

# **THE DRAMA OF DEVELOPMENT IN INTERVENTION**

**An investigation from the perspective of cultural psychology of  
semiotic mediation**

by

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Dissertation submitted

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## PUBLICATIONS

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- Xu, S. S. & Tateo, L. (accepted). Affectivity from ‘the full vitality of life’: Developing Vygotsky in the Chinese context. *Culture & Education*.
- Xu, S. S. & Tateo, L. (accepted). Between form and content: affective generalization in art. *Revista Pro-Posições*.
- Xu, S. S., Wu, A. & Li, X. W. (2022). Understanding the developing subject in the cultural psychology of education. *Estudos de Psicologia (Campinas)*, 39, e200184.
- Xu, S. S., Wang, J., & Tateo, L. (2021). Dramatizing living-in-the-world: Affective generalization in drama-in-education workshop. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 1-29.
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- Wu, A., & Xu, S. S. (2020). One step further: Where to put the subjectivity of human mind in efforts of integrating psychology?. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 54(3), 597-603.

- Xu, S. S. (2019). Revisiting Bruner's legacy from the perspective of historical materialism. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 53(4), 590-601.
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# ENGLISH SUMMARY

This thesis explores new ways to understand the complexity of development in intervention, especially cultural-aesthetic development in Drama-in-Education (DiE). The present field of intervention is going through a neoliberal rationalization process, with the popularity of evidence-based intervention research as a manifestation. When examined from the narrow means-end scheme, intervention risks being reduced to a direct mode of production. This becomes especially debatable in DiE with all the uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of the drama space.

Cultural psychology of semiotic mediation (CPSM) is adopted as the theoretical and methodological lens to resume and capture the systemic, holistic, subjective and intentional nature of development in intervention. It theorizes the individual as an intra-personal system being nested in and actively developing from its relation with the environment. Setting from the systemic view, this thesis introduces and integrates ideas from different traditions:

First, the notions of SHI (势) and SHUN SHI (顺势) from Chinese philosophy are introduced. SHI represents individual's developmental propensity, and SHUN SHI is to follow and transform the dynamic evolving process of SHI. SHI foregrounds the becoming dimension derived from the tendency of historical development. This discussion brings in the condition-consequence scheme, highlighting intervention as a complex interplay between directionality and possibility. Second, targeting on the development of the intra-personal system, Vygotsky's theorization of intellect-affect development from the primary vital whole is examined from two sides: for self-control and for aesthetic transcendence. The existential orientation is introduced to advance the latter into existential psychology of art. This orientation also enables to reconsider the mediating role of language on consciousness by foregrounding the notions of "sensuous consciousness", "existential affective experiences" and "illumination". Third, from the lens of CPSM, three approaches for facilitating new understanding in DiE are distinguished. Empirical data of a DiE session is included for a micro-genetic analysis of participants' dynamic semiotic construction in DiE. DiE is summarized as a hybrid cultural-aesthetic space catalyzing development by mediating experience blending in plural worlds.

This thesis aims to provide 1) a theoretical understanding of the complexity of developmental intervention and cultural-aesthetic development in intervention; 2) a theoretical approach to research DiE for developmental intervention.





# DANSK RESUME

Denne afhandling undersøger nye måder at forstå kompleksiteten af udvikling i intervention, især kulturel-æstetisk udvikling i Drama-in-Education (DiE). Det nuværende interventionsfelt gennemgår en neoliberal rationaliseringsproces med populariteten af evidensbaseret interventionsforskning som en manifestation heraf. Når man ser på intervention ud fra et snævert middel- og målrettet skema, risikerer den at blive reduceret til en direkte produktionsmåde. Denne debat bliver særligt synlig i DiE med al den usikkerhed, kompleksitet og tvetydighed, der kendetegner dramarummet.

Som teoretisk og metodologisk linse anvendes kulturel psykologi af semiotisk formidling (CPSM) til at genoptage og indfange den systemiske, holistiske, subjektive og intentionelle karakter af udvikling i intervention. I denne forståelse anskues individet som et intrapersonelt system, der er indlejret i og aktivt udvikler sig ud fra sin relation til omgivelserne. Med udgangspunkt i det systemiske synspunkt introducerer og integrerer denne afhandling idéer fra forskellige traditioner:

Først introduceres begreberne SHI (勢) og SHUN SHI (顺势) fra kinesisk filosofi. SHI repræsenterer individets udviklingsmæssige tilbøjelighed, og SHUN SHI er at følge og transformere SHI's dynamiske udviklingsproces. SHI lægger vægt på den dimension af tilblivelse, der er afledt af tendensen i den historiske udvikling. Denne diskussion inddrager betingelses- og konsekvensskemaet og fremhæver intervention som et komplekst samspil mellem retningsbestemthed og mulighed. Desuden undersøges Vygotskys teoretisering af intellekt-affekt-udviklingen fra den primære vitale helhed fra to sider: for selvkontrol og for æstetisk transcendens. Den eksistentielle orientering introduceres for at fremme æstetisk transcendens til eksistentiel kunstpsykologi. Denne orientering gør det også muligt at genoverveje sprogets formidlende rolle for bevidstheden ved at fremhæve begreberne "sanselig bevidsthed", "eksistentielle affektive oplevelser" og "illumination". Sidst kan der ud fra CPSM's synsvinkel skelnes mellem tre tilgange til at fremme en ny forståelse i DiE. Empiriske data fra en DiE-session indgår i en mikrogenetisk analyse af deltageres dynamiske semiotiske konstruktion i DiE. DiE opsummeres som et hybridt kulturelt-æstetisk rum, der katalyserer udvikling ved at mediere erfaringsblanding i pluralistiske verdener.

Denne afhandling har til formål at give 1) en teoretisk forståelse af kompleksiteten af udviklingsintervention og kulturel-æstetisk udvikling i interventioner; 2) en teoretisk metode til forskning i DiE for udviklingsintervention.



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# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. THE CRAFT OF DEVELOPMENTAL INTERVENTION

“Every occasion for whatever passes over and goes forward into presencing from that which is not presencing is poiesis, is bringing-forth [Her-vor-bringen]” (Plato, *Symposium*, cited in Heidegger, 1977, p.10).

This quote has followed and inspired me through the whole Phd journey of working on developmental intervention. It was from Heidegger (1977)’s *The Question Concerning Technology*. In this short essay, Heidegger traced the essence of technology back to the ancient “craft”. According to Heidegger, craft is creation, revealing, the poiesis of bringing forth what is not presencing into presencing, and it is the shared origin of technology and art. Heidegger lamented that the thinking mode underlying modern technology has shifted from bringing-forth to challenging-forth. In this shift, we move from a time of cultivation, in which we take care, wait and pray like an old peasant, to ordering, in which we make production plans and control the process to make it the most efficient.

Developmental intervention is also a kind of craft, in the sense of bringing forth what-has-not-yet-developed from what-has-developed. The shift of thinking mode underlying intervention on nature, from cultivation to ordering, has also penetrated into intervention on human development, manifesting in a neoliberal form. Cultivation and ordering implies different social imaginaries and attitudes towards human development. In cultivation, development is generative, vital and can only be guided in a limited sense. While in ordering, development is determined, produced and guaranteed by the law of causality in a means-end frame. This contrast becomes more tense and debatable in the area of art-based intervention, e.g. drama-in-education. When applied for the aim of intervention, drama brings in a fluctuation between being technique and being art, and it both benefits and suffers from this “dirty” richness.

Yet human beings can not be easily reduced to entities and objects being predicted and calculated under the causal logic. Ordering in psychology has the tendency of *entitification* (Valsiner, 2000) as its premise, which abstracts the holistic and dynamic psychological phenomenon into stable categories. Based on these categories, intervention is treated as an instrumental and causal means (Biesta, 2007) to bring development from state A to a pre-defined state B (Valsiner & van der Veer, 2014). In this pre-determination, human agency, intention and the subjective psychological world is dismissed. The ambivalence between human beings as active meaning-making agents and as targets for intervention speaks out all the theoretical and empirical difficulties for developmental intervention researches.

A counteract against this “ordering” move in the neoliberal background locates within the legacy of cultural psychology of semiotic mediation (CPSM, see the Yokohama manifesto, Valsiner, Marsico, Chaudhary, Sato & Dazzani, 2016; manifesto for cultural psychology of education, Marsico, 2017). CPSM conceptualizes human beings not as objects moving mechanically under physical laws, but as intentional and meaning making agents in a constant relation with the context and pre-adapting for uncertainties in the irreversible time (Valsiner, 2014a). The psychological reality, along with the dimension of intentionality, makes developmental intervention a bi-directional dynamic process between internalization and externalization full of uncertainty and possibilities for resistance, innovation and transformation (Marsico, 2018; Marsico & Tateo, 2018). From this perspective, intervention is far away from a direct production. Instead, intervention is indirect and dramatic, as it tries to step in, deal with problems, possible resistance and make changes in a relatively short period of time. Development in intervention is essentially messy, uncertain and complex. Development cannot be ordered, produced or challenged forth directly in intervention according to pre-determined ends. Development can only be brought forth, that is, to be guided, cultivated, catalyzed and transformed indirectly in intervention. All these verbs- guiding, cultivating, catalyzing and transforming- imply the generative dimension of irreversible time, which brings in the problem of historicity and future-orientation into the present intervention context.

Developmental intervention is a poetic craft dealing with vivid, flesh-and-blood human individuals with all the vitality of life. For both general and art-based intervention, it integrates the technique part and the art part- it adopts certain means and methods to intervene the poiesis of life and bring life to a new state. It is a craft working on the interface between the tangible and the intangible, the past and the future, the individual and the social, the inner and the outside. Once we shift from the narrow modern understanding of technology and return back to the ancient mode of craft, rich phenomena would be released and it challenges researchers to strive for new understanding on the whole methodology circle (Valsiner, 2017, p.14)- from basic assumptions, phenomena, theories to constructed methods.

This thesis is mainly a theoretical oriented project. It locates in and sets from the legacy of CPSM to understand the messiness, dirtiness and beautifulness of the drama of development in intervention (drama-in-education as specific). Based on CPSM’s basic tenets of conceptualizing human development, it introduces and integrates different ideas to understand important theoretical questions: the dimension of historicity for future-oriented development, the holistic characteristic of the psychological system as intellect-affect unity, the logic of affective generalization, the unique function of language as mediating semiotics, and the social genesis of individual agency. It is also an experiment of introducing and adopting the lens of CPSM to investigate the rich phenomena in the area of drama-in-education. This introduction is productive in two ways: 1) to provide a strong theoretical approach to capture and analyze the psychological mechanism underlying potential development

in DiE; 2) to advance theoretical construction on semiotic mediation of cultural-aesthetic development in CPSM.

Empirically, the workshop *The green children* is chosen as an example for structural analysis in Article C. A two-hour DiE session *Castle in a box* working with Chinese immigrating teenagers is also included for a close analysis in Article D. This workshop was co-designed and co-conducted by me and my Chinese colleagues before I started this project. Video data on this workshop is interpreted to illuminate the theoretical approach of this thesis.

## 1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THESIS STRUCTURE

In this thesis, I use “drama” in two senses: 1) development in intervention is dramatic; 2) the art of drama-in-education (DiE) used for developmental intervention. The word play of the thesis’s title “The drama of development in intervention” manifests these two concerns. Correspondingly, two general research questions thread through the whole thesis:

*How to understand the complexity of developmental intervention as an indirect process rather than direct production?*

*For DiE as developmental intervention, how can new understanding of I-world relationship be generated from developing individuals’ active meaning making guided by DiE?*

The sub-questions derived from the general research question are:

- 1) How to understand and deal with the developing individual as an active and intentional meaning maker rooted in the basic unit of individual <> environment relation in developmental intervention? (Chapter 5)
- 2) How to theorize psychological development as a holistic system integrating intellect and affect, under cultural and aesthetic mediation? (Chapter 6)
- 3) What are the main approaches in DiE to facilitate development as emergence of new understanding? (Chapter 7)
- 4) How to analyze the complex experiences derived from the bi-directional interaction between the active developing subject and DiE as structured guidance? (Chapter 7)

The relations between the three main chapters and the research questions are depicted in Figure 1-1.

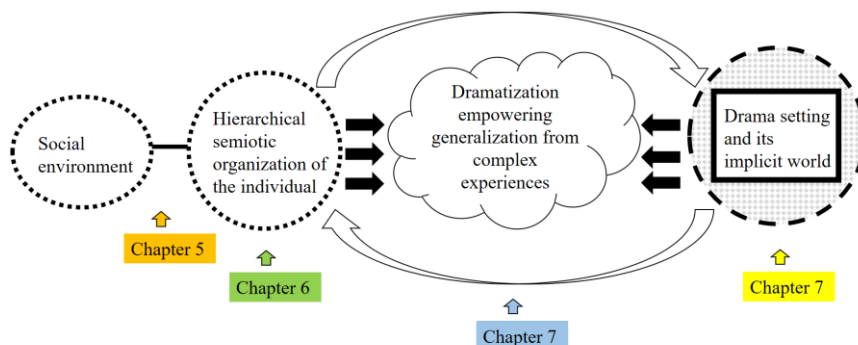


Figure 1-1 Overview of chapters targeting on the research questions

Specifically, this thesis is structured as follow:

**Chapter 1**, as the present chapter, provides a general introduction to the research topic, research questions and my theoretical standpoint.

**Chapter 2** depicts the general background of neoliberal educational reform for investigating developmental intervention. I highlight the neoliberal reform as a rationalization process advanced by a joint force of capital and modern science, which has greatly influenced understanding and practice towards students' problems and brought about a trend of evidence-based intervention research. To overcome this trend, there has been a shift to the systemic perspective, which understands intervention as an event interrupting the developing individual as an open system. Based on this shift, I propose that further researches should continue to pursue a second shift- the subjective shift- to understand the developing subject as an active meaning maker in his continuous relation with the context.

**Chapter 3** is a literature review of using DiE for developmental intervention. The uncertain, intangible, reflective and aesthetic dimensions of drama experience make it hard to fit into the instrumental framework. Drama, as a liminoid space facilitating subjective transformation, provides multiple modes of experiences with different integration of basic psychological functions, e.g. intellect and affect. I argue that the image of individual as an agent and active meaning-maker is relatively missing in the present area, when reviewed from the perspective of developmental intervention. By introducing Gadamer's work, I conclude that development as emergence of new understanding should be conceptualized as being derived from subjects' complex cultural-aesthetic meaning making process guided by the drama setting as a strong other.

**Chapter 4** outlines the general theoretical framework I adopt for this thesis- cultural psychology of semiotic mediation (CPSM). CPSM provides important tenets to conceptualize the psychological world, the individual <> environment relation as a

basic unit, the developmental intervention as a catalytic processes and the cultural-aesthetic experiences in DiE as hierarchical generalization under social and cultural guidance. Based on review in Chapter 3, I provide a model (as shown in Figure 1-1) to theorize using DiE for emergence of new understanding. With this model as a reference point, different ideas are introduced as interlocutors in the following chapters.

The following three chapters contain the four articles included in this thesis. After presenting the articles, a discussion is provided in each chapter to highlight and deepen the ideas explored in the articles. The four articles included are:

**Article A:** Wu, A., Xu, S., & Li, X. (2021). Transforming by Following Forces: Introducing Chinese Philosophy of SHI and SHUN SHI into Developmental and Educational Psychology. *Culture & Psychology*, 27(3), 359-373.

**Article B:** Xu, S. & Tateo, L. (accepted). Affectivity from “the full vitality of life”: Developing Vygotsky in the Chinese context. *Culture & Education*.

**Article C:** Xu, S., & Tateo, L. (2020). Drama-in-Education for understanding: an investigation from the perspective of cultural psychology of semiotic mediation. *Human Arenas*, 1-18.

**Article D:** Xu, S., Wang, J., & Tateo, L. (2021). Dramatizing Living-in-the-World: Affective Generalization in Drama-in-Education Workshop. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 1-29.

**Chapter 5 (Article A)** introduces the concepts of SHI (势) and SHUN SHI (顺势) from Chinese philosophy to explore CPSM’s idea of development as an uncertain becoming process and intervention as a catalytic event. SHI, as the individual’s developmental propensity, is systemic and historical. It targets on the becoming dimension in the being <> becoming relation and amplifies the conditioning effects from the system’s side on intervention. SHUN SHI is to rely on and “exploit” individual’s developmental propensity for intervention. These two concepts provide a new vintage point to examine different models of intervention.

In **Chapter 6 (Article B)**, Vygotsky and the existential orientation become my interlocutors to discuss psychological development based on all the vitality of life. Vygotsky’s work contributes to understand the development of the holistic psychological system and the mediating function of language for development. In Article B, the notion of “intellectual affect” is adopted to designate the development of intellect-affect unity. Generalization of new understanding for developing intellectual affect is divided into two orientations in Vygotsky’s work: self-control and aesthetic transcendence. To clarify the latter, the existential orientation is

introduced to highlight the deep root of aesthetic experiences in individual's daily existential experiences. Existential orientation also helps to re-consider the language  $\diamond$  consciousness relation. This line of investigation brings a new mechanism of development compared with internalization- as illumination of sensuous consciousness.

**Chapter 7** transfers to the area of Drama-in-education and contains two articles. **Article C** outlines and models different approaches in DiE in facilitating “me  $\diamond$  not me  $\diamond$  not not me” experiences for the emergence of new understanding. Three layers of experience are distinguished in DiE for their different potential of generating signs. An empirical workshop is also chosen for structural analysis to show how experiences can be mobilized among the three layers. **Article D** adopts CPSM as the theoretical lens to analyze participants' meaning making process in an empirical workshop on a micro-genetic level. In the discussion part, five phenomenological worlds are distinguished and the uniqueness of DiE in blending experiences for new understanding is discussed.

**Chapter 8** presents an overall discussion and synthesis of the ideas. Limitation of the thesis and direction for future work is also included.



# **CHAPTER 2. CONSTRUCTING THE FIELD: EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERVENTION IN NEOLIBERAL SOCIETY**

In this chapter, I will depict the general neoliberal background for investigating education, development and intervention. I start from a general description of the neoliberal reform in the educational system. By a brief presentation of the ideas of Karl Marx, Georg Lukács and the Frankfurt School, I highlight this reform as a rationalization process advanced by the joint force of the capital and modern science and technology. I will show how this rationalization has changed understanding and practice towards students' psychological and behavioral problems and how mainstream psychology helps to reproduce neoliberalism in the school context. I will also give a critical view to the evidence-based intervention research from the rationalization perspective. As a counteract, there are researchers appealing for a systemic view to conceptualize intervention as an event interrupting the developing individual as an open system. Based on this shift, I propose intervention researches should set from a second subjective shift. That is to understand intra-psychological system and the developing individual as an active meaning maker in the intervention event.

## **2.1. THE GENERAL BACKGROUND OF NEOLIBERAL REFORM IN EDUCATION**

Recent years have seen a growing trend of measurement, instrumentalism and utilitarianism penetrating in educational practice and research (Marsico, 2017, 2018; Xu, Wu & Li, 2022). In this trend, school efficacy and students' performance are evaluated and pursued as the highest goal for educational efforts. With this pursuit, there is an urgent calling for identifying skills, techniques, strategies, instruments and methods to produce desired and pre-supposed goals and aims. Some authors recognize it as outcome-based education, which is derived from a global educational reform directly related to the popularity of the Programme for International Student Assessment (Sahlberg, 2011). According to Sahlberg (2011), to improve educational quality, the global educational reform has manifested six prominent features since 1990s:

- 1) Students' ability in literacy and numeracy is more emphasized;

2) Clear standards with sufficiently high goals for performance are set up for schools, the achievement of which are monitored by external assessment and evaluation;

3) To achieve successfully the pre-determined goals for teaching and learning, methods proven by evidence-based researches become the focus in searching for effective, safe and secure means. Accompanying the measurement culture, there is also a rise of performativity culture in educational practice, in which means become ends with a dominating position of technical validity (Biesta, 2009);

4) Accountability based on tests for schools and teachers are adopted, with pay-per-performance as a popular example. As Biesta (2005, p.57) pointed out that, ““value for money”..... lies at the basis of the emergence of a culture of accountability in education ..., which has brought about ever-tighter systems of inspection and control, and ever-more prescriptive educational protocols”;

5) Reform ideas are brought from external corporate into the educational system, which damages the educational system’s spontaneity and continuity;

6) Control on school is increased for data-collection for the open market and also for policymakers.

Many authors identify this general reform as school education shifting to the ideology of neoliberalism (Boll, 2018; Martínez Virto & Rodríguez Fernández, 2018; Szulewicz, 2018). Neoliberalism can be generally defined as “the new political, economic, and social arrangements within society that emphasize market relations, re-tasking the role of the state, and individual responsibility” (Springer, Birch & MacLeavy, 2016, p.2). By emphasizing the rationality of market as the main principle, practices and values in different arenas of social life are being re-evaluated, re-organized and regulated (Amable, 2011; Esposito 2011; Esposito & Perez, 2014; Giroux, 2018). In education, it brings in the general aim of making education into a trading commodity (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) with high quality and secure producing processes. Along with education as a commodity, the learner is positioned as the consumer, with certain clear needs and requests, of school’s educational products. Accordingly, the teachers are reduced to service providers, who should be ready and competent to meet and satisfy the consumers’ needs (Biesta, 2005, 2009). From the side of the schools, schools as autonomic agents should compete with each other to improve their schooling efficacy to earn their consumers’ preference and to improve their status in resource allocation by policymakers.

Commodification of education has been criticized as being “extremely deleterious to a rich and meaningful educational experience” (Kumar, 2019, p.235) and is essentially a deformation of school (Pinar, 2012). Under the huge influence of commercial competition, educational problems are framed one-sidedly as efficacy questions,

being captured, presented, evaluated and monitored in numerical data, which leaves more fundamental questions concerning values and purposes of education untouched. As Biesta (2014a, 2014b) has intensively written, un-educational questions are introduced from external political and commercial interests, which pushes the real educational question of what makes good education into the deepest background. According to Kumar (2019), behaviorism and positivism goes hand in hand with capitalism to channel educational processes by measuring performance through standardized tests and valuing objective knowledge. Just like production in factory, education becomes mechanical in order to produce capable human capital efficiently and securely.

## 2.2. NEOLIBERAL REFORM AS A RATIONALIZATION PROCESS

The neoliberal reform constitutes the general background for investigating education, development and intervention. Before I go on to examine its more concrete influences on developmental intervention, I would like to shift a little bit to a more philosophical perspective. Most authors refer to the overwhelming controlling power of market and capital underlying the neoliberal reform on the educational system (e.g. Szulevicz & Tanggaard, 2014). I would like to highlight that in this control, there is *a process of rationalization advanced by the joint force of capital and modern science and technology* (Wang, 2000a). This highlight will show that, the controlling process in the neoliberal reform is achieved in a particular way, that is, by a general process of rationalization. It will also prompt how modern science with its normative power, e.g. mainstream psychology, contributes to the rationalization process.

To achieve this, I introduce ideas from Marx, Lukács and The Frankfurt School. A detailed presentation of the works is beyond the thesis's scope. The limits of my use of the three lie in their critical work on capital, mechanical systems and instrumental rationality in modern science. The relation between the three can be summarized most succinctly as follows: *the demand for capital growth brings about a process of abstraction, formalization and rationalization of social life, which is advanced to the greatest extent by the instrumental rationality represented by modern sciences.*

### *Marx: productive forces as an abstract SUBJECT*

Marx identified the principle of capital as the basic principle of modernity. Capital proliferation establishes itself as the ultimate aim of human social life. As Heidegger (1996, pp. 383-384) has pointed out, "The modern metaphysical essence of labor is anticipated in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit as the *self-establishing process of unconditioned production*" (italics added). Production becomes unconditioned by establishing itself as a SUBJECT. In this "unconditioned production", the whole world is turned into raw materials and the social is reduced to capital's market. As Marx & Engels (1998) has noted,

“the productive forces appear as a world for themselves, quite independent of and divorced from the individuals, alongside the individuals.....on the one hand, we have a totality of productive forces, which have, as it were, taken on a material form.....On the other hand, standing against these productive forces, we have the majority of the individuals from whom these forces have been wrested away, and who, robbed thus of all real life-content, have become abstract individuals” (pp.95-96).

The above citation shows how the productive forces, as originally derived from social life processes, can be detached from and stand as an abstract SUBJECT against the flesh-and-blood individuals. Kosik (2015) pointed out that, there is a domination, and it is the domination of abstraction over man, the reversal of dominance between object and man, product and producer, the mysterious subject and the real subject. With productive forces becoming the abstract SUBJECT, the world (including human beings) goes through a process of disenchantment and is reduced to objects and materials. This can be clearly seen in the invisible but real power of “market” in the neoliberal discourses.

*Lukács: abstraction, formalization, and rationalization of mechanical systems*

In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács (1971) especially developed Marx’s concept of “reification” and revealed the main characteristics of reification as abstraction, formalization, and rationalization. Reification manifests in the techno-mechanistic trend penetrating into all aspects of social life (Wu, 2002). Lukács’s analysis is greatly inspired by the application of Taylor’s scientific management, as can be seen in the following segment:

“the principle of rationalization based on what is and can be calculated. The chief changes undergone by the subject and object of the economic process are as follows: (1) in the first place, the mathematical analysis of work-process denotes a break with the organic, irrational and qualitatively determined unity of the product.....(2) in the second place, this fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject.... Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of the process, on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system.... .. mechanization makes of them isolated abstract atoms whose work no longer brings them together directly and organically; it becomes mediated to an increasing extent exclusively by the abstract laws of the mechanism which imprisons them (Lukács, 1971, pp. 88-89).

Lukács focuses on the reification of human beings by mechanical systems based on the principles of abstraction, formalization and rationalization. First, vivid and holistic social processes are broken down and abstracted into components through a mathematical analysis. Then, formal relations are established between these parts for

the purpose of optimizing this process. Last, the overall process, as originally being “organic, irrational and qualitatively determined” (ibid), is re-examined and re-organized according to these formal and abstract laws. In this way, human beings are reduced into a part of the mechanical system (Chen, 1996; Jin, 2003; Sun, 2012). Abstract laws of the mechanical system mediate and regulate the human process to eliminate all the irrational factors. Human social connections become subjected to the abstract laws. Faced with the mechanical system, human beings become “isolated abstract atoms” (ibid). The trends of standardization, accountability and measurement installed in the global school reform (Szulevicz et al. 2016) are vivid examples of the process of abstraction, formalization, and rationalization.

### *The Frankfurt School: science and technology as instruments*

Science and technology plays a fundamental role in the process of abstraction, formalization and rationalization. Following Marx Weber's distinction between instrumental and value rationality, the Frankfurt School criticizes instrumental rationality as principled by formal rationality, which is affirmative and lacks the dimension of critique and transcendence of reality. As Horkheimer (1947, pp.8-9) pointed out,

“In lay discussion as well as in scientific, reason has come to be commonly regarded as an intellectual faculty of co-ordination, the efficiency of which can be increased by methodical use and by the removal of any non-intellectual factors, such as conscious or unconscious emotions”.

Marcuse (2002) sharply revealed the relation between science, technology and dominance: “the internal instrumentalist character of this scientific rationality by virtue of which it is a priori technology, and the a priori of a specific technology—namely, technology as a form of social control and domination (p.161)”. As Marcuse (1968, p.223) has pointed out:

“Not only the application of technology but technology itself is domination (of nature and men) – methodological, scientific, calculated, calculating control. Specific purposes and interests of dominance are not foisted upon technology “subsequently” and from the outside; they enter the very construction of the technical apparatus”.

In the framework of instrumentalism, values are separated from the objective reality and stigmatized as being subjective, unreal and ideal. The technological transformation of nature also includes the control and transformation of human beings. Instrumental rationality becomes the deep foundation of total control over man (Chen, 1996). With the slogan of “evidence-based everything” (Oakley, 2002), positivism is gradually invading the realm of everyday discourse and becoming a norm for self-regulation (Yang, 2007). Science becomes ideology (Yang, 2009), with its huge normative power channeling social life. As Horkheimer & Adorno (2002, p.23) noted,

“Positivism, which finally did not shrink from laying hands on the idlest fancy of all, thought itself, eliminated the last intervening agency between individual action and the social norm”. Psychology, as the science of human beings, is one of the most frequently referred knowledge pool to regulate social life. Psychology is never a bystander to its social context. Rather, mainstream psychology is neoliberal in essence and it produces neoliberal selves (Pickren, 2018; Ratner, 2019; Teo, 2018). Mainstream psychology helps to reproduce and legitimize neoliberalism in the school context (Adams et al., 2019).

To sum up, with science and technology as a strong instrument for control, different aspects of social life are undergoing a process of rationalization for pursuing capital expansion. In this rationalization process, along with the establishment of productive forces as abstract SUBJECT, human beings are abstracted into materials/ components/ elements to be integrated into mechanical systems and to be regulated by formal laws. The neo-liberal reform in education can also be re-examined from the perspective of school rationalization process, which is a part of a more general process of social rationalization. How are students problems understood and intervened in this process? What is the position of psychology in this process? The next section would touch these questions.

### **2.3. STUDENTS' PROBLEMS AND INTERVENTION IN NEOLIBERAL RATIONALIZATION**

The neoliberal trend and its rationalization of school life has greatly changed educational discourse and practice towards students' problem and intervention. On the one hand, with an eye always on the dimensions of efficacy and performance, the range of both “what students should do” and “what students should not do” becomes rigid. The image of the ideal student is presented as being expressive, responsible, self-regulating and self-monitoring (Boll, 2018; Martin & MaLellan, 2013), who should develop an entrepreneurial relationship towards self for constant self-promotion (Teo, 2018). This ideal image squeezes students' rich and wide developmental possibilities into narrow and flat demands on skills, abilities and performance (Martínez Virto & Rodríguez Fernández, 2018). As a consequence, what counts as problems needing to be intervened also becomes narrow and rigid.

On the other hand, mainstream psychology legitimizes the social imaginary of neoliberalism by providing “an essentialist understanding of the person as a bundle of defining attributes” and offering “tools for measuring these essential attributes” (Adams, et al., 2019, p.202). In this way, psychological and behavioral problems are understood as being derived from inner individual traits, attributes and tendencies, which are de-contextualized and ahistorical. Moreover, the biomedical model becomes more and more dominant in understanding mental health problems. Szulevicz (2018) pointed out that psychiatric notions are not unfamiliar to school psychologists when talking with students. Timimi (2011, p.155) called it “a

fundamentally positivist technical and biomedical framework” with a universalist and essentialist position. This biomedical model diagnoses psychological problems as individual pathologies and uses medicines as universal and value-free treatments. Consequently a more social and holistic understanding of individual problems is dismissed (Esposito & Perez, 2014).

The homogenization and individualization of students’ psychological and behavioral problems also leads to a homogenization and individualization of problem treatment and intervention. Without taking the contextual dimension and the whole picture of individual-in-context into consideration, both understanding and intervention of student’s problems becomes abstract. As an example, Szulevicz, etc. (2016) analyzed how students’ disruptive behavior becomes further controlled, homogenized, individualized and evaluated primarily on performance, which destroys the opportunity of it being investigated and analyzed as a complex dynamic phenomena situated in the social and cultural context. In this sense, developmental and educational intervention becomes more technical, mechanical rather than artistic.

In the background of neoliberal rationalization, “evidence-based” becomes the rule for being “scientific”. Evidence-based intervention relies on the randomized control trial to produce valid knowledge of “what works”. It originally inherits the Enlightenment’s legacy to use reason to make better changes, and nowadays it shows a characteristic of instrumental rationality (Sanderson, 2002). With the pre-determined goal, the effectiveness of intervention as an instrument constitutes the most important dimension for evidence-based intervention study. Correspondingly, the research question is “what is the most effective way to achieve the pre-set goal?” Biesta (2007) pointed out that, it is ultimately a technological question. Wrigley (2018) lamented that, when the mean effect size is adopted to examine and report evidence, the richness and complexity of the intervention event, as well as the vivid individuals in the intervention, are erased. The abstraction, formalization and rationalization requirements, as well as scientific research as a tool to fulfill these requirements, are reflected in the evidence-based intervention as follows:

First, the criteria for classifying students’ problem behaviors are constrained by the rationalization process of the educational system. As revealed by Szulevicz, et. al. (2016), the understanding of students’ behavior problems is first limited by the entire mechanization process within the school. Behavior problems are the ones affecting teaching, performance and outcome and the system should enhance control and monitoring of these behavior. Adelman & Taylor (1994) also noted that, the society’s interests play a fundamental role in deciding which psychological phenomena should be given special concern.

Second, intervention also shows a mechanical process of abstraction, formalization and rationalization. The goal of evidence-based intervention research is to find the effective ways to solve the problem. This is accomplished first by abstracting the

students' problems and corresponding intervention into entities connecting and interacting in formal laws, and then by mathematical measurements and calculations of the psychological entities in pre-post tests. Here Lukács's critics (1971, pp.166-167) also applies:

“quantification is a reified and reifying cloak spread over the true essence of the objects and can only be regarded as an objective form of reality inasmuch as the subject is uninterested in the essence of the object to which it stands in a contemplative or (seemingly) practical relationship”.

Third, the intervention method is encapsulated into tool package. “What has worked in the past” verified by evidence-based research is further abstracted into scientific tools and procedures of “what works” waiting to be activated and utilized for solving problems in matched categories. In this way, intervention becomes a type of universal psychological medicine. Scientific knowledge construction starts from the concrete and empirical question of “what are the effective means to achieve this particular ends” and finishes with formalization of “what works for this kind of problems”. Bietsa (2007, p.19) termed it as “the technological expectation about research”. The intervention process becomes “technocratic framework of routinized operations” (Webb, 2001, p.71). Like the shift from commodity-money-commodity to money-commodity-money, in the evidence-based interventional study, we can also observe a shift from actual problem-intervention tool-actual problem to intervention tool-actual problem-intervention tool. Tools and its refinements are becoming dominant, as if the purpose of research lies in the development and verification of tools and instruments through research in different contexts of practice. Questions about how the tools and means are employed and tailored under the professional judgement of educators to solve their specific problems become “scientifically” irrelevant or unimportant. Also as a result, important contextual influences are treated as contaminating factors waiting to be minimized (Webb, 2001).

Evidence-based intervention research aims to establish a causal connection between the two entities of means and ends, just like in mechanic physics. As Biesta (2010, p.496) pointed out, the assumption of a necessary connection between cause and effect only works in “closed systems operating deterministically”, which is not applicable to education as “open, recursive and semiotic systems”. The conception of individuals as dynamic open systems with self-steering and self-regulating processes foregrounds the complexity, indeterminacy and uncertainty of the system, making causal modelling very difficult (Pawson, 2006; Wrigley, 2018). In *Beautiful risk of education*, Biesta (2014a) examined different dimensions of the weakness of education. The notion of weakness is understood as education not working in a machine-like way. He proposed that it is exactly the non-mechanical characteristics that makes education educational. To summarize Biesta (2014a), machine-like education is strong, secure, predictable and risk-free, which is closely connected to the strong metaphysical notion- to function as a cause and bring something into existence. The mechanic and metaphysical logic underestimates the students'



subjectivity and agency. It abstracts them into materials and objects to be modeled or produced. If we take students as agents of action and responsibility, then education has to be a dialogical process, with its working being slow, difficult and frustrating. And instead of the strong metaphysical conception of “bringing being into existence” (p.23), we need to work under the weak existential notion of “calling being into life” (p.23). Education are open and undetermined processes concerning the very basic aspects of communicating, teaching and learning. With the weak existential notion in mind, Biesta also criticized the pursuit of total control in evidence-based practice. He reminded us that the basic assumption of human beings as active meaning makers poses a great challenge for constructing a causal connection between educational inputs and outcomes.

Evidence-based intervention assumes time-symmetry and internal homogeneity of categories as its two main principles. Waiting to be distributed to different treatments, the students are regarded as all equal and neither them nor conditions change over time. Intervention becomes a universal medicine allocated to universal students, both of which are abstracted to the level of formal laws. The two principles of time-symmetry and internal homogeneity are exactly opposite to the principles of system theory: systems change over time and are sensitive to conditions. The next session will show how the systematic perspective can bring a different perspective to intervention study.

## **2.4. A SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE: INTERVENTION AS AN EVENT**

From Biesta’s work, it can be summarized that the boundary for constraining the abstraction, formalization and rationalization of interventional processes lies exactly in the subjective, agentive and open-systemic nature of the individuals. To give up the dominance of interventional technology is to take the application problem seriously. That is to transcend the view of intervention as a universal medicine, as implementing a set of decontextualized components to act upon certain entities and “securely” produce certain effects in a mechanical chain. It is to have a close look at what really happens in the specific context, and how intervention, as an event (Hawe, Shiell & Riley, 2009; Moore et al., 2019), essentially intervenes into the self-organized dynamic open system. The result of the event is ultimately ambiguous, risky, open-ended and undetermined. Moore et al. (2019) appealed that in this systemic lens, the efficacy problem in evidence-based intervention should be re-conceptualized to shift from technological validity to the key question of how to disrupt the system’s functioning.

For developmental intervention research in psychology, it deals with two levels of systems at the same time- the interpersonal system as the individual-in-context and the intrapersonal system as holistic psychological functioning. For the interpersonal system, as early as 1990s, the area of school psychology has proposed for a paradigm shift from the medical model to ecological approaches based on Bronfenbrenner’s

ecological systems theory (Burns, Warmbold-Brann, & Zaslofsky, 2015; Lerner, 1996; Sheridan, & Gutkin, 2000). The ecological framework gives emphasis to an interactive blending of environmental and individual characteristics. From this framework, students' problems are not conceptualized as internal deficits but as adaptive efforts within the context.

More researches are needed to uncover the functioning of the intrapersonal psychological system in intervention context, as merely adding contextual variables into the causal correlations still cannot reveal the underlying psychological mechanisms (Cohen, 2009). To achieve this, it is to transfer the research focus from multiple variables acting on each other in formal logics to the dynamic subjective meaning-making process in individual's interaction with his context. Heidegger (2003, p.54) wrote:

“For modern physics, thunder follows lightning, and that is all. This physics ever only observes nature as a succession of things that follow upon one another, and no longer as a course of things emerging from each other, as was the case for Aristotle”.

The abstracted and formalized intervention process perceives cause and effect as a mutual succession, while from the subject's point of view, it is the process of psychological reality “emerging from each other” (ibid) in irreversible time. It can be seen how this temporal, holistic, interpretive and generative process is covered by mathematical abstraction. All these adjective words are necessary to understand human beings as open systems (Von Bertalanffy, 1967). Only by going deep into the individual's subjective meaning making process in the intervention event can we have an essential understanding of “why and how what worked still works in this context”.

For psychological researches, a second shift- I call it the subjective shift- is needed. Compared with the shift to interpersonal system, this shift requires to focus back to the individual subject encountering and interpreting the intervention. As Pawson (2006, p.45) pointed out, “it is within this interpretative process- or mechanism- that the causal powers of programs reside”. This is to see how the intervention becomes meaningful for the individual from the perspective of the individual subject as an active meaning maker living in the context in the irreversible time. The second subjective shift constitutes the starting point for this thesis's investigation of developmental intervention.

## 2.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I reviewed the neoliberal reform and its rationalization process in education, which has greatly changed the present understanding of students' psychological and behavioral problems and brought in a trend of evidence-based intervention research. The rationalization process provides pre-set goals of "what should be achieved" to intervention research. Concerning its un-educational dimension, there is a huge risk of falling into the danger of Hegel's "external reflection" (Hegel, 1980)). Wu (2017, 2018) pointed out that the essence of external reflection is making a vast separation between "what should be" and "what is", and it puts completely aside the real situation of "what is" and talks about "what should be" based on subjective imagination, preference and abstract principles. External reflection is inherent in the ongoing process of rationalization, in which school life is abstracted as materials waiting to be processed, controlled and optimized according to the market. It can also be observed in the application of interventional protocol onto homogenized student problems without having a close look at what is really happening in the intervention as an event.

To transcend "external reflection" in developmental and educational intervention, it is to reveal the subjective meaning making process of the developing individual in the intervention event. For psychology, the problem of "what is" always concerns the psychological reality derived from the individual-context relationship (Tateo, Marsico & Valsiner, 2022). If the basic assumption is that intervention is essentially undetermined, open and interpretative, and if this assumption is accepted, then the subjective meaning making process of the individual becomes the vintage point for understanding and investigating educational and developmental intervention.



## **CHAPTER 3. THE TENDER FRUIT OF DRAMA**

In this chapter, I will transfer to the empirical field of Drama-in-Education (DiE). The aim of this chapter is to understand the potential of DiE as a type of developmental intervention for the emergence of new understanding based on a literature review. I use five parts to achieve this aim. First, I shortly introduce the characteristics of DiE. Second, researches on DiE within the instrumental framework is presented and discussed. The notion of “space” is highlighted to overcome the instrumental tendency, as it preserves the uncertain, intangible and reflective dimensions of drama experiences. Third, to better understand the phenomenological space for emergence of new understanding, I roughly divide and organize the present literature into two orientations: the educational orientation emphasizing rational reflection on the experiences, and the aesthetic orientation emphasizing the epistemological value of the aesthetic experiences. For the latter, I traced the notion of “aesthetics” received within and developed from the Kantian framework in the field. With the Kantian notion of imagination as a reference point, I further distinguish researches and ideas on aesthetic experiences in DiE along two paths: aesthetic experiences emphasizing on sensuous feelings and emotions, and aesthetic experiences emphasizing on understanding. Forth, based on the division of the two paths, I introduced Hohr’s three modes of experiences- conceiving, feeling and enliving- to probe into the difference and connection between the two paths. Fifth, in the last part, I examine the notion of the developing individual as an agent appearing in DiE researches and refer to Gadamer’s work to establish DiE as a firm other for the developing individual.

### **3.1. A SHORT INTRODUCTION OF DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION**

DiE can be broadly seen as applying the drama art in educational practice and learning activities. There are different ways to apply drama for different educational and interventional purposes, e.g. psychodrama and the critical tradition of Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed*. DiE is also called “process drama” and “educational drama”. It is an interdisciplinary area with roots in areas such as pedagogy, children’s play and theatre tradition (Heggstad, 2019). The rising and great advance of drama in school education in the twentieth century was along with a requirement for experience-based and child-centered education. This requirement was put forward under the influence of the progressive education with a focus on freedom, self-expression and activity (O’Hara, 1984; Havell, 1987). Since then, the essential substance of DiE as an independent subject went through several changes.

Bolton (2007) reviewed the historical development of DiE from its first pioneers to contemporary promoters. According to Bolton, in Peter Slade (1995)’s work, drama

was a natural extension of children's play and was adopted for children's free expression of their inner drama. From Dorothy Heathcote, drama deviated from the focus on self-expression and received a fundamentally different task for meaning exploration and change of understanding. Also, the establishment of a drama world was highlighted by Heathcote for the participants to live through by using powerful devices such as teacher-in-role and mantle of expert. Nowadays, the critical orientation advanced for social justice, liberation and emancipation gains international popularity.

With the highly diverse practice in the area, here I adopt Heggstad (2019)'s definition to highlight the main characteristics based on our interest on DiE for new understanding. According to Heggstad (2019, p. 2),

“Drama is an art subject adapted for co-creative experience and learning. Through body and voice, fantasy and imagination we are identifying with portrayed characters and situations and are learning and expressing ourselves in new ways. We alternate between spontaneity and structure. We are creating and transforming form and structure and reflecting on play events and play actions both within and outside the play”.

As has discussed briefly in Article C, this definition sketches the following key dialectics inherent in DiE:

1) *Reality <> Fiction*. Drama is first of all a fictional world bounded in a certain time and space, the existence of which depends on group consensus and willingness to believe, pretend and play (O'Neill, 1995). Same as in children's dramatic play, the drama world is created and gradually developed by the group. To play seriously in this world, the big challenge for the teacher is “to be able to trap the people into an agreement that for now they will believe in “the big lie”” (Heathcote, 1984, p.115). During the activities, transitions between reality and fiction, between me and not-me, are usually planned for the group to discuss and reflect upon what they have experienced.

2) *Structure <> Spontaneity*. DiE proceeds without a pre-given script. Usually teachers plan in advance different episodes of activities and adjust flexibly according to the group's needs. As Heggstad (2019, p.3) has put forward: “The alternation between spontaneity and structure is at the core of the art subject. Structure provides direction and form, while spontaneity is the chaotic side of the subject”. A good balance between structure and spontaneity can help the teacher to respect and value the group's interests, needs and contribution as well as to scaffold the group with necessary support in their exploration in the drama world. The chaotic part from the group's spontaneity makes the outcome from DiE extremely unpredictable.

3) *Form <> Content*. As other art subjects, DiE adopts particular forms to deal with human contents. Dramatic forms are important for both areas of children's dramatic

play and theatre art. Forms select, distort, intensify and condense materials from particular angles to communicate the theme (Heathcote, 1984; Heggstad, 2019). Bolton (1982) summarized that the essence of dramatic forms are focus (a particular choice of theme), tension and symbolization (actions or objects endowed with meanings which is a dynamic evolution process rather than one-time given event).

*4) Immersion <> Reflection.* DiE transfers between the fictional and the real. By immersing in the fictional world, DiE facilitates direct, authentic and contextual learning experiences. By distancing from the fictional world, participants' experiences both in the fictional and real world are discussed and reflected to expand their understanding (Wagner, 1981).

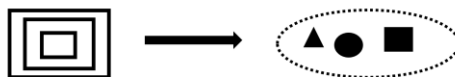
These four dialectics interweave with each other and bring about complex cultural, educational and aesthetic experiences in DiE.

### **3.2. THE TENDER FRUIT OF DRAMA IN THE INSTRUMENTAL FRAMEWORK**

The rise of standardization and instrumentalism in the general educational setting has made it difficult for drama to maintain a place in the school curriculum (Catterall & Darby, 1996; O'Toole & O'Mara, 2007; Somers, 2015; Winston, 2006; Young, 2001). To deal with this challenge, drama adjusts its position as an important tool for education in cultivating and fostering multiple key skills, e.g. creativity, imagination and communication (Haseman & Österlind, 2014). Along this line, evidence has been established to prove the effectiveness of drama in the following areas, just to name a few: second language learning (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Piazzoli, 2018; Winston & Stinson, 2016), interpersonal relations (Joronen, Konu, Rankin, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2012), antibullying (Belliveau 2005; O'Toole & Burton, 2005) and metacognition (Andersen, 2002). The two dimensions of embodied experience and reflection have made learning in/through drama unique and outstanding (Wright, 2000).

The direct application of biomedical model based on quantitative data and experimental design in researching the effects of art for individual and social changes has caused huge doubts and debates. Putland (2008) claimed that there are two different and even conflicting perspectives in accounting for the effects of drama and other arts for achieving certain outcomes: the "health" perspective and the "arts" perspective. The two perspectives bring in unresolved tension. According to Putland, the call for using rigorous research designs to provide "hard" evidence can mainly be characterized as a perspective from the health area, which tries to establish linear models of causality to create and produce health- a strong metaphysics position in Biesta's words. The arts perspective considers the nature of arts and their general social roles. This perspective worries about reducing values of arts and cultural activities into merely instruments to achieve prescribed and narrowly defined outcomes. As Putland has stressed, the conflict deeply touches the fundamental

question about arts' value and function in our society- arts as an instrument or arts as meaning making activities. He sharply revealed that for present situation, the increasing recognition of arts' value is derived from its instrumental position, and where there is a higher position of art, there is a deeper level of instrumentalism, which makes the subject of art itself more and more invisible.



*Figure 3-1 Drama as inserting influences on separate psychological variables*

The chaos, along with the holistic nature and magic of drama, may disappear, when the “dirty” drama is interrogated and broken down into activities such as expressive, experiential and interactive (Bowell & Heap, 2010). These discrete activities are assumed to act upon certain psychological variables (Figure 3-1) to account for development of targeted skills (e.g. enhanced emotional and social skills). It is exactly the “arts” perspective and the antithetical essence of art subject (O'Hara, 1984) that poses huge challenges and constitutes a boundary for applying the “health” perspective. Based on literature review, I summarize the following aspects, which may constrain the instrumental framework in establishing linear connections between drama as inputs and pre-determined goals as outputs:

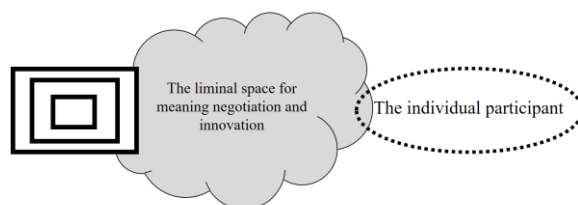
1) The nature of chaos, ambiguity, complexity and unpredictability in drama work (Hancock, 1995; Schonmann, 2007). Borrowing Biesta's words, the process in DiE is extremely open, dialogical and undetermined, with multiple factors influencing the process. It can be hard to establish linear causal connections. As Rodricks (2015) pointed out, the uncertain impact of drama education is its very nature and no grand promises can be made that certain expected results will be achieved.

2) Holistic and intangible learning in DiE. DiE usually aims for general humanistic concerns, such as enhancement of awareness, development for a whole person (Ward, 1957), relating to the world, and construction of subjectivity uniting intelligence and emotion (Misson, 1996). This general concern makes it difficult to both clearly define the learning goals (O'Hara, 1984) and to assess the outcomes. Except the more obvious effects of entertaining and engaging the participants, it can be hard to detect a significant improvement brought about by the dramatic activities (Mages, 2018), as effects of drama usually manifests as complex dynamics. Nagy, Laskey & Allison (1993) stressed that accountability requires clear statements of expected outcomes and objective measurements, and to reach this policy-oriented requirement, researchers dealing with complex fields like drama tend to pick out the easily assessed aspects and give up the more elusive ones with highly qualitative forms. They used the metaphor of “tender fruit” (p.117) to illuminate that in the harvesting process of evaluation, subtle, intricate and subjective learning outcomes, e.g. value



internalization, might be damaged or be hard to be captured. As a result, there are appeals to shift the focus from outcomes to the dynamic process and to go deep into the subjective experiences of the participants in the drama activities (Catterall & Darby, 1996). Raw, Lewis, Russell & Macnaughton (2012) lamented that without an analysis and theorization of the practice to reveal the underlying mechanisms, the findings from impact researches can hardly have an essential contribution to the field. They call it the danger of “a hole in the heart” (p.98), which can not be filled by the increasing piles of empirical evidence. This shift, from outcome assessment to process analysis in order to articulate development, also requires to change the research question from “what is the causal relation between drama inputs and students’ behavioral changes as outputs?” to “What is going on for the participants in the process?” Researchers in this line recognized a great potential for introducing phenomenological framework into the drama field (Grammatopoulos & Reynolds, 2013; Shen, 2016), as the phenomenological tradition stresses on setting from the individual’s perspective and first-hand experiences.

3) The generative, reflective and critical dimension. Besides difficulties emerging from the complex processual nature of drama work, there are also unresolved tensions arising from the epistemological value and generative dimension of the aesthetics in drama. The potential of drama in generating new knowledge may be restrained in the framework of instrumentalism (Bolton, 1998), in which drama is treated as a means to achieve pre-determined goals for an institutional and political agenda. Emphasis on new understanding, awareness, reflection, transformation and change has a long history and can be traced back to the influences inherited from reform pedagogy, humanistic psychology and emancipatory pedagogy (Heggstad, 2019). Along this line, theoretical connection has been established with Turner’s (1983) concept of liminal and liminoid and Winnicott’s (1991) third space between inner subjective world and outer objective world. Drama has been conceptualized as a third liminal space (Figure 3-2) with potentiality for distancing, meaning negotiation, deconstruction and innovative synthesis (Rodricks, 2015).



*Figure 3-2 Drama experiences as a third space*

The term “space”, with a strong phenomenological flavor, captures all the three characteristics of drama experiences in DiE: uncertain, intangible and reflective. It radically contrasts with the notion of “instrument” in the means-end framework.

Experience in the drama world is experiencing in a third space, which is detached from, suspends and challenges the mundane normative life. Sloan (2018) stressed that, the term “space” is closely connected to potentiality, freedom, fluidity, indeterminacy, experimentation. Besides all the positive words, O’Grady (2017, cited in Sloan, 2018) also warned the risk and vulnerability arising from the openness and complex navigation. In this space, it is not to encapsulate violently the dynamic qualitative experiences into quantifiable variables, but to identify the unquantifiable as complex and deeply subjective phenomenon. Experience in this space is extremely sensitive to temporal asymmetry and condition changes, which is contrary to the evidence-based research paradigm. The notion of phenomenological space constitutes a very difficult starting point for empirical and theoretical research.

### **3.3. DRAMA AS A SPACE FOR SUBJECTIVE TRANSFORMATION**

Roughly speaking, there are two orientations to theorize and practice the transformative function of DiE as a third space for meaning exploration and innovation: embodied experience and reflection (Wright, 2000). As Rasmussen (2014, p.23) has accurately summarized after Szatkowski & Jensen (1985):

“This relation between experiential and propositional knowing was once an issue of heated debate in drama education, whereby the “aesthetic camp” supported the practice as epistemologically complete, while the “educational camp” or critical theory tradition gave priority to the conceptual and conscious post-reflection as an educational (and political) necessity”.

By dividing into two orientations, it is not to say that one orientation only contains experience, while the other stands exclusively with reflection. Both the two emphasize on the importance of facilitating new understanding from the drama experience. The difference lies in their different focuses, as one focuses on the experiential dimension, while the other on the reflective dimension. To be more specific, the educational orientation regards experiences as the primary/ first-hand materials for further rational reflection; For the aesthetic orientation, the generative and epistemological dimension of the sensuous experiences is highlighted.

#### **3.3.1. THE EDUCATIONAL ORIENTATION IN THE CRITICAL TRADITION**

Within the two orientations, the educational/ critical line is relatively neat concerning both practice and theorization. This orientation emphasizes on conscious reflections of experiences for potential emergence of new understanding, which is greatly influenced by Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy (Ott, 1995). Freire (2005) developed two key concepts in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: codification and conscientisation. Codification is “the objects which mediate the decoders in their critical analysis”

(Freire, 2005, p.114). It is to represent a problem, indicate certain themes in the present situation and pose tasks for the future. As Freire (ibid, pp.95-96) has written, "Utilizing certain basic contradictions, we must pose this existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem which challenges them and requires a response-not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action". As a kind of representation, codification is to facilitate "perception of the previous perception" and "knowledge of the previous knowledge" (ibid, p.115). Conscientisation concerns human's unique traits of being able to distance from the reality to analyze, question and transform the present situation. For Freire (1974), conscientisation is not just awareness of reality ("prise de conscience", p.24), but is the critical development of the awareness, which leads to reflections upon our humanities and present barriers and also brings about emancipatory actions to change the reality.

Faced with codification, participants de-codify the coded situation by critical analysis. In de-codification, participants go between the abstract and the concrete, the part and the whole, to establish connections between themselves, the object and the real situation (Freire, 2005, p.105). According to Freire (2005), there are several requirements for codification to be efficiently facilitating and motivating:

- 1) Codifications should represent familiar situations and be recognizable for the participants.
- 2) There should be a certain distance between the representation and the theme, so that the theme won't be too explicit with the risk of falling into propaganda statement, or too implicit appearing as a puzzle.
- 3) Codification should be able to contain different directions for decoding interpretations.
- 4) Contradictions should be included in codification.

Freire used to adopt visual aids for codification, such as sketches and photos, because codification should represent the reality as a whole. The basic forms of drama consist of basic elements of focus, symbolization and tension (Bolton, 1982), which makes drama an appropriate format for codification. As Heathcote (1984, p.114) has summarized, the drama art can help problematize the situation and empower contemplation by "isolation of the human condition, particularization, distortion, and forming". Concerning the art form, drama possesses the following advantages compared with photos or sketches:

- 1) Drama symbolizes the reality rather than realistically represent the reality. The distance and ambiguity enabled by symbolic resources provide more space for de-codification (Pompeo Nogueira, 2015).

2) Drama concerns change. As Heathcote (1984, p.115) put forward, “The most important manifestation about this thing called drama is that it must show change. It does not freeze a moment in time, it freezes a problem in time, and you examine the problem as the people go through a process of change”. In the protection of fictional world, participants can try out different solutions to prepare for future actions.

3) Drama offers an experiential and embodied engagement inside the codification (Villanueva & O’Sullivan, 2020). The “living through” dimension facilitates situated learning (Andersen, 2004). Villanueva & O’Sullivan (2020) also pointed out that the distanced de-codification is different in DiE, as in DiE, participants step into roles and also hold awareness and reflection of their fictional experiences at the same time.

When considering DiE from the perspective of Freire’s codification, it is the dynamic and imaginary living-through experiences and actions in the fictional world that constitute the object as codification. Conscientisation is achieved by two ways of reflection on this kind of experiential codification: 1) reflection after the experience: the dramatic experience can be discussed with the group out of role; 2) reflection in the experience: in role taking, participants are in-between two worlds at the same time. They observe themselves while acting in the fictional world.

### **3.3.2. THE AESTHETIC ORIENTATION: AESTHETICS AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES IN DRAMA**

As Woods (2018) pointed out, codification and de-codification of the world is both an artistic and educational endeavor. It is the aesthetic potential of the artform, which emphasizes more on the role of imagination, symbolism, metaphor, and analogy in representation and codification (Villanueva & O’Sullivan, 2020) that requires to have more knowledge from the second aesthetic orientation.

A closer look into the aesthetic orientation would immediately lead to an impression of being complex and chaotic, with huge and tough efforts and struggles from researchers and practitioners to understand and theorize the aesthetic dimension of DiE. As Austrin & Sørensen (2011, p.11) have noted, “aesthetics have developed into an extremely airy concept, a “hooray” word that covers anything tasteful, artistic, sensuous, harmonic, beautiful and experience-oriented.” In this section, I would first present aesthetics received and developed from the Kantian framework in the field; Based on Kant’s concept of imaginative faculty, the area is divided into two lines in conceptualizing aesthetic experiences: one emphasizing on feelings and emotions and the other on the emergence of understanding.

### 3.3.2.1 Aesthetics received in and developed from the Kantian framework

As Winston (2006) has noted, in present promotion of the educational and cultural values of arts, discourses on beauty and aesthetics is marginalized, compared with the more heated arguments for the purpose of social utilization. Acceptance of the notions of beauty and aesthetics in DiE primarily falls into the Kantian framework. Kant (1964) defined beauty as an objective and general judgement, which transcends the subjectivity of the individual psyche. For Kant, the objectivity of the judgement is attributed to the judgement made by transcendental rationality in the sensuous area.

From the Kantian framework, the concept of “disinterested contemplation” gives the biggest trouble for embracing aesthetics in DiE’ practice and theorization. On the one hand, Winston (2006) recognized a flavor of elitist from the uselessness of beauty derived from disinterested contemplation, which is contrary to DiE’s general pursuit of social justice and equality. On the other hand, Haseman & Winston (2010) noticed that there are two hesitations in introducing aesthetics into DiE: First, in the present culture of instrumentalism and accountability, participants’ pleasant emotions produced from the aesthetic judgement seems not important enough to attract funds. Second and more important, how to resolve the ambivalence between DiE’s profound interest in practical utility both on the individual and social level and the disinterestedness of the aesthetic experiences? It seems that participants’ subjective desires, motivations and needs have to be all removed in the aesthetic judgement, while for constructing dramatic events in the fictional world, participant’s attention, interest and investment are central.

Efforts have been made to re-theorize the Kantian notion of “disinterestedness” to shade new lights on aesthetic experiences in DiE. These efforts can be sorted along the following two lines:

*1) Developing “disinterested interest” as a form of engagement.* DeCoursey (2016) proposed to interpret “disinterested interest” as “distancing” and he distinguished two types of distancing in DiE activities: 1) distancing from the real world to be involved into the imaginary fictional world; 2) distancing from extrinsic motivation to make room for the emergence of intrinsic motivation. According to him, extrinsic motivation concerns the instrumental purposes of learning and intrinsic motivation enables a better focus on the art itself. He identified disinterested contemplation almost the same as intrinsic motivation. Based on this step, DeCoursey (2018) proposed the notion of “aesthetic engagement” and defined it as “a fixed, sustained attention of a non-instrumental sort to appearances in the here and now” (p.125) and “aesthetic engagement succeeds in distancing extrinsic motivation and replacing it with intrinsic” (p.131).

2) *Developing the transforming and critical dimension from aesthetics*. This line is to free aesthetics from its narrow definition. Winston (2006) proposed to regard beauty as a transformative force for expanding and heightening consciousness. The transformative dimension is established along two theoretical steps: 1) emphasizing the commonality between daily and aesthetic experiences; 2) emphasizing the qualitative differences between the two based on commonality. Many authors refer to Dewey (1934)'s *Art as Experience* (Hohr, 2010, 2013; Rasmussen, 2006) to look for a solid connection between daily and aesthetic experiences. Close to Dewey's position, Neelands (2004) distinguished the two notions of intra-aesthetic and para-aesthetic to look for a more fertile ground for the transformative dimension of aesthetics. According to him, the intra-aesthetic approaches is based on an isolation between participants' experiences in DiE and in the broader social, cultural and historical context. It prioritizes participants' skill development in arts and legitimates social differences. As a contrary, para-aesthetic approaches sets from the social-artistic dialectic and recognizes artistic experiences as a type of social and cultural learning with a priority of participants' personal and social development.

Because my interest lies in researching DiE as a developmental intervention for new understanding, it seems to me that DeCoursey's notion of "aesthetic engagement" describes participants' aesthetic experiences from the outside of the subjective meaning and experiences- from the angle of attention and focus. This notion hasn't probed into the potential changes of individuals' emotions and understanding in DiE. It cannot explain the real meaning of the emergence of intrinsic motivation in DiE. Efforts emphasizing on aesthetics' function in sharpening awareness usually gives a primary concern to general social issues of unmasking power, ideology and injustice and as a result, the dimension of individual development is relatively ignored. Also, the underlying mechanism for arts transforming individual consciousness and awareness is still waiting to be uncovered. Nevertheless, these two lines indicate potential directions for future psychological investigation of Kant's aesthetic experience in drama. That is, to understand the dimension of intrinsic motivation and the continuity and transcendence of aesthetic experiences with mundane experiences. In Chapter 6 & 7, I made attempts by introducing Heidegger and Gadamer's work from the existential tradition.

Back to Kant's definition, Wang (2003, 2005) pointed out that there are two key points in Kant's concept of purposiveness without purpose for explaining the psychological mechanism of aesthetic experiences: 1) Beauty connects to the sensuous form of the objects rather than its practical utility; 2) There is no direct participation of concepts in the judgement of beauty. It is the coordination of imagination with understanding that evokes pleasant emotions. According to Wang (2003), the mysterious lies in the function of imagination:

"Imagination connects transcendental reason on one side and objects' appearances on the other side. It is not hard to understand the two sides.

But how to understand the imagination? It stays in mysteriousness. It is the mystical alchemy. On one aspect, it makes reason not to produce any concepts. On the other aspect, it makes the objects' appearances not to be just abstractly intuited but to become appearances conveying emotions" (p.79).

Because of lacking an understanding of the mysterious function of imagination, the Kantian framework risks being broken down into two directions: 1) The connection between imagination and objects' appearances is one-sided stressed, which leads to an emphasis on subjective feelings and emotions facilitated by the object. 2) The connection between imagination and transcendental reasoning is exclusively highlighted, which leads to an emphasis on the grasping of the ideas. In the following part, I will present the two directions of theorizing aesthetic experiences in the DiE field: aesthetic experiences as emotional sensuous experience and aesthetic experiences as new understanding.

### **3.3.2.2 Aesthetic experiences as emotional sensuous experience**

The concepts of feeling, emotion and affect are among the ones most frequently referred to when aesthetic experience is foregrounded. As Dewey (1973, p.570) has put forward, "The perception of an art work is not hearing and seeing plus emotion but through emotion". Emotions, feelings and affects also play an important role in criticizing the present over-emphasis on effects and outcomes, in the sense that affective and emotional development are harder to be captured by the pre- and post-tests (Nagy, Laskey & Allison, 1993; Thompson, 2009). It is also important to note that feeling, affects and emotions are endowed with a special role to bypass ideological discourses and bring about innovative meaning construction through metaphors (Courtney, 1995), because of their embodied and pre-semiotic characteristics and their power in facilitating and driving actions. For instance, Sloan (2018) developed the notion of "potentiality" from the autonomous and unconscious affective force and as a theoretical consequence, the affective experience in theatre is understood as a space of liminality and potentiality.

Best (1989) reminded us that there is a danger of regarding the subjective feeling involved in artistic creation and appreciation as direct and pure feelings, which escapes the interruption, prejudice, limit and control from the rational understanding. Best revealed the root of this unquestioned assumption as a dualistic opposition between feeling and cognition, and accordingly, art is positioned in the polar of feeling and is conceived as expressing and receiving emotional experiences. He identified this tendency "subjectivist", as the subjectivist conceptualizes artistic appreciation and creation as imposing and expressing inner feelings to the object. He asked how the two statements from Bolton (1984)- that "aesthetic meanings are felt rather than comprehended" (Bolton, 1984, p.147) and that art aims for a change in understanding- can be consistent and not contrary with each other. Does prioritizing feelings and emotions at the same time means to give up the possibility for emergence of new

understanding? If new understanding is aimed for, does that mean that we are going for cognitive concepts and as a result, repudiating the position of feelings and emotions? Best doubted the possibility of individual freedom and emotional education in the dominating position of feeling and emotions in artistic experiences. Instead, he called for giving a crucial place back to cognitive functions in aesthetic processes. To achieve this, Best proposed two ways to connect feeling and cognition:

1) Distinguishing emotions from sensation, as in the emergence of emotions, there is already cognitive processing of the object. This position can be identified with the cognitive theory of emotion, with the determining power at the side of cognitive appraisal;

2) Distinguishing interpretative reasoning from deductive and inductive reasoning. Interpretative reasoning consists of new perspectives, visions and evaluations, and it freshens feelings not in an inhibiting and distorting way.

Best restored the rational dimension of emotional experience as its essential characteristic. In this way, emotional feelings are regarded as an expression of certain understanding (cognitive appraisal and interpretative reasoning). In his solution, the unique characteristic of artistic emotions, e.g. the pre-semiotic and unconscious dimension pointed out by Sloan (2018), and the path through which innovative interpretative reasoning is achieved *through* affective engagement in drama are cancelled. While for researching DiE for new understanding, it is exactly the process giving birth to alternative interpretative reasoning and the possible function of undifferentiated and unconscious feelings in the emerging process, that are the “black box” to be analyzed further. I also found the notion “understanding” interesting, as it differs from the more “cognitive” ones, such as concepts, and it gives a flavor of being intuitive and hermeneutic. In Article B, the issue between feeling, cognition and understanding would be resumed in the theoretical scope of Vygotsky’s work on the higher development of emotions and affectivity.

### **3.3.2.3 Aesthetic experiences as new understanding**

The emphasis on cognitive functions and emergence of new understanding can be seen in efforts to define aesthetic experiences made by DiE researchers and introduced from the philosophical area:

“The aesthetic recognition for creator and observer is characterized by the experience of understanding; an entirety of emotionality and rationality” (Rasmussen & Wright, 2001, p.2).

“Aesthetic denotes a mode of sensuous knowing essential for the life and development of consciousness; aesthetic response is inevitably, through its sensory and physical operations, cognitive in nature” (Abbs, 1987, p.53).



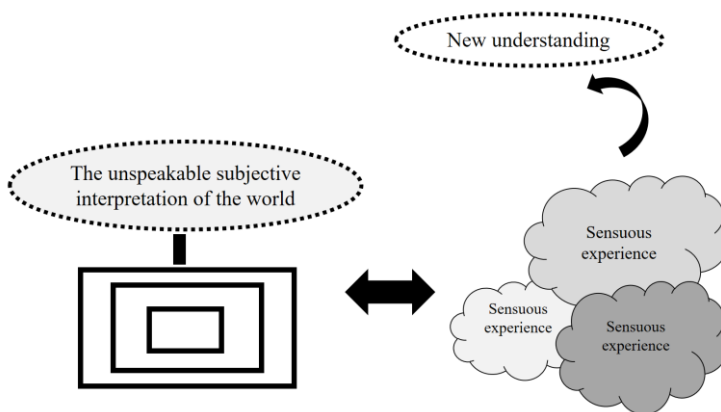
Aesthetic experience is distinctive because “cognition, imagination, memory and the body work in complex interrelation to produce insight and fresh understanding” (Haseman & Winston, 2010, p.467).

Aesthetic engagement is featured in the following three aspects: animation (feeling alive), connection (ideas emerging from individuals’ experiences and interpretation of the work, integrating individuals’ past experiences and understandings), and heightened awareness (becoming more open) (Bundy, 2003).

To summarize, aesthetic experience is holistic, as it integrates multiple levels of functions, e.g. emotion, imagination, cognition, memory and the body; it produces a heightened level of consciousness and a unique type of understanding, which can be called as insight, sensuous knowing or an emotional and rational whole.

As the most distinctive characteristic of aesthetic experience, the sensuous dimension in the emergence of new understanding is firmly held in all the above definitions, which can be seen most in the juxtaposition of cognition and other psychological functions, such as emotion and memory. The way how the new understanding is derived from and influences back upon the holistic function of emotions and cognition needs to be further analyzed.

For example, Austrang & Sørensen (2011, p.12) proposed a definition focusing on the side of the symbolic form of the artwork: “Aesthetics are a sensuous symbolic form that contains an interpretation of ourselves and the world and which is particularly capable of communicating from, to and about emotions.” And accordingly, the aesthetic experiences in art creation and appreciation is “an issue of symbolic communication where conscious understanding results from understanding through the sense” (Austrang & Sørensen, 2012, p.93).



*Figure 3-3 Aesthetic experiences emerging from the subject-work interaction*

Figure 3-3 summarizes Austrung & Sørensen's definitions. First, from the side of the artwork, artwork (including the design of episodes in DiE) is a special type of symbolic form for expression. On one hand, as Austrung & Sørensen (2012, p.93) has pointed out, "it has been created with the intent to be experienced sensorial, i.e., with all of the human sensory potential as resonance." On the other hand, the content is shaped in a unique form to imply some ideas for the participants to connect with and to express subjective interpretations of the world. These interpretations can be "the subjective, emotions and sensory experiences that to the subject itself appear silent, unclear and fragmented and topics such as hate or love, whose complexity and emotional meaning can only be captured roughly and insufficiently in discursive phrasing" (Austrung & Sørensen, 2011, p.14). The problem of how understanding can be achieved through sensorial experiences rather than arriving directly on ideas implied by the work needs to be further examined.

In sum, both the two orientations emphasize on the generation of new understanding from drama experiences. The educational orientation highlights a rational reflective position towards these experiences. For aesthetic orientation, Kant's notion of imagination makes sensuous knowing mysterious. The two orientations are related with different understanding on the intellect-affect unity for psychological development. This discussion is resumed in Chapter 6.

### **3.4. MODES OF EXPERIENCES IN THE DRAMA SPACE: DIFFERENCES AND CONNECTIONS**

In the above review, I have organized the literature on the emergence of new understanding in DiE's third space along two orientations- the educational orientation and the aesthetic orientation. As has been pointed out, both orientations aim for an examination of the emergence of new understanding from the open space. The two orientations have different focuses. The educational orientation emphasizes on reflection in and after the experiences, while the aesthetic orientation calls for paying attention to the epistemological value inherent in the aesthetic experiences. In this section, I will introduce Hohn (2013)'s three modes of experience developed from Dewey's concept of "experience". I found it useful for investigating the difference and continuum between the two orientations.

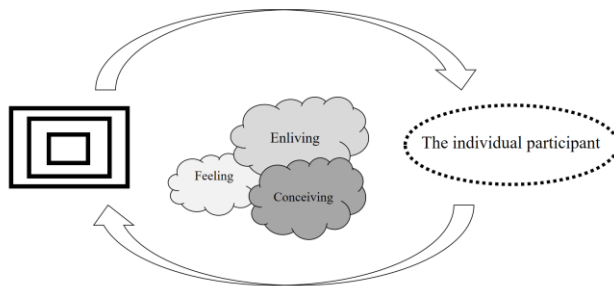
Hohn (2013) proposed that experience can be divided into various main aspects- the emotion, action, cognition and communication. Concerning the degree of integration of these aspects, three modes of experiences can be identified: conceiving, feeling and enlivening.

1) Conceiving. In the conceiving mode, it is the statements and concepts that mediates experience. As a consequence, a relatively higher position is endowed to cognition compared with action and emotion in the holistic experience.

2) Feeling. The feeling mode consists of pre-symbolic/ non-symbolic/ de-symbolized interactions and constitutes the implicit ground for knowledge construction. In feeling, emotion, cognition, action and communication are in a primary and undifferentiated unity.

3) Enlivening. In the enlivening mode, we become able to “emerge to the world as (conscious) subjects” (p. 32). Enlivening uses aesthetic presentation, forms and patterns as its medium. In this mode, emotion and cognition is simultaneously distanced and proximate with each other in a playful exploration. In enlivening, cognition is “holistic, situational, and relational, grasping complexity and subtlety” (p.34), and also more fluid and ambiguous in generating and clarifying meanings. Enlivening shares common characteristics with both the conceiving and feeling mode. Compared with feeling, it is also integrate and holistic, but without the dominating position of emotions. Also, the reflective dimension makes it close to the conceiving mode, but without the necessity of being consistent. With this special emotion-cognition unity, we can experience the unspeakable understandings and interpretations in enlivening’s presentation.

From the perspective of Hohn’s three modes of experience, the debate between the educational and aesthetic orientations can be revisited. Roughly speaking, the educational orientation mainly works for (not merely on) the conceiving mode. For instance, in Freire’s use of visual aids as codification, the codification object contains a theme and is specially made for the group to discuss and reflect on the theme. The aesthetic orientation, on contrary, focuses more on the feeling and enlivening mode. When Sloan (2018) talks about the space of potentiality opened up by the unconscious feeling, she can be seen as mainly referring to the feeling mode- an undifferentiated unity with a prominent position of feeling- the pre-symbolic dimension of which opens up spaces for meaning exploration and innovation. When sensuous knowing or emotional-cognitive holism is emphasized in aesthetic experiences, it can be said that the enlivening mode is foregrounded, with a salient emergence of understanding from the coherent whole.



*Figure 3-4 Conceiving, feeling and enlivening as modes of experiences in DiE space*

Hohr's differentiation of Dewey's experience into three modes sketches an outline for conceptualizing the transforming experiences emerging in the potential space opened up by DiE (Figure 3-4). Because the educational and aesthetic orientation are often integrated as different episodes in one DiE workshop, participants may experience all the three modes in the workshop. More researches are needed to trace and analyze how different psychological processes are integrated in the three modes of experiences and how the different modes transit from each other and synthesize into powerful transforming experiences to give birth to new understanding.

### 3.5. FROM "GIVING" TO "MAKING": THE DEVELOPING AGENT IN DRAMA

In the above section, I have reviewed literature on conceptualizing DiE as a transforming space for the emergence of new understanding. Most of these literature implies a discourse of learning and education. That is, the participant enters into DiE as being ready to "be given" with some new experience and to "be enlightened" with some new state of consciousness. In accordance, DiE is illustrated as being particularly powerful and efficient in making/producing/bringing about these experiences. In this discourse, the position of developing individual as an agent with his own intention, motivation and desire for meaning making is not emphasized. To prepare for researching DiE from the perspective of developmental intervention, this section would present efforts in the field to consider DiE as participants' active meaning making activities for their own development.

Discourse on participants as active agents for their own development is relatively marginalized in the area of DiE. Wright (2011) pointed out that,

"What agency might mean in terms of drama and young people is that drama practices, forms and structures *enable* individuals to become creative and active constructors of knowledge and so cultural producers rather than cultural consumers. This means that young people can be seen to be intentional and active in creating their identities rather than having things done to them as "objects", or being passive receptors of external action" (p.112, italics added).

The image of agent in DiE is first of all closely related to the critical theory tradition, which pursues a knowing and acting subject with the power to be responsible and to enact for transformation (Carson, 2012; Munday, Anderson, Gibson & Martin, 2015). Along this line, DiE embraces agency in two ways: 1) agency practiced and cultivated in the DiE space. By enabling active participation, providing protection in the fictional world and facilitating pro-social group work (Neelands, 2009), DiE can empower and scaffold participants to be agentive learners to explore and negotiate learning materials by themselves; 2) Agency transferred to the real world. Learning in the fictional world becomes a preparation for future practices in the social world. In sum, this tradition

regards DiE as a liminal zone to activate and empower individuals to become into agents.

Another line of promoting agency hides in the work of Rasmussen & Wright (2001). Drawing on Dewey's concept of "an experience" which connects daily and aesthetic experiences, Rasmussen & Wright (2001) proposed to deconstruct both notions of "education" and "aesthetics" and to regard drama as a cultural practice and a way of knowing. They re-conceptualized dramatic knowing as a cultural-aesthetic and playful way of knowing. With special concern on form-making and symbol construction, dramatic knowing "allows a space for dealing with sensuous impressions, examining knowledge, experiencing disconnections, re-experiencing meaningful connections and learning "how to know"" and it "highlights a certain intentional, interactive, creative, and context-situated production of meaning" (p.1). By firmly identifying dramatic knowing as human meaning making activities with a generative dimension, they proposed that the rigorous boundary between daily life and arts should be blurred and interdisciplinary efforts can be introduced to develop a theory of aesthetics which is "epistemologically enriched and phenomenologically expanded" (p.4). They adopted the notion of "cultural-aesthetic" activities to connect play, drama and theatre in one continuum. From the perspective of this continuum, they called for a reconsideration and rediscovery of the theatre tradition as "'banks" of resources" (p.6). They also emphasized the experiential and experimental dimensions of aesthetic dramatic knowing in sensuously deconstructing and reconstructing materials. From this experiential and experimental dramatic exploration, reflections and new understanding can be created in a form uniting emotions and cognition. The notion of drama and theatre conventions as resources for individual's cultural-aesthetic meaning making activities also challenge future researchers to focus on the interaction between the dramatic medium and the participants as the meaning makers in dramatic knowing.

From the perspective of researching DiE for developmental intervention, there are three points that should be noted in Rasmussen & Wright (2001)'s proposal:

First, the position of being active agents is firmly endowed to the participants. Participants are regarded as active meaning makers both in daily life and in DiE workshops. In this way, the "myth" of the third space in empowering young people to become into agents is deconstructed. Participants are intentional agents actively adopting dramatic knowing to explore meanings.

Second, the notion of cultural-aesthetic continuum regards drama and dramatization as a type of meaning making activity both in the daily life and in the DiE workshops. It proposes a task of understanding dramatization and dramatic knowing as a general and widely used meaning making activity. In this direction, efforts have been made from the area of drama and psychology. For instance, Heathcote (1984) sees dramatization functioning in daily imagination and narratives. From the psychological

side, Pascarella et al. (2021) theorized dramatization as a spontaneous coordination between individuals' inner psychological world and the outside social world. They also reported observation of children's spontaneous dramatization as early as in kindergarten.

Third, as a fluctuation along the cultural-aesthetic continuum, the characteristics of DiE in facilitating unique learning and aesthetic experiences are kept. DiE can launch various different experiences along the continuum and has the potential to move to the aesthetic side. The difference between aesthetic and mundane cultural activities calls for further research.

Also, because DiE researchers usually don't work from the perspective of psychological development, it seems that DiE attributed the agentive position of the individual in the dramatic cultural-aesthetic activities more to play. In accordance, dramatic exploration is "playful" exploration of the cultural resources. The "playful" tradition connects drama with children's spontaneous play and has a long history in DiE, which can be traced back to the earliest pioneers such as Peter Slade (Heggstad, 2019). Slade (1995) emphasized on the importance of respecting children's spontaneous forms of expression and creative play. Integrating the perspective from the psychological developmental framework can help to probe into the psychological needs, intentions, motivations and desires underlying participants' playful dramatic exploration to have a better understanding of the dynamic process.

In the structure  $\diamond$  spontaneity dialectics, conceptualizing individual participants as meaning making agents amplifies the spontaneous aspect compared to the structural aspect of the workshop design. It should be noted that there is a risk of falling into subjectivist if the agentive position of participants is one-sided emphasized. That is, the meaning making process in the artistic experience is understood as participants projecting and imposing their own visions and interpretations onto the artwork, which covers the epistemological and social values of the artwork (Rasmussen, 2006). That is to say, meaning making in DiE becomes a self-repetitive process. To understand cultural-aesthetic experiences as a fundamental way for *innovative* meaning construction, the vitality of the artwork in generating and transforming human understanding should also be revealed.

In Rasmussen & Wright (2001), drama and theatre conventions are re-considered as resources to be de-constructed and reconstructed. Rasmussen (2006) referred to Gadamer's work to emphasize the epistemological value inherent in the artwork. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer (2013) regards aesthetic experience as an experience of truth, which offers a different position compared with resources:

"Is there to be no knowledge in art? Does not the experience of art contain a claim to truth which is certainly different from that of science, but just as certainly is not inferior to it? And is not the task of aesthetics precisely

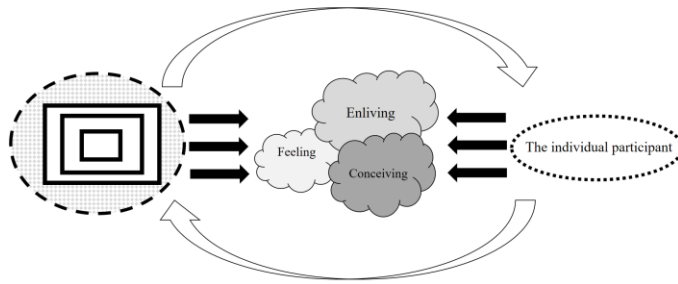
to ground the fact that the experience (Erfahrung) of art is a mode of knowledge of a unique kind, certainly different from that sensory knowledge which provides science with the ultimate data from which it constructs the knowledge of nature, and certainly different from all moral rational knowledge, and indeed from all conceptual knowledge- but still knowledge, i.e., conveying truth?" (p.88)

Li (2003) pointed out that Gadamer's aesthetic theory is in accordance with Plato and Hegel's idealism, as Gadamer also held the position that there are truth and ideas in art. According to Li, Gadamer is different from Hegel in that, Gadamer didn't regard art as a lower form in grasping truth and that art should give up its position to philosophy. Art is not substantive existence of ideas. Rather, it is an event continuously happening in interpretation and a unity of meaning being open to the irreversible time. Li (2001) stressed that Gadamer's introduction of the historical dimension has made both the artwork and the individual subject as temporal existence:

"In aesthetic understanding, the artwork is no longer an object of self-existence, but an organism continuously producing effects, a meaning volatilizing in changes, a mechanism continuously leading to different fusions of horizons, a real temporal being. Also, the understander is no longer a pure knower setting from subjective consciousness or transcendental logics, ..... but a temporal Dasein" (p.125).

It can be said that, for Gadamer, the truth of artwork belongs to the interpretation process in irreversible time. This kind of interpretation happens between the artwork and the individual subject. Truth doesn't abstractly exist in the artwork nor in individual's subjective consciousness. Rather, it is in a historical becoming process. He (2008) compared Gadamer and reception aesthetics and noted that "aesthetic reception is both free and constrained" (p.133), while reception aesthetics ignores the ontological existence of the artwork, emphasizes one-sidedness on the initiative of the interpreters' subjective consciousness and risks falling into the trap of relativism and subjectivism.

To sum up, Gadamer established the ontological existence of the artwork. As an other standing firmly, it rejects assimilation of the subjective consciousness and it continuously invites the individual to enter into the world of the artwork and extend his horizon. The unspeakable subjective interpretation of the world discussed in the previous section exists not as an abstract idea, but as the horizon of the work. In this way, emergence of new understanding is derived from horizon fusion between the artwork and the interpreter.



*Figure 3-5 Interaction between the participant and DiE with implicit horizon*

From Gadamer, two beings is established for researching DiE as developmental intervention- DiE workshop implying potential horizons and the developing subject with his own intentions and motivation. As indicated by Figure 3-5, on one hand, the developing individual is an active meaning maker adopting dramatic knowing for his own development. On the other hand, the setting of DiE and the corresponding guidance of the teacher stands firmly as an other to be encountered, interpreted and dialogued, the aesthetic dimension of which contains possibility for experiencing the fusion of horizons in Gadamer's words.

DiE is different from traditional artworks, such as paintings and sculptures, as it is only half structured, delicately guided and facilitated by the teacher. That is, participants are at the same time creators and recipients of the workshop as an artwork. On one side, they are encountering a much more vague artwork, the horizon of which is a seed waiting to be identified and cultivated; On the other side, the delicate and highly selective mediation of the teacher prepares, invites and guides participants to enter into a productive dialogue with the drama world. This half structured horizon as an implicit seed is best grasped by O'Neil's notion of pretext. According to O'Neil (1995, p.xv), a pre-text is the "source or impulse for the drama process.....as well as indicating an excuse – a reason for the work- it also carries the meaning of text that exists before the event". The notion of pre-text is contrary to the notion of stimuli. O'Neill (in Taylor 2000, p.25, cited in Taylor & Warner, 2006) stressed that, stimuli is mechanical, while pre-text is a "complex organic implication" with a structural function in activating and weaving the dramatic action. In my interpretation, underlying the pre-texts are powerful and classic themes which usually are objects for artistic processing and formation, e.g. love, betray, revenge, etc..



### 3.6. CONCLUSION

Following the subjective turn proposed in Chapter 2, the holistic and subjective *experiences* in the DiE *space* constitute a necessary premise for investigating DiE as developmental intervention. It requires to transcend the design of pre- and post-tests in the instrumental framework to capture all the richness, dynamics, wholeness and transformation of participant's drama experiences. As Rasmussen (2010) put forward, transformation of participants' subjective experiences constitutes what should be measured as the quality of DiE. Because of the complexity and ambiguity of the experiences, it can be felt from reading this chapter that there are so many "dualisms" in organizing and discussing the literature, e.g. experience-reflection, education-aesthetic, cognition-emotion. It should be noted that these "dualisms" are adopted only for the convenience to outline different focuses, as all the orientations are based on the wholeness of experiences.

Examining DiE for developmental intervention research brings a new challenge to the present field. This challenge can be recapitulated as going deep into the experiences to investigate the encountering process between the developing individual as an agent and the DiE as an other (as shown in Figure 3-5). It requires to:

1) analyze the functioning of the psychological system underlying the experiences. Different modes of experiences vary from each other with different integration of basic psychological functions and they fluctuate along the cultural-aesthetic continuum. How are basic psychological functions, e.g. cognition, emotion and imagination, integrated in a whole and interacting with each other differently in different modes of experiences? The present DiE field offers rich insights in describing and distinguishing different types of experiences but relatively lacks an understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the experiences.

2) analyze the experiences as subjective meaning making processes of the developing agent under the cultural guidance of DiE. It is also necessary to ask about how the developing individual would actively make meaning for his own development in these experiences, and how DiE supports and constrains the subjective meaning making process. As Neelands (2004, p.49) put forward: it is to examine "the how (processes) and why (purposes and intentions) as well as the what (impacts and effects) of the transformational effects of drama experiences". On one side, it requires to analyze the unique design and structure of DiE workshops in guiding and facilitating meaning making. On the other side, it is to understand individuals' intentions and motivations for entering into the drama space.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the lens of CPSM to prepare a theoretical and methodological ground for probing into these questions.



# CHAPTER 4. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL STARTING POINT: CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY OF SEMIOTIC MEDIATION

The two previous chapters posed huge theoretical and methodological and challenges for understanding development, intervention and DiE. The second subjective shift presented in Chapter 2 required to focus on the subjective meaning making process of the developing individual as an intentional agent in the intervention event. In Chapter 3, the notion of *experience* in drama *space* was foregrounded as an encountering between the developing agent and the DiE setting. To respond to these challenges, in this thesis I choose the legacy of cultural psychology of semiotic mediation (CPSM) as my theoretical and methodological starting point. CPSM has helped me to comb the following questions: How to conceptualize the individual's psychological world and its development from interaction and connection with the outer world? How to theorize the developing individual as an active meaning maker and an intentional agent? How to frame the relationship between the agent and developmental intervention? It also offers a strong research tradition on individual's higher psychological development mediated by cultural guidance, which helps me to understand development in/through the cultural-aesthetic experiences in DiE.

This chapter is organized as follow. First, I introduce CPSM as a general psychology with its basic tenets in conceptualizing the hierarchical semiotic organization of the individual psyche and the individual <> environment relation as a basic unit. Second, CPSM's emphasis on development as a dynamic becoming process is adopted to re-conceptualize developmental intervention shifting from the frame of linear causality to the frame of catalyzing. Third, I introduce and discuss three key concepts in theorizing cultural-aesthetic experiences in DiE: 1) dramatization, 2) the dialects between cultural resources and the subject, 3) affective semiotic and affective generalization. As a conclusion of the theoretical framework, I offer a model to theorize DiE intervention for new understanding from the lens of CPSM. This model constitutes the starting point for integrating the four articles included in this thesis. Last, the empirical data included in this thesis and its analysis is summarized within the overall methodology circle of the thesis.

## 4.1. CPSM AS A NEW GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY

Generally speaking, cultural psychology devotes to understanding how human's construction of the world is culturally guided and mediated (Boesch, 1991; Bruner, 1990; Cole, 1996; Wertsch, 1991). The legacy of CPSM pays special attention to the emergence and development of human's higher psychological functions under the mediation of signs (Valsiner, 2018a). CPSM emphasizes on the subjectivity of human experiences (Valsiner, 2014a) and it theorizes the subjective psychological life as a semiotic phenomenon constituted by signs (Josephs & Valsiner, 2007). Semiotic dynamics constitutes both the inner psychological world and the outer cultural environment. CPSM investigates the basic principles of human being's production and use of signs to distance and regulate psychological processes both at the intrapersonal and interpersonal level (Valsiner, 2001). Through semiotic construction, de-construction and re-construction, human psyche and the social cultural world are in a dual dynamic relationship of internalization and externalization (Valsiner, 2007). For understanding development, intervention and researching DiE for developmental intervention, there are two aspects in this legacy that should be especially noted for a meta-theoretical consideration: the semiotic hierarchical organization of the individual psyche and the individual  $\diamond$  environment relation as a basic unit.

### 4.1.1. THE HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION OF INDIVIDUAL PSYCHE

Valsiner (2017) stressed that as a general psychology, CPSM is essentially developmental, as it focuses on the dynamic becoming process in the being  $\diamond$  becoming dialectics by introducing three basic rules:

- 1) The rule of irreversible time (future-orientation of signs for pre-adaptation to the environment);
- 2) The rule of human psyche as open systems in constant relation with the environment;
- 3) The rule of goal orientations of the individual (teleological nature in semiotic construction).

The open system's development emerges from the coordination of the system's goal orientation with its environmental condition and guidance in irreversible time. From system's continuous relation and interaction with the environment produces differentiation in both the inner psychological world and the outside environment. From the side of the developing subject, development is conceptualized as structural transformation of the whole system (Diriwächter & Valsiner, 2006) and production of qualitatively new levels of hierarchical organization in the system. Hierarchical organization and reorganization represents the historical development of the open system (Valsiner, 2017). By the process of internalization and externalization between

the individual as an open-system and its environment, a unique hierarchical system of semiotics is constructed as the personal culture and it continues to frame future development both in the sense of guiding and restraining. Personal cultural system is essentially subjective, and it enables the individual to transcend, interpret and act upon the here-and-now context with an intentional orientation. The hierarchical semiotic system regulates the dynamic experiences through the processes of generalization and contextualization. According to Valsiner (2017), the process of generalization involves construction of semiotic regulators at new levels, while contextual specification concerns regulation of the abstract signs upon specific contexts.

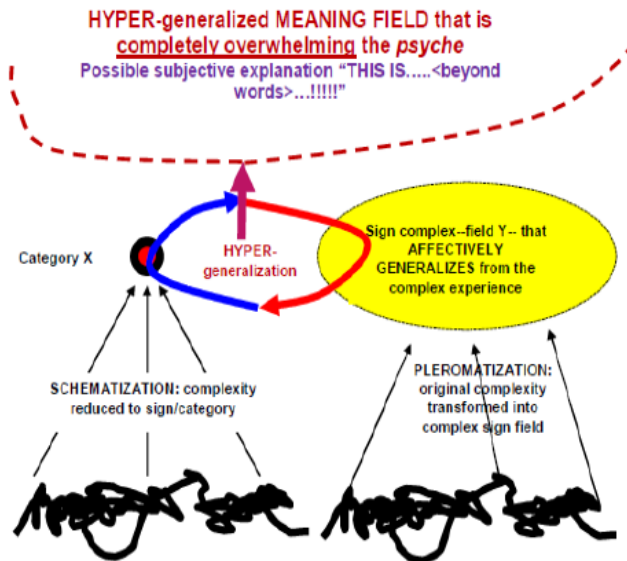


Figure 4-1 Semiotic hierarchy by schematization and pleromatization (Valsiner, 2021, p. 13)

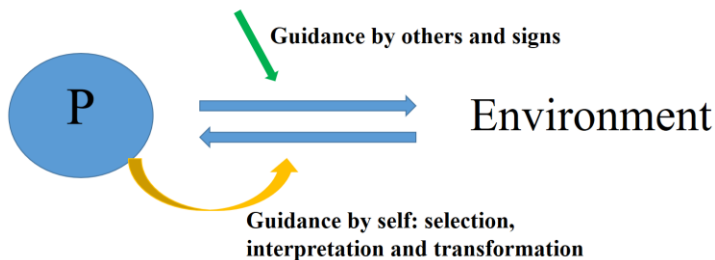
Figure 4-1 illustrates a basic three-level hierarchical organization through generalization. The three levels are immediate experiences, point-like and field-like signs and the hyper-generalized meaning field. Valsiner (2021) adopted the notions of schematization and pleromatization to distinguish two different types of generalization in constructing semiotic hierarchy. According to Valsiner (2021), the process of schematization produces point-like signs, which presents and represents experiences and objects in a relatively unambiguous way, such as mathematic languages. On the contrary, pleromatization encapsulates the complexity and affective flavor of the experiences into a field-like sign, such as poems and paintings. Point-like and field-like signs interact with each other, which leads to further generalization of hyper-generalized meaning field. Valsiner (2019) regards hyper-generalized field-like signs, such as values and beliefs, as the major innovation of CPSM. Hyper-

generalized signs are deeply subjective, fussy, vague, over-whelming. They connects with subject's life projects and orients the total psyche at all the hierarchical levels. The unspeakable subjective interpretation of the world discussed in chapter 3 locates at the level of hyper-generalized field of meaning.

From the perspective of CPSM, emergence of new understanding takes the form of qualitatively new levels of semiotic organization. Through various different processes of generalization, new understanding is condensed into different forms of signs located at different levels of the hierarchy of the personal cultural system. As the individual is in constant relation and interaction with his environment, the personal cultural system also goes through changes in irreversible time.

#### 4.1.2. THE INDIVIDUAL <> ENVIRONMENT RELATION AS A BASIC UNIT

CPSM employs the individual-socioecological frame to conceptualize the relationship between the developing agent and its environment (Valsiner, 2014a). From the individual-ecological frame, it inherits the system <> environment relation as its basic focus. As an advancement, it adds a fundamental component of social guidance to adjust the original frame to fit the social and cultural nature of human development.



*Figure 4-2 Individual-socioecological frame for CPSM research (cited and edited on Valsiner, 2014b, p. 11)*

As can be seen in Figure 4-2, in the system <> environment relationship, the individual as an open system is a goal-oriented agent. It selectively interprets environmental influences and transforms the environment in accordance with its own aims and intentions. Also, it is not a sole individual facing the environment. There are always other social individuals and semiotic settings providing guidance for the individual's relating with the environment.

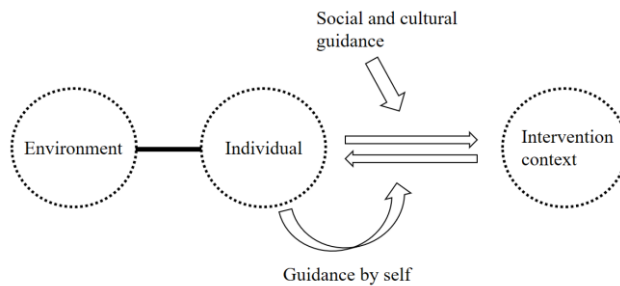
The individual-socioecological frame considers the individual <> environment as a basic unit for researching the emergence and transformation of psychological phenomena. Based on what Valsiner (2014b) has stressed, adoption of this frame in researching developmental intervention requires to analyze the following four aspects:

1) The individual system: The individual psyche is conceptualized in the form of semiotic hierarchical organization (the personal culture). It is through the different levels of semiotic construction (including the hyper-generalized meaning field such as values and beliefs) that the individual relates with the environment. By analyzing the system's functional connection with and meaning making of the environment, systems' fundamental semiotic constitution can be inferred and analyzed. Individual's hierarchical semiotic organization constitutes the premise in designing developmental interventional activities. This aspect is intensively discussed as analyzing SHI (developmental force) and SHUN SHI (following the developmental force) in Article A.

2) The environment: How the environment is set to scaffold and facilitate the system's development. In DiE, it concerns the space and material objects deliberately selected for the intervention.

3) The social others: This aspect especially concerns the role of the teacher and peers in developmental intervention. It asks how the teacher and the peers mediate individual's connection with the intervention. It also involves the mediating function of cultural resources. Namely, what resources are activated and introduced into interpreting the environment.

4) The goal orientations of the individual: It concerns what future-oriented signs are activated and contextualized in the intervention setting and how the individual's intentions, desires and aims step into the individual's interpretation of the interventional setting.



*Figure 4-3 Dual individual <-> environment relations in the developmental intervention (cited and edited on Valsiner, 2014b, p. 11)*

The individual <-> environment unity exists in the irreversible time. Consequently, in the developmental intervention, there are always two sets of individual <-> environment relations (Figure 4-3): 1) the individual living in his own social environment, from which certain manifestations are regarded as problems to be intervened. The original individual <-> environment relationship frames the

individual's participation in the intervention in multiple ways: as the construction of personal cultural system, the formation of developmental potential, etc.; 2) the individual in the intervention context, in which certain problems are dealt with in this liminal space. For DiE, the original individual  $\diamond$  environment relationship is in shadow and indirectly targeted by working in the fictional world.

#### 4.2. DEVELOPMENTAL INTERVENTION REVISITED: FROM LINEAR CAUSALITY TO CATALYZING

The constant processes of semiotic construction, reconstruction and deconstruction from the immediate experiences has resulted in a conceptualization of development as a dynamic becoming process rather than stable states of being. Emergence of innovation (Abbey & Diriwächter, 2008) and teleological future orientation (Valsiner, 2016a, 2016b) are inherent in the becoming process, which have created a huge degree of complexity, unpredictability and uncertainty in developmental intervention researches. It poses great challenges to efforts trying to establish correlation and linear causality between two variables as static entities. Valsiner (2014a) proposed to adopt the notion of “catalyzing” as a form of systemic causality to theorize the relevance of various conditions' presence in novelty emergence in development. Valsiner (2008a) distinguished two different types of catalysis: allocatalysis and autocatalysis. Allocatalysis concerns how the influences from outside break into the self-regulation process of the open-system to trigger changes and transformations. Autocatalysis deals with the individual system's own state in regulating its relation with the outside environment. Developmental intervention functions as a type of allocatalysis and it is endowed with the task of identifying the autocatalytic condition to find the right opportunity to penetrate into the self-organizing system.

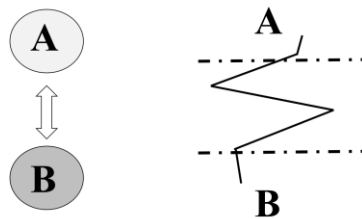


Figure 4-4 From correlational “being” to “becoming” as border crossing (cited and edited on Valsiner, 2021, p.186)

With the introduction of catalysis into developmental intervention researches, the correlation study between psychological variables and interventions as two entities are broken down. Developmental interventions should go deep into what happened behind the correlation researches and be re-conceptualized as an event of system's autocatalysis encountering the allocatalytic interventional design. This encounter involves inevitably resistance, conflicts and negotiation from the subjective side



through the constructive internalization and externalization process. Consequently, intervention is to successfully cross the border of the personal culture system to bring about changes (Figure 4-4).

### 4.3. KEY CONCEPTS FOR THEORIZING CULTURAL-AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES IN DRAMA

In the previous sections, I have reviewed a general conceptualization of the developing individual's psychological world, its relationship with the environment and with developmental intervention from the lens of CPSM. In this section, I would shift the focus back to researching DiE for developmental intervention and review important concepts and ideas for understanding and theorizing the complex cultural-aesthetic experiences in DiE. The concepts included are: dramatization, cultural resources and affective semiosis.

#### 4.3.1. DRAMATIZATION AS A LIMINAL SPACE FOR MEANING MAKING

Dramatization, as human's basic abilities to enact and present selves, has contributed to humans' development of ritual and art (Bedaux & Cooke, 1999). It happens at different levels of social lives. From institutional ritual and organization, to children's spontaneous daily play and interaction, and eventually to more condensed and well-prepared drama activities and theatric performances, dramatization takes on various forms and functions at different levels to influence children's development (Valsiner, 2020; Pascarella, Vicigrado, Tateo & Marsico, 2021). The three levels of dramatization- macro institutions, children's spontaneous interaction in everyday context and DiE- all base themselves on human's basic ability of dramatizing. They obtain powerful influences on developing individuals by locating themselves in the border zone between world and self (Figure 4-5).

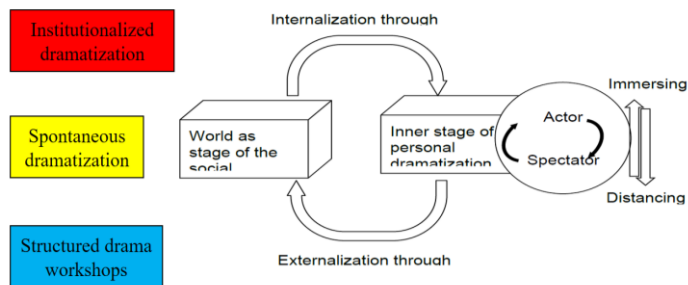


Figure 4-5 Different levels of dramatization in the educational setting (cited and edited on Pascarella, etc., 2021, p.4)

According to Pascarella, etc. (2021), dramatization happens both in the outer world as social drama and the inner world as personal drama. The two drama worlds are connecting, mutually constructing and feeding into each other by the dynamic movement between internalization and externalization. The developing subject takes the role of both actor and spectator in the world of social drama, internalizes the voices, positions, cultural symbols, resources and structures into the inner world and externalize its inner drama upon the outer world through interpersonal interaction. This bi-directional process leads to dialogues, potential conflicts and negotiation. In this way, the two drama worlds constitute a unity continuously evolving towards future in irreversible time.

The notion of dramatization on different levels and in both the inner and outer world specifies what Rasmussen & Wright (2001) has called dramatic knowing in the cultural-aesthetic continuum discussed in Chapter 3. Dramatization can be theorized as a meaning making device or a mode of knowing integrating cultural and narrative schemes to organize social life and regulate our own psychological processes. For this function, Valsiner (2021) stressed particularly the potential of dramatization in affective escalation and generalization. According to Valsiner (2021), affective generalization has the power to break the mundane meaning making processes, bring about innovative synthesis of meaning and understanding and form hierarchical semiotic systems orienting towards the future. This point will be closely examined in the following section of affective generalization and semiosis.

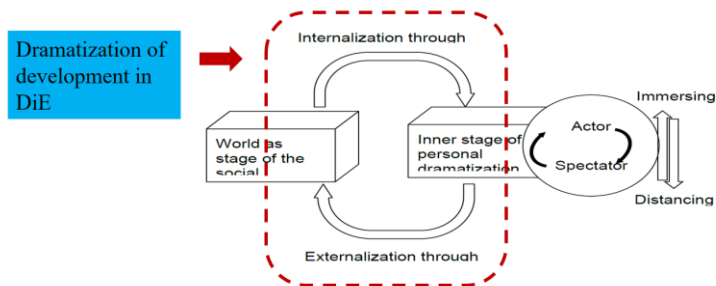


Figure 4-6 Between social and inner drama- developmental dramatization in DiE (cited and edited on Pascarella, etc., 2021, p.4)

Intervention generally and DiE specifically can be conceptualized as a condensed type of dramatization in the border zone between world as social drama and self as inner drama (Figure 4-6), in the sense that they facilitate intensified forms of interaction and dialogue for negotiating the individual-world relationship. This border zone in DiE is special, as it is constituted by three interacting parts: developing individuals- teachers as facilitators- drama art as cultural resources. Both the teacher and the drama art functions as a powerful mediation for the internalization-externalization movement. In this border zone, because of the adoption of drama art as a special codification, the

relationship between world and self is put forward in a close and at the same time distanced manner. Participants are enabled to enter into and transit between different types of experience with different levels of affective generalization. As I have struggled in Chapter 3 in defining the aesthetic experiences in the potential zone, drama art also constitutes a special kind of cultural resources, which I will discuss in the following section.

#### **4.3.2. THE DIALECTICS OF CULTURAL RESOURCES <> AGENT**

Signs, as both social representations and psychological mediating tools, function as the configurative contents and forms for both the social and the inner psychological world. One of the key questions for CPSM is how to conceptualize the relationship between signs and the mediating-mediated subject. This difficulty can be summarized as the macro-micro and mechanism-intentionalism problem (Cornejo, 2007, 2010). On the one hand, social norms and representations are conceptualized as objects inserting influences on individuals' psychological world (the macro and mechanism side). On the other hand, there is an image of intentional and purposeful agents actively producing meaning and intervening the world (the micro and intentional side).

Gillespie & Zittoun (2010) noted that the rise of the notion of cultural resources emerged as a result of cultural psychology's move from culture <> agency opposition to the notion of culturally constituted agency. In the culture <> agency opposition, culture determines the psyche as an external force and the psyche fights against the culture to hold its own existence. The notion of culturally constituted agency emphasizes that it is through the mediation of culture that individuals can distant from the immediate here-and-now context and develop into active agents. They identified the use of culture as resources in raptured activities to make meanings, resume actions and solve problems. In the metaphor of use, the agentive position of the individual is firmly held by emphasizing on individual's creative action and novel appropriation in different contexts.

According to Zittoun (2007, p.344), there are three important conditions in analyzing something being used as symbolic resources: 1) the intention of the agent; 2) the context of the use; 3) the function of imagination. Concerning the first two conditions, Zittoun emphasized that both the agents' intention and the context of use should at least partially go beyond the meaning and value of the resources themselves. That is to say, the resources are not considered in a disinterested interest way in Kant's sense, but are firmly located in an instrumental framework (Zittoun, et al., 2003), although the intention or goal of the use is not necessarily in full consciousness.

From the perspective of developmental intervention, DiE is adopted as cultural-aesthetic resources to guide and facilitate participants' development. Yet, it is a special kind of resources based on disinterested interest to:

- 1) suspend disbelief and live through in the fictional world;
- 2) have aesthetic experiences.

Different from Zittoun's emphasis on the position of the subject as an intentional agency to appropriate cultural resources for aims external to the resources, in DiE participants step into roles and live through the resources. That is to say, it focuses on the experiences of the resources rather than the use of the experiences. Although the participants are also conceptualized as active meaning makers with their intentions, needs and desires in encountering the drama world, the intentional dimension concerning the use of the drama for interventional goals lies mainly in the teacher's side. It is the teacher who needs to consider the connections between the developmental problems and the implicit horizon and educational potential of the drama design. In this sense, DiE represents a gentle and indirect way of intervention, as it is through working in/for the fictional world that the participants' developmental problems are grasped and reflected from innovative perspectives. As participating in plays in Gadamer's sense, the agent position of the participants need to be suspended to some extent to be involved into the imaginary world.

Concerning the aesthetic dimension, there are also theoretical shortcomings derived from the "use" metaphor. Brinkmann (2021) pointed out that in order to correct the theoretical consequence of mechanical causality, cultural psychology sets out with the image of agentive individuals actively using resources for purposeful *projects*. He reminded us that regarding the world as materials and resources for the agent to pursue his project falls right into the frame of modernity, which risks ignoring other, namely patient and non-instrumental, relations to the world. Seeing this risk, he called for making a balance between agency and patiency by introducing the phenomenological tradition to shed lights on human beings' patient and resonate modes of being in the world.

In my interpretation, in the "I am-I think" relation, Brinkmann saw the implicit image of "I am as agents planning, controlling and acting, therefore I think to construct meaning" in the metaphor of use. He proposed to compensate with the image of "I am as patients dwelling, responding and resonating, therefore I think to reveal meaning" on a more primordial phenomenological level. Brinkmann (2021) referred to Heidegger's dwelling, Jonas's three features of tool, image and grave, Gumbrecht's presence and Rosa's resonance to illuminate the unique relating of human with world in the patient mode. To some extent, it is to look for the ground, the primary existence of human living in the world to de-abstract the agentive individual. The questions remaining to be answered are: what is the relation between the agentive mode and the patient mode? For the patient mode, what meanings are to be revealed and discovered (instead of constructed and invented) with the phenomenological tradition, and how these meanings are connected with and derived from our living in the world as an agent?

If suspending disbelief and living through in DiE can be called as a patient mode to dwell in and resonate with the imaginary world, then consequently the in-between experiences in DiE's potential space can be conceptualized as an embeddedness of the active mode within the patient mode. It is to be active through being patient. On the one hand, the participants are actively making meaning in/for the drama world and only from that they can make meaning for their own development. On the other hand, following Gadamer, the DiE workshop has its own ontological existence as powerful themes and horizons and participants' interpretation of the story belongs to one of its presentations. This question is discussed as the "me-not me- not not me" experience in Chapter 7. As can be seen in Chapter 7's analysis, in this threefold experience, we are dealing with very complex I-world relationship with multiple layers.

#### 4.3.3. AFFECTIVE SEMIOSIS AND AFFECTIVE GENERALIZATION

To trace and theorize participants' experiences among different modes activated and mediated by DiE, in this thesis, I rely heavily on the affective generalization model proposed by Valsiner (2007, pp.300-357; 2020, p.10; Branco & Valsiner, 2010). According to Valsiner, there are five different hierarchical levels (Figure 4-7) in human affective processes mediated by signs emerging from individual's constant interaction with the environment.

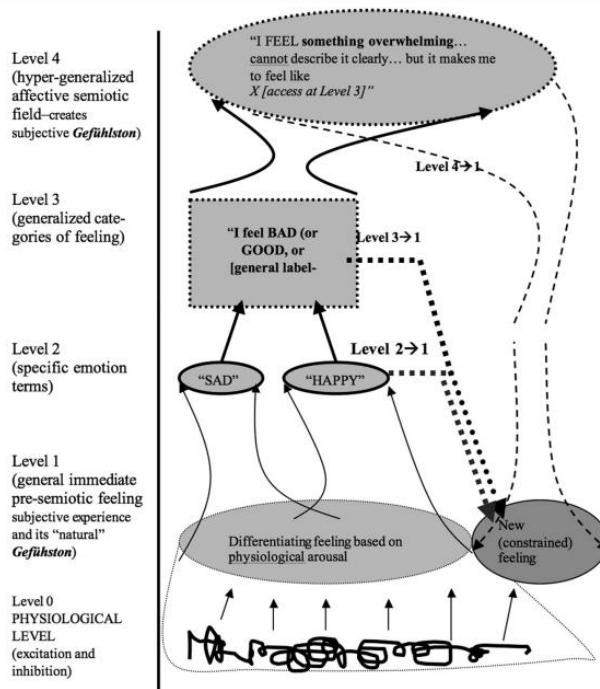


Figure 4-7 Hierarchical model of affective generalization (Branco & Valsiner, 2010, p.246)

In this model, the most unique feature of feeling at Level 1 is their aboutness and fuzziness, compared with the rational discourse with high degree of certainty (Branco & Valsiner, 2010). Valsiner (2007) stressed that sign mediation of un-differentiated feelings started from level 2, where daily discourse about emotions steps in as a reflection of the pre-semiotic feelings on level 1. Encapsulating pre-semiotic and non-mediated feelings into categories of emotions on level 2 enables distancing from the original state and further abstraction into higher levels of generalization and hyper-generalization (level 3 & 4).

This hierarchical model of affective generalization resonates well with Hohr's three modes of experiences in Chapter 3. The mode of feeling, as an un-differentiated and primary whole, can be located at Level 1, the mode of conceiving on level 2 in forms of concepts and categories, and the mode of enliving on Level 4. Both Valsiner and Hohr emphasized that the enliving mode/ hyper-generalization is an undifferentiated whole, yet with higher degree of integrity, compared with the feeling mode.

The hierarchical model of affective generalization constitutes a theoretical foundation to trace, analyze and conceptualize affective transformation in developmental intervention both from the side of the workshop (Article C) and from the side of the developing subject (Article D). Important questions for developmental interventions are how to effectively employ semiotic resources to access and transform the different levels of generalization. For example, In Article D, the participants were in a generalized state of being frustrated and depressed on level 3 due to life transitions. The problem would be how to trigger and transit among different levels to intervene on level 3 in the deliberate intervention context.

#### **4.4. CONCLUSION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

As a general theoretical perspective, CPSM is essentially developmental. It situates the developing individual firmly in relation with the social environment under cultural guidance. The psychological world is conceptualized as a hierarchical semiotic organization constantly developing from the intentional individual's interaction with his environment in irreversible time. CPSM uses signs to represent the psychological reality and its development. Signs bring in integration on three layers:

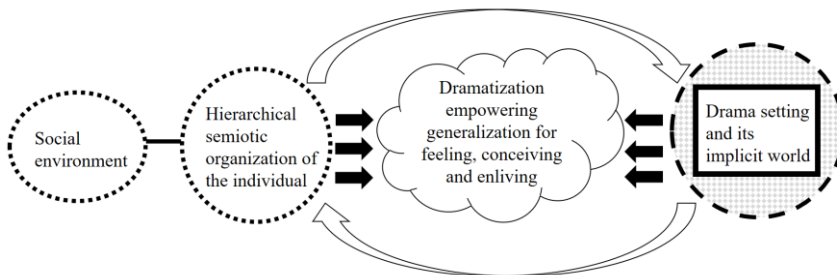
- 1) Integrating various psychological functions. Semiotic construction is not only intellectual, but also affective. As Cornejo, Marsico & Valsiner (2018) noted, there is a primary affective dimension in meaning construction towards the world around, which makes meaning construction highly affective and subjective. Valsiner (2021) regarded affectivation as being central for the development of higher psychological functions. This integration makes the semiotic tradition suitable for capturing and analyzing the drama experiences with a similar holistic nature.

2) Integrating the subjectivity of the individual and the social and cultural guidance of the environment. Signs circulate between the interpersonal plane and the intrapersonal plane. The developing individual and its environment is in a constant bi-directional process of internalization and externalization. In this sense, signs are also the windows to examine the dynamic and fluid interaction between the participants and the intervention.

3) Integrating the past, present and future. The signs from the past are condensed into the personal cultural system in the present, which orients towards and prepares for the future. The personal cultural system frames participant's meaning making in the intervention context. As a subjective configuration (González Rey, 2016a), it constitutes the vintage point to think about intervention as allocatalysis encountering autocatalysis.

The three concepts- dramatization, cultural resources and affective semiosis- bring a new light to investigate DiE as developmental intervention. Dramatization, as a mode of meaning making, possesses the potential of affective escalation and generalization to break mundane and normative meaning making process and bring about innovative synthesis. Living through drama as cultural resources is to be active by being patient. From this “being active by being patient” emerges multiple levels of affective generalization transiting among different modes of experiences along the cultural-aesthetic continuum.

Last, I would like to briefly summarize Chapter 2, 3 & 4. CPSM responds well to the second subjective turn proposed in Chapter 2 and the key notion of experience in the drama space foregrounded in Chapter 3. Meaning making process, intentional semiotic construction and complex cultural-aesthetic experience under guidance are all considered carefully in this legacy. With the windows of signs, CPSM enables me to trace and investigate the dynamic psychological process on multiple levels of generalization in intervention. From the lens of CPSM, facilitating new understanding for development in DiE can be modeled as a dual system (Figure 4-8):



*Figure 4-8 The dual systems model of development in DiE from CPSM*

This model highlights the co-existence of the intra- and inter- personal system. The following three aspects should be noted:

First, concerning the inter-personal system, it highlights the dual sets of individual-environment relations for intervention research. The individual<> environment unity exists in irreversible time. From the original individual-environment relation emerges subjective intentions and tendencies, which frame the individual's meaning making process in the intervention setting. How to deal with these two sets of relations becomes a key question.

Second, concerning the intra-personal system, it conceptualizes the constitution and development of the holistic psychological world in the form of hierarchical semiotic organization generalized from immediate and phenomenological experiences. This generalization is not only cognitive, but also highly affective. How to understand affective generalization and its relation to the intellectual tradition deserves further research.

Third, the three modes of experiences from Chapter 3- feeling, conceiving and enlivening- are understood as different forms of generalization locating at different levels on the model of affective generalization in Figure 4-7. How the encountering between the intentional individual and the DiE setting can facilitate new generalized understanding needs to be carefully examined.

The four articles included in this thesis are efforts to advance from this model. Article A deals with the dual sets of individual-environment relations from the tendency of historical development- the notion of SHI as developmental propensity. Article B targets on development of the holistic intra-psychological system from the Vygotskian legacy. Article C closely examines the guiding and mediating approaches of DiE in facilitating new understanding. Article D provides a micro-genetic analysis of participants' semiotic generalization in DiE.

## **4.5. EMPIRICAL DATA AND ANALYSIS IN THE METHODOLOGY CIRCLE**

Empirically, this thesis contains a structural analysis of a DiE workshop in Article C, and a close analysis of participants' meaning making process in a DiE workshop in Article D.

For the structural analysis, *The green children* is chosen after reviewing various reports of workshops from journal articles and book chapters, because it covers all the three layers of experience proposed in Article C. I follow Vygotsky (1971)'s suggestion of focusing on the text itself, rather than participants' reactions. This analysis aims to examine the conditioning effect from the side of the DiE workshop as a strong other. The method of structural analysis enables me to see how the



sequential steps of the workshop design target on and transfer between the different layers of experiences to facilitate and frame participants' meaning making in the fictional drama world.

For Article D, the workshop *Castle in a box* was conducted before I start my Phd. Thus, it counts as existing data for this thesis. This workshop is chosen as it was especially designed for developmental intervention and it integrated the efforts of researchers and practitioners from both the area of psychology and drama art, which is not commonly seen in the present DiE field. The workshop was conducted in Chinese and then transcribed into English. Significant moments as video segments are chosen for close examination and discussion between researchers. Analysis focuses on the evolving process of the group's semiotic construction under the teachers' guidance inside the frame of the workshop. This semiotic method differs from the usual research method in DiE, e.g. using pre- and post- tests to verify the effect of the workshop. With signs as windows, it becomes possible to access the micro-genetic emerging process of participants' innovative generalization guided by the workshop structure.

Compared to the structural analysis of the text, the micro-genetic analysis of participants' meaning making process in *Castle in a box* is more complicated. I went through a back-and-forth process between being internal as a designer and being external as a researcher. On one hand, my presence in the workshop process gives me a vivid/ intuitive grasping of the overall atmosphere and a direct perception of participants' state of engagement; on the other hand, looking back at the data from the lens of CPSM gives a distance and offers a new perspective to examine what really happened in the process. My analysis and personal understanding of the workshop is gradually deepened along the research process. This can be seen from the difference between Xu, Li & Wang (2018) and Xu, Wang & Tateo (2021).

Both the methods of structural analysis and video analysis are approached from a semiotic view to highlight the dynamic, interactive and generative nature of the intervention process. As shown in Figure 4-9, the empirical research in Article C & D, together with the theoretical constructs in this chapter, locate in and constitute a cohesive methodology circle. The methodology circle interrelates the four parts of basic assumptions, phenomena, constructed theory, constructed methods and derived data (Valsiner, 2017, pp.21-30).

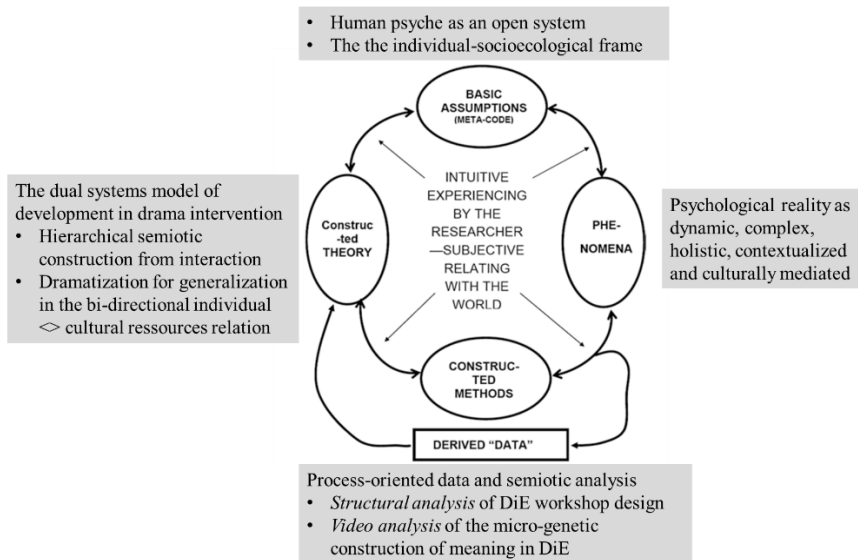


Figure 4-9 The methodology circle of the thesis (cited and edited on Valsiner, 2017, p.22)

Specifically, to follow and advance from Valsiner (2017), the open-systemic nature of the human psych has brought in the individual-socioecological reference frame as a basic assumption. Accordingly, the psychological phenomena is dynamic, complex, holistic, located in a specific context and mediated by social and cultural suggestions. The constructed theoretical model of this thesis stresses the importance of the bi-directional relation between the individual and his context for psychological development. Also, the methods of structural analysis and video analysis center on the processual nature of DiE intervention. The whole project goes back and forth within the methodology circle coordinated by my intuitive experiences as a researcher. In this process, theoretical construction and data analysis interplay with each other and open up rooms for interesting discussions.

# CHAPTER 5. INTERVENTION BASED ON DEVELOPMENTAL POTENTIAL: FROM POST- TO PRE-FACTUM INVESTIGATION

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*Becoming now appears as the truth of Being, and process as the truth about things, then this means that the developing tendencies of history constitute a higher reality than the empirical 'facts' (Lukács, 1971, p.181).*

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As has been discussed in chapter 2, I set from what I called the second subjective shift. The first interpersonal shift, as rooted in a systemic view, has transcended neoliberal rationalization's strong metaphysical notion of bringing something into being in Biesta (2010)'s words or challenging-forth in Heidegger (1977)'s words. It renders intervention as an open, unpredictable and semiotic event. Intervention can no longer be regarded as one entity inserting direct influence on the individual as another entity. Efficient intervention has been understood as successfully stepping into and interrupting the developing individual as a self-organizing system. Based on the first shift, the second subjective shift focuses on the intrapersonal system nested in the interpersonal system. It highlights the active meaning making process of the developing individual as an intentional agent in the intervention context.

Article A in this chapter deals with the problem of agency and resistance in intervention. In Article A, I introduce Chinese philosophical ideas of SHI and SHUN SHI as my interlocutor to theorize the dual sets of individual <> environment relations in developmental intervention. SHI represents individual's developmental propensity and SHUN SHI is to follow and transform SHI's evolving process. The concept of SHI theorizes the agency and self-organization of the system as being framed by the developmental propensity with a systemic and historical dimension. It amplifies the conditioning effects from the side of the original individual <> environment relation on the efficacy of intervention. Or in Lukács's words cited above, it foregrounds "the developing tendencies of history" (Lukács, 1971, p.181).

As Jullien (2004) has noted, the concept of SHI falls into the condition-consequences frame compared with a means-end frame. The means-end frame emphasizes on efficacy of action in achieving pre-set goals. In the condition-consequences frame, on the one hand, the objective existence of SHI as condition predetermines the success

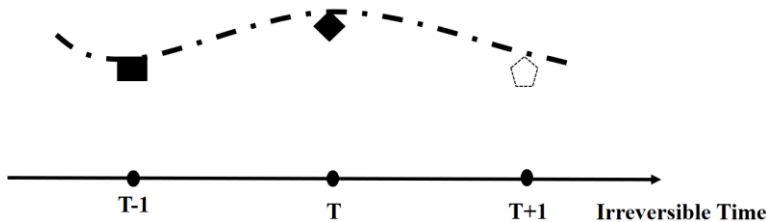
or failure of certain intervention to a large extent; on the other hand, the final consequence is uncertain and open-ended. Accordingly, the efficacy of intervention can no longer be attributed solely to the intervention strategy. Jullien (2004) has stressed that, transformation working on the systemic propensity of SHI is always global rather than local, with all-pervading effects. Thus, back to the psychological perspective, it is the process and result of the whole system's evolvement with the guidance of intervention mediated by the historical relation between the individual and the environment.

In the discussion after Article A, I will elaborate on the following two aspects: 1) two intervention models based on the being-becoming dialectics; 2) two different interpretations of SHI. These two aspects are inherent in the theoretical scope of Article A and can be clarified further to have a better understanding.

**5.1. ARTICLE A: TRANSFORMING BY FOLLOWING FORCES:  
INTRODUCING CHINESE PHILOSOPHY OF SHI AND SHUN  
SHI INTO DEVELOPMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGY**

## 5.2. TWO INTERVENTION MODELS BASED ON THE BEING-BECOMING DIALECTICS

The being-becoming dialectics constitutes a dual reality for developmental researches. It requires researchers to investigate and analyze individual's tangible manifestations on two planes: the static externalizations and its underlying dynamic propensity for future development derived from the historical relation with the environment. Conventionally, developmental researches tend to focus on certain behaviors or abilities of an individual or a group.



*Figure 5-1 Individual's externalized manifestation and its underlying dynamics*

As shown in Figure 5-1, the focus used to be on the change of variables along the timeline. This tradition may lead to two problems:

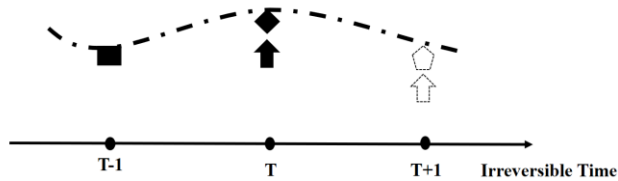
- 1) The description obtained is static. Although several time points (T-1, T, T+1) can be targeted to collect data, the subjective (most of the time invisible) psychological process underlying overt behavior is still neglected in the particular moment (Valsiner & Brinkmann, 2016).
- 2) The same number or similar behavioral manifestation obtained in different points of time may arise from totally different psychological mechanisms; and the numerical change of variables at different time points cannot describe the essence of development because of the non-linear nature of development.

SHI should be considered as an important complementation to investigate the dynamic process of development evolving into future. To fill the gap between the two levels of being and becoming in developmental psychological researches, researchers should work among different levels of generalization and go deeper from non-dynamic analysis of categorizations of elements, to dynamic generalization of SHI based on exploring and theorizing the main systemic driving forces (e.g. the identity position in Article A) in the becoming processes.

From the dialectical relation between SHI and configuration as externalized manifestation, two different interventional models resulted from two perspectives

concerning students' behavioral problems can be distinguished: 1) focusing on configuration: problem-oriented intervention, 2) focusing on SHI: propensity-oriented intervention.

### 5.2.1. PROBLEM-ORIENTED INTERVENTION: FOCUSING ON DEVELOPMENTAL CONFIGURATION



*Figure 5-2 Intervention targeting on misbehaviors in problem-based model*

In Figure 5-2, the geometries represent salient behavioral problems of students observed by the educators. The problems are a result of the dynamic unfolding process of students' developmental propensity based on their subjective meaning making in different conditions in the school context. Educational intervention is presented as an arrow targeting directly on the externalized problems. In this model, the relation between students' behavioral problems and educational intervention follows a pattern of stimuli-reaction. That is, the students present behavioral problems as A and then educators take actions and choose tools to intervene the problems towards not-A based on educators' pre-determined understanding of what a student should and should not be (Tateo, 2019, p.14). Problem-oriented educational intervention has three features:

1) Investigating behavioral problems in isolation. This model regards students' behavioral problems as rising and falling of random phenomena. It cannot identify the ongoing developing process underlying the behavioral problems and is insufficient in explaining why a particular problem makes its appearance at a certain point and takes a certain form in the specific context.

2) Direct intervention with a bigger chance to trigger resistance. It builds its interventional design directly upon the appearance of problems. Its strategy starts from identifying "what is not good" in the problematic behaviors and then use "what is good" to require/inforce the students to obey the rules. It ignores the subjective needs, motivations and potentials underlying the problems, which will result in resistance from the students' side. In its best, although it successfully inhibits a certain kind of behavioral problem, the inhibited subjective potential would manifest itself in other forms in the same or other conditions.

3) Passive intervention. In this model, only when a problem appears can the educators be attentive and take actions. Educators' role transfers from cultivator to problem-solver like "fireman". Without an understanding of the subject's implicit developmental propensity, it can rarely provide insights for effective educational prevention.

### 5.2.2. PROPENSITY-ORIENTED INTERVENTION: FOCUSING ON SHI

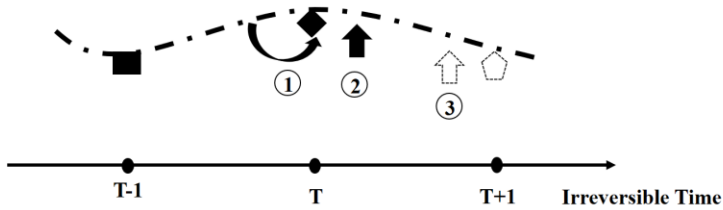


Figure 5-3 Intervention and cultivation as prevention in propensity-based intervention

Figure 5-3 describes educational intervention based on a successful identification of students' intangible developmental propensity. It also has three features:

1) Understanding behavioral problems in the background of historical developmental propensity (① in Figure 5-3). This model connects students' problems emerging in the present with the underlying historical developmental propensity and tries to understand the forming of the problem in the background of potential development: Students' behavioral problems are the result of the evolving process of their developmental propensity. The specific appearance of problems indicates students' subjective meaning making of their relation with the context based on the state of developmental propensity.

2) Transformation as indirect intervention (② in Figure 5-3). Intervention in this model is always indirect. It starts from analyzing the present state of developmental propensity to have a better understanding of the subjective meaning of the emerging problems. It achieves interventional effects by exploiting the power of students' propensity underlying the problems. By creating appropriate transforming conditions, educators can guide students' developmental propensity to evolve itself toward a positive state in interventional activities.

3) From intervention to cultivation as prevention (③ in Figure 5-4). Propensity-based educational intervention requires researchers and educators to transform their role from "intervener" to "cultivator". Researchers and educators should immerse themselves in the school context and be alert to key transitional points of students' developmental propensity. In this way, they can take actions before the emergence of



the problems and create conditions and platforms to assist students' developmental propensity to develop and evolve smoothly. By scrutinizing the beginning of a tendency (Jullien, 2004, p.66) and taking actions ahead, educators merge naturally the prevention with the spontaneous unfolding process of students' potential development. In this way, prevention becomes gentle and undetectable cultivation and is able to reduce resistance from students' side to the most.

Jullien (2004, pp.46-60) distinguished the difference between action and transformation: transformation works and relies on the whole system's evolving process, while action intervening in the course of things is always external, relatively arbitrary, importunate, momentary, partial and superficial. The notion of transformation and action can be adopted to best summarize the two models. Problem-oriented intervention, in the background of the rising of evidence-based intervention, is direct and willed and it relies on techniques and methods to insert influence from external. Propensity-oriented intervention is indirect and it relies on the carrying power of the continuity of system's evolving process.

### **5.3. TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF SHI: DEVELOPMENTAL SET OR INTENSIVE POTENTIAL STATE**

SHI is conceptualized as "propensity at work in configuration" (Jullien, 2004, p.13), which conditions future development into certain directions. A closer look of Article A would lead to a distinguishing between two different interpretations of the developmental propensity inherent in the present configuration and orienting to the future: SHI as developmental set (发展定势) and SHI as intensive potential state (发展潜势). These two interpretations are not clearly differentiated and sometimes fused with each other in Article A, which may lead to theoretical ambivalence. In this section, I will integrate Valsiner (2008)'s notion of allocatalysis and autocatalysis to develop further our work in Article A. Both developmental set and potential targets on the becoming dimension and implies certain direction for future development. The difference lies in that developmental set leads to relatively rigid meaning making and difficulties in inter-contextual adaptation, while developmental potential highlights changes derived from a gap between the individual's subjective developmental needs and the current developmental condition.

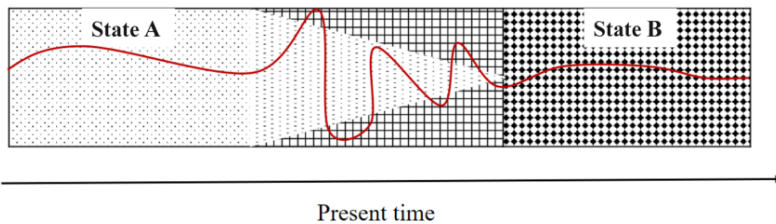
#### **5.3.1. SHI AS INTENSIVE POTENTIAL STATE: INTERVENTION AS SUPPORTING AUTOCATALYSIS**

When SHI is interpreted as intensive potential state, it refers to the propensity of the *developmental potential*. In Article A (pp. 363-364), the historical evolving process of the developmental potential is described from  $t-1$ ,  $t$  to  $t+1$ :

"At  $t$  point, the state of SHI is the most powerful, and the whole system is very unstable. From  $t$  to  $t+1$ , SHI realizes itself from potential existence

into actual being, leading to system's transformative reconfiguration. This realization or actualization is also a process of SHI using itself up for reconstruction. Thus, at  $t+1$ , the system develops into a stable state again" (Wu, Xu & Li, 2021, p.364).

The above segment describes SHI from the perspective of developmental potential state. At the point of  $t$ , the potential state is the strongest in directing the system to innovative development and the system is most unstable and sensitive to external guidance. As shown in our work elsewhere (Xu & Wu, 2021), the transition between state A and state B is characterized with intensive potential state:



*Figure 5-4 Transitional state with intensive developmental potential (Xu & Wu, 2021, p. 315)*

This transitional state constitutes a case of auto-catalysis for the system, as the system is unstable and itself requires innovative change. Developmental intervention targeting on this transitional state is to recognize the gap between the present social condition of the system and the need of the system and to create platform to support the system to evolve into a new state (which is also educationally desirable). Along the process of evolving into state B, the intensity of SHI also decreases, as SHI realizes itself in constructing new social practice. It is at this moment of full culmination of potentiality that intervention can rely on the system's spontaneous transformation process and derive most efficacy.

In other work (Li, 2010; Li & Xu, 2018; Xu & Wu, 2021), my colleagues and I presented another example highlighting the dimension of newly emerging but unrealized potential of SHI. In this example, primary school students at third grade exhibits various behavioral problems as a result of the emergence of a strong wish for active self-presentation (being smart) after getting familiar with the school rules. Here problems are derived from a gap between students' present social practical activities and their strengthened self-consciousness. This potential gradually grows from students' participation in school practical activities in the first and second grade. As it becomes prominent, it requires to break through the present configuration to realize itself into new practical activities. Successful intervention is achieved by identifying and guiding this new developmental potential into new social practical activities under the name of "Being smart to solve problems".

### 5.3.2. SHI AS DEVELOPMENTAL SET: INTERVENTION AS ALLOCATALYST

The second interpretation is to understand SHI as developmental set with relatively rigid tendency for self-organization towards future. This interpretation highlights SHI as propensity of *the present configuration* rather than developmental potential state. As illustrated by the empirical example in Article A, the identity position of “good student” with the meaning of “surpassing others and obtaining approval” functions as a strong set restricting J’s interpretation of the unfamiliar situation and leading to J’s low participation and anxious reactions. This identity position has its rootedness in J’s developmental histories in the normal school and family setting. As a historical tendency, it brings difficulty in adaptation when the context changes: “in the setting of unfamiliar joint activities, J could not realize her propensity- inward was to maintain her identity as a “good student” and outward was to try to surpass other peers” (Wu, Xu & Li, 2021, p.368).

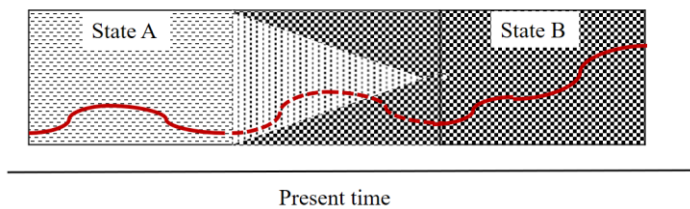


Figure 5-5 Transitional state for allocatalyst intervention

As shown in Fig 5.5, when SHI is interpreted as a developmental set, the potential is in a low state and the system is very stable in assimilating interaction with the outer world. Failure in assimilation brings in a tensional state and it constitutes a case of allocatalysis, as the changes are introduced from the outside to break the rigid tendency of the system. Intervention is to soften the rigid tendency by going along the direction of the tendency to introduce new social activities and cultivate new developmental potential (growing developmental potential in state B in Figure 5-5). In Article A’s example, fictional characters (“wisdom wizard”) and collective dramatic activities are introduced to break the meaning making barrier of J’s original rigid psychological set, to protect J into playful exploration of new experiences and meanings and to successfully embody and internalize new meanings into the original meaning-making system. In this intervention, the fictional dimension becomes essential for practicing and internalizing new regulating signs. Intervention works by relying on the strong developmental set while softening, altering and enriching its meaning under the protection of the fictional world.

In sum, both SHI as developmental set and intensive potential state are systemic and historical. Both of them favor the whole system's development in certain direction towards the future. As developmental set, SHI represents propensity on the level of configuration. As intensive potential state, SHI represents propensity on the level of developmental potential. In both cases, the developing individual is not necessarily aware of its developmental state/needs. Behavioral problems may be derived from the subjective meaning making based on the personal culture. Developmental intervention is to read the underlying state of SHI and guide the system's self-regulation process. In both cases of autocatalysis and allocatalysis, SHUN SHI can be adopted as a gentle and indirect intervention by going along the system's original propensity. In autocatalysis, SHUN SHI is to scaffold the evolving process of intensive potential and guide it to realize into educationally desired results. In allocatalysis, SHUN SHI is to design activities close to individual's cultural system to gradually enrich its content and cultivate new potentials in new activities.

#### 5.4. CULTIVATION AND INTERVENTION ON THE CIRCULAR EVOLVEMENT OF POTENTIAL

As has discussed above, both SHI as developmental set and as intensive potential state are accompanied with certain problems. In SHI as developmental set, students get too rigid, while in SHI as intensive potential state, students need help in regulating themselves to realize the underlying potential. To follow Jullien (2004), SHI as developmental set can be located at the beginning of the potential's evolving process, when potential is weak and the system is stable. Also, the intensive state is the culmination of the evolving process, when the potential is strong and the system is very unstable. Theoretically speaking, intervention brings about a circular rising and falling movement of developmental potential in the sense of intensity (Figure 5-6).

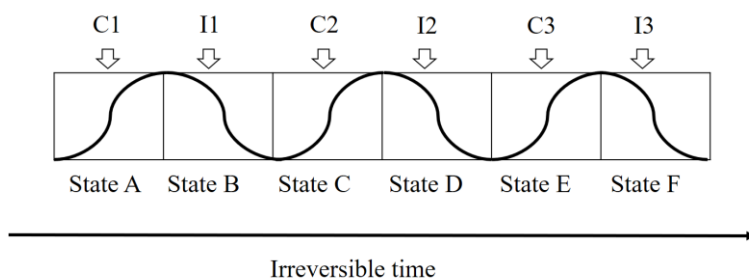


Figure 5-6 Cultivation and intervention based on the dynamic evolving process of developmental potential

With the advancement of intervention comes students' developmental progress as well as new problems. Wu, Li & Zhang (2017) revealed this phenomena as *releasing effect*:

“When pupils positively participated in and fully engaged in creative activities, their actualizing potentialities and bad habits (which might have disappeared for a long time, or appear as new) emerged side by side. If there were no experience of such practices, pupils would not have presented these weaknesses nor would they have had the opportunity to develop and improve” (p. 452).

Wu, Li & Zhang (2017) made an example of problems emerging at the starting/end point of potential’s evolving process, at which moment students became too rigid to the rules of the intervention activities:

“At first, pupils had no knowledge or consciousness of cooperation. When the groups were built up stably, phenomena of egoistic group consciousness came to light. Narrow group consciousness which put group success above anything else and correspondently fear of group failure externalized in the course of group competition as the action of shielding group members” (p. 452).

At this moment, cultivation of new developmental potential is needed, which can be done by introducing more challenging activities. Problems can also emerge at the culmination point, at which moment intervention is needed to guide the realization of the strong potential. Figure 5-6 illustrates the alert work of cultivation (as C1, C2, C3) and intervention (as I1, I2, I3) on the circular evolving process of developmental potential. Again, it is worth noting that the circular movement describes only the intensity dimension, not the real nature, of the changes of developmental potential.

## **5.5. CONCLUSION**

Targeting on the dual sets of individual-environment relations, this chapter introduces the concept of SHI to shed lights on the wholeness of individual’s historical development nested in the present intervention setting. This wholeness not only condenses historical development in the present but also orients to the future, in the form of propensity as developmental set and developmental potential. The three dimensions of past, present and future are integrated into “a past-present-future dimension” (Branco, 2016, p. 226) in SHI. As a propensity oriented towards future, SHI constitutes a special condition for intervention inputs. The condition-consequences frame contrasts greatly with the means-end frame in understanding intervention, as it brings in a complex interplay between certainty and uncertainty. Intervention as an event should identify and follow the evolving process of this propensity to reduce resistance. The right opportunity for intervention’s allo-catalytic interruption locates at special autocatalytic moments with high tension. These are the moments when the strong force of developmental set fails to realize itself or when the intensive potential force requiring to change the present condition to realize itself.

Distinguishing developmental configuration and propensity along the being-becoming dimension resonates with Pawson (2006)'s realist perspective to target on the dynamic forces, structures and mechanisms underlying the surface manifestation. Developmental propensity is the intangible vitality of the open-system, the synthesis of the interplaying forces. It is the global, holistic agency of the open-system. It has been captured as identity positions (e.g. "being smart" and "being a good student") to highlight its feature as a condensation of the intra-personal system nested in the inter-personal system. That is, it integrates all the psychological functions at the intrapersonal level, and it is derived from and oriented toward the whole individual-context system. How to identify and scaffold this invisible and holistic force based on the formed configuration becomes the key issue for researches with a realist and pre-factum ambition.

# CHAPTER 6. DEVELOPMENT SETTING FROM ALL THE VITALITY OF LIFE

This chapter deals with the development of the intra-psychological system. Conceptualization of development from holistic experiences in drama space in Chapter 3 & 4 highlights three characteristics of psychological development: 1) the wholeness of psychological system; 2) the fundamental function of feeling, affect and emotion; 3) the mediation of cultural resources. The key is to grasp all the three characteristics in theorizing development and it can be encapsulated into the following question: How to theorize psychological development as a whole integrating intellectual and affective functions mediated by cultural resources?

In this chapter, I transfer to the Vygotskian legacy to tackle this question. Vygotsky's work and the legacy of cultural historical theory (CHT) has been one of the most important and fruitful theoretical sources of CPSM (Tateo, Marsico, Valsiner, 2022). Among the many productive tenets proposed by Vygotsky, the principles of socio-genesis, semiotic mediation and searching for wholes as unit of analysis are the most relevant ones for this thesis. Vygotsky regarded human psychological development not as development of isolated psychological functions, but as reorganization of inter-functions of the whole psychological system constructed through the mediation of signs (Fossa, Pérez, & Marcotti, 2020). Development is theorized as construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of inter-functional relations in forming innovative psychological systems. In this chapter I highlight his proposal to investigate development on "the full vitality of life". With this proposal, Vygotsky aims to investigate the historical development of the whole psychological system with a special emphasis on emotions and affects- the vitality dimension of human life.

In Article B<sup>1</sup>, I traced and distinguished Vygotsky's different theorizations of the development of the intellect-affect unity in different periods of his work. I used the notion of "intellectual affect" to designate the development of this unity from the primary vital whole. Intellectual affect outlines the systemic nature of the psychic world in a simplified but also significant way, as some authors also note that we do not need to stop with abstracting only these two components from the wholeness of the person (e.g. Blunden, 2016a). Article B roughly depicts Vygotsky's theorization of intellect-affect development in two sides: for self-control and for aesthetic transcendence. For the later, ideas from existential aesthetics and Chinese *Jingjie*

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<sup>1</sup> Article B is wrote for a special issue in *Culture & Education* with the aim of reviewing and developing Vygotsky's work in the Chinese context. The parts highly relevant for this thesis starts from the third section "Psychology on "the full vitality of life": the problem of affect and Vygotsky's Spinozian solution".

theory are also introduced to advance his work and establish a new psychology of art in the existential orientation.

Based on these two sides, the discussion following the article examines the role of cultural mediation for human development. This aspect is approached from the language  $\langle \rangle$  consciousness problem. In accordance with the two sides of developing the intellect-affect unity in Article B, I also distinguish two different ways of conceptualizing the language  $\langle \rangle$  consciousness problem: 1) Vygotsky's way of word meaning-consciousness-personality; 2) the existential way of language-sensuous consciousness based on Marx and Heidegger's work. Correspondingly, the mediation of language for developing consciousness can also be differentiated into two sides: 1) internalization; 2) illumination.



## **6.1. ARTICLE B: AFFECTIVITY FROM “THE FULL VITALITY OF LIFE”: DEVELOPING VYGOTSKY IN THE CHINESE CONTEXT**

Xu, S. & Tateo, L. (accepted). Affectivity from “the full vitality of life”: Developing Vygotsky in the Chinese context. *Culture & Education*.

## **6.2. THE WAY TO FREEDOM: THE LANGUAGE <> CONSCIOUSNESS PROBLEM**

In this section, I will transfer to the role of cultural mediation for human development centering on the language <> consciousness problem. Language is one of the most important cultural resources; consciousness is the whole of psychological functions reflecting reality. Language plays a fundamental role in developing consciousness. Through the mediation of language, consciousness develops in the form of hierarchical inter-relations between psychological functions. In accordance with the two sides of developing the intellect-affect unity in Article B, I also distinguish two different ways of conceptualizing the language <> consciousness problem: 1) Vygotsky's way of word meaning-consciousness-personality; 2) the existential way of language-sensuous consciousness.

### **6.2.1. VYGOTSKY'S WAY: WORD MEANING- CONSCIOUSNESS- PERSONALITY**

Vygotsky emphasized on the function of words and concepts for the conscious regulation of psychological functions. His elevation of the words' function from promoting the development of thinking to the development of consciousness is most clearly expressed in the following segment:

“The consciousness of sensation and thinking are characterized by different modes of reflecting reality. They are different types of consciousness. Therefore, thinking and speech are the key to understanding the nature of human consciousness. If language is as ancient as consciousness itself, if language is consciousness that exists in practice for other people and therefore for myself, then it is not only the development of thought but the development of consciousness as a whole that is connected with the development of the word. Studies consistently demonstrate that the word plays a central role not in the isolated functions but the whole of consciousness” (Vygotsky, 1987, p.285)

As Gal'perin (1934, cited in Engeness & Zavershneva, 2021) noted, in accordance with the distinction between lower and higher psychological functions, human consciousness is intelligent compared with animal's instinctive consciousness. In the same spirit, Vygotsky distinguished two types of consciousness- sensation and thinking. The sensation mode is bounded to the objects in the stimulus-reaction frame. On contrary, the thinking mode, with its power in distancing and generalization, endows concepts to objects and transforms the primary affects induced by objects to affects connected with concepts (Zavershneva, 2010a)- a way proposed by Spinoza. Citing Marx's writing of “language is as ancient as consciousness itself” (Vygotsky, 1987, p.285), Vygotsky verified the fundamental position of language in the development of consciousness. The mediation of words opens up an alternative plane

of reflection to the reality (van der Veer & Zavershneva, 2018). As Zavershneva (2010b) has summarized, the work of thinking determines the extent of freedom in individuals' action in the immediate field. Gal'perin (1934, cited in Engeness & Zavershneva, 2021) also pointed out that the intelligent consciousness in distancing and freeing from the immediate situation is gradually strengthened by the sequential development of perception, memory and thinking as the dominant function of the psychological system.

Zavershneva (2010a) identified a basic definition of humans as a type of animals who can think in Vygotsky's work, the image of which is inherited from the modern metaphysics. According to Zavershneva's interpretation, Vygotsky injected the power of thought and words to the image of superman in transcending all the constraints and being his own master. This image is most prominent in Vygotsky's establishment of tertiary connections between personality as the highest, consciousness as the intermediate and primary psychological functions as the lowest (Zavershneva, 2014). In this hierarchy, the personality concerns self-transcendence and functions as a guidance for consciousness's work with psychological functions: "the highest forms of consciousness are directly related to free voluntary action and the formation of a mature personality, which is only possible due to the emergence of a new form of consciousness: awareness of one's own psychological processes, self-reflection, and self-consciousness" (ibid, p.73).

This hierarchy of psychological functions - consciousness - personality reads quite abstract. It seems that all the individual concerns is to master the cultural tools to develop himself as a capable intelligent being. Based on a similar concern, Sawyer & Stetsenko (2018, p.149) noted an implicit process of "ceding ground to the mentalist interpretation of psychological development" in Vygotsky's exclusive emphasis on the mediating function of speech for the higher psychological development. Zavershneva (2014) called it the accusation of intellectualism for investigating consciousness mainly from the aspect of verbal thinking and ignoring other equally important aspects such as motivation, emotion and volition. Gal'perin (2009, p.122, cited in Zavershneva, 2014) also criticized that, "Thus, as of today the system does not have somebody who would act, driven by some or another motive, neither does it consider actual reality, within which his psychological life could unfold- there is neither personality nor its interrelations with the real world".

As a complementary to the intellectual tendency, the notion of "sense" was proposed in Vygotsky's later work to capture the affective and volitional aspects of consciousness and to form a new general psychological system (González Rey, 2016b). Sense is "the aggregate of all psychological factors that appear in our consciousness as a result of the word" (Vygotsky, 1987, p.276). It is subjective and directly related with all the vitality of life. González Rey (2015, 2016a, 2017) developed Vygotsky's ideas in the last period and proposed the notion of subjective sense as symbolic-emotion integration to highlight the creative and generative

characteristic of human psyche. That is to say, the ability to invent alternative realities should not be restricted to human's power of thinking. Equally important is the function of emotion and imagination, which should not be ignored or reduced into irrational power needing to be mediated and controlled by the intellect.

Comparing the two notions of word meaning and sense (also considering González Rey's further development of Vygotsky), it seems that there are two versions of consciousness as the psychological system. Both versions have the power to save the psychological world from being a mere reflection or epiphenomena of the external world. One is dominated by intellect and the other by emotions and imagination. The distinguishing between word meaning and sense echoes the two different traditions inherited by cultural psychology noted by Cornejo (2004, 2007): 1) the hermeneutic-historical tradition with emphasis on the determination of collective structure and representations; 2) the phenomenological tradition focusing on individual creativity. Distinction of the two traditions represents the intensive inter-relations not only between meaning and sense but also between culture and agency, language and speech, Geist and mind. On one side, there is objectivity, entities, and structures. On the other side, there is sensuousness, subjectivