with the voice of the organization, "What do you think is the organizational position on that?" The manager may be encouraged to speak with the voice of the experienced salesperson. For example, "Mr. Smith, suppose a highly experienced and skilled sales person from another organization could listen to us. What might he or she want to say as the voice of the sales staff?"

The interviewer should also reflect on his or her position in the system. The interviewer is usually accorded an expert position, sometimes in order to defeat the expert. The interviewer does not always have to appear to present him or herself in the expert role. It is very useful sometimes to take a "one-down"

position. For example, suppose a group seems intent on being "one-up" on the interviewer. Rather than struggle for the "one-up" position, it may be useful say, "You really have a very complex situation. I need your help. How can you help me understand it better?"

Guidelines for Circular Questions.

There are several general guidelines to follow when using this approach. These guidelines further explain the nature of circular interviewing and its fit with the nondualistic orientation.

EXPLORE THE "GRAMMAR" OF USE, DON'T GET "INSIDE" A PROBLEM. Wittgenstein described the way we learn to communicate by learning "rules" for how to make coherent connections within one's own discourse and with the responses of the other. When we are interested in understanding a word or phrase, like "feeling anxious," we want to know its use. We might ask, "What is going on when you start to notice you are feeling anxious?" "When in the conversation did you begin feeling this way?" "What happens next when this feeling begins?" "Who first notices you're feeling anxious?" "What is your story about showing anxiety in this organization?" In circular questioning, the interview *embeds* in each question the key terms contained in the last response, staying with the actual words used. Remember, we are not trying to find out what a behavior or utterance "really means" inside persons' heads. We are exploring meaning as use. Therefore, we might ask, "How do others respond differently when they notice you are feeling anxious?" "How is the conversation affected when Tony's anxiety is observed?"

We do not interview into so-called mental states. We do not say, "Tell me more about your anxiety." Instead we might ask, "When in the course of the conversation do you notice your anxiety getting worse?" Peter Lang (1994) used this phrase with his students: "Never interview into a problem or pathology." That is important because, if we do so, we will probably participate in elaborating the problem. For the same reason we limit our use of "why" questions, avoiding questions such as: "Why do you think your wife is angry so often?" or "What else is going wrong here, can you tell me more?" These beg the respondent to 'be smart' and develop an elaborated account that may be harder to change.

EXPLORE THE LOGICAL FORCES IN THE SYSTEM. The grammatical abilities of communicating individuals join to create the overall logical of the system. As we act into the actions of others we create affordances and constraints for the formation of responses. Circular questions can be used to explore the co-construction of this "logical force." Consider the classic case of the husband who responds to his wife's accounts of difficulties at work with immediate efforts to provide a solution for her. An interviewer might ask, "What would be different if you did not offer a solution?" and the husband responds, "I would have

failed her, a man should be able to solve problems if he loves his wife." Such a response suggests the hypothesis that the husband feels a strong obligation to solve the problem when it is presented, and that the obligation to respond in this way is internally related to ideas about the role of a loving husband and what it means to be a competent man. The force of this obligation is stronger than that of the negative response he gets from his wife.

TREAT NONVERBAL FEATURES AS MEANINGFUL ASPECTS OF THE GRAMMAR. Tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, visible tension, and silence are all examples of nonverbal features that are meaningful in conversation. Silence, for example, can be treated like any other behavior or utterance. For example, [addressed to a participant who did speak] "How do you understand Jane choosing to be silent when you asked the group about the social skills of new engineer?" "How did her silence make the conversation different?" "At what point in the conversation did you become aware that Jane was remaining silent?" "Who first noticed her silence?" "What did they do next?"

Merswa's project described earlier is a good example of exploring the grammar of showing "stress" typically by body tension, tone of voice, and movement. Perception can be similarly explored. For example, "If a friend was visiting your home, what might he notice in your son's comment about school?" "If you focus on those features of your son's comments, what could you do differently?" The next two questions are examples of investigating the meaning of a consummatory moment: "When you and your spouse had that powerful moment together, watching the sunset on Arroyo Burro Beach, what features of life seemed to fit together better than before?" "After that moment, what was different in your relationship"?

INTERVIEW FROM THE POSITION OF CURIOSITY. Cecchin (1987) originally recommended a stance of neutrality. Of course, an interviewer must not take sides, but it is difficult to pretend neutrality if interviewing a spouse abuser or a tyrannical boss. We can, however, take a stance of curiosity about how the abuse system works and how it is sustained. For example, if an interviewer is working with a boy who has harassed a classmate, the systemic interviewer might question such as: "Where were you when you said those things?" "Who were you with?" "What happened next?" "What do you think the other boy was feeling when you said —————?" "What were you feeling?" "What is different in you life if you could not get these feelings?"

LOOK FOR DIFFERENCES AND CHANGES. Ask, "How are things different now between you and the principal than they were when you started teaching here?" "When did things start to change?" "What was going on when you noticed them change?" "Are things better now or worse?" "Who is most involved, who least?"

CHANGE CONSCIOUSNESS AND HIGHLIGHT ABILITIES. In a social construction orientation, consciousness is not a possession, it is an ability to do something (James, 1904). It is the ability to tell a story about connections. For example,

an individual may be able to report that he once fell in a well, and that he now rejects moving to the country. However, circular questions may facilitate reporting the connection.

Earlier in this chapter, the notion of "ability" was introduced as a good metaphor to replace mental contents. Often it is important to help interviewees overcome the feeling that they are "stuck" in unpleasant patterns. Elspeth McAdam (2006) used a technique she called *ability spotting* with circular questions. It is used to help interviewees to focus on abilities they exhibit and make them *conscious* by creating a story connecting abilities to situations. The idea is to help the client not only become conscious of the ability, but to also extend it. McAdam might hear a manager respond to a question by saying that a subordinate was not attending closely to a task. She might respond, "You seem to have the ability to note small changes in your subordinates. When did that ability allow you to see potential in some subordinates that others did not see?" Here McAdam would be spotting an ability and then connecting it to a positive use.

INTERVIEW A SINGLE PERSON AS A MEMBER OF A SYSTEM. Sometimes it is necessary to interview persons individually. There may be power relationships or other reasons why this is necessary. In that case the individual is still interviewed as a participant in a system. For example, suppose a consultant is interviewing an employee about his or her conflict with a high-level manager. The employee can still be interviewed as part of a system even if no one else from the organization is present. For example, "What is your idea about the changes in your department?" "What do you think are your manager's ideas about the changes?" "When you and your co-worker argue, what is going on, how does it start?" "How do you think your co-worker would answer this question?" "Who else is present?" "How are things different for you (your other co-workers, your family) since the conflict began?"

IDENTIFY WHAT IS BEST IN A SYSTEM. Circular questions are often used to find the best things going on in an organization or family so those good practices can be developed. A consultant might ask, "What was the most useful conversation you had with a subordinate lately?" "What was going on when you decided to have that conversation?" "What made that conversation different from others?" "When in the conversation did you start feeling that it was going well, what did you notice in your own actions that was different?" "What did your subordinate say or do that gave you the idea to continue that way?" It is important to see how, in these last two questions the interviewer is trying to foster a view of competence that is *co*-creative and thus consistent with the interactive, continuity perspective.

ALL QUESTIONS DO NOT HAVE TO APPEAR CIRCULAR. What is important is to understand the social construction process. It is perfectly fine say, "Can you tell me more about that?" or "I am surprised that you are able to do —————. Help me to understand that." At time just repeating back some of what you have

heard encourages the interviewee to say more. Beyond these general guidelines, it is important to focus on just what makes this process circular.

The forgoing is meant only to be suggestive. It is not my claim that circular questioning is the only qualitative method consistent with a continuity perspective. This method illustrates the possibility of working within a continuity perspective. Circular questions alone do not provide an analytic framework for organizing data into systemic hypotheses (Pearce, 1994b). The practical theory that W. Barnett Pearce and I have been developing, called CMM, provides such an analytic framework articulated to the use of circular questions (see Cronen, in press). An alternative to the structured, theoretical approach of CMM is John Shotter's (2004) "rhetorical responsiveness" approach, which has the same social construction orientation. Gergen's extensive publications also offer less structured alternatives (e.g., see Gergen, 2001a; see also, Gergen, 1992).

GENERATE SYSTEMIC HYPOTHESES. The inquirer wants to develop an account of how a system of communicating persons works. The goal is never to determine "who is mad or who is bad." If you were trying to help in a dispute between two student roommates, you would begin by trying to figure out how they came into conflict. Even if you could determine that someone is to blame, that would only make things worse if they must go on living in the same space. Tentative hypotheses are developed from the data. These hypotheses are systemic, they are explanations of how the system accounts for all relevant participants. Often alternative hypotheses are formulated on the bases of the same data, so that the interviewer is not stuck with one perspective for the continuation of the interview. Further questions develop and test the viability of hypotheses. CMM theory offers one way to organize date into systemic hypotheses (see Cronen, 2001). However, some researchers and practitioners prefer a less-structured way to organize this kind of data.

And Back to the Future

The foregoing chapter is an effort to clear away unhelpful puzzles and suggest some different ways to proceed. Wittgenstein argued that there are no genuine philosophical puzzles. By that he meant that no puzzles are simply endemic to life no matter how we look at things. The puzzles we encounter are not the products of reality. They are the products of the language games we choose. The various methods and theories that have been created under the rubric of social construction will generate their own puzzles to work through. What we can expect of these tools is that they generate more productive problems than those attendant on the dualistic tradition.

As argued earlier, social constructionism is not intrinsically solipsistic. Indeed, by restoring the continuity of meaning and action, the instrumental and

the artistic it opens the way for inquiry into communication that fits Aristotle's account of why we study the practical doings of persons. He said there is only one reason, and that is to make life better. Social construction shares with pragmatism the idea that *truth* is a rather boring notion. After all, what do "true" things have in common? Only their claim to truth. Much more exciting ideas are use, functionality, and heuristic value. An idea or method that can be used to make life better is an important idea (James, 1909/1961). Dewey (1927) once said that he had a "naturalistic metaphysics" (p. 57) The only phenomena that Dewey and the other contributors took to be bedrock, what must be taken into account in *any* coherent approach to inquiry, are the undergoings, sufferings, and joys of life; the human experience of pain and excitement, happiness and sorrow that are constructed in so many different ways.

Acknowledgments

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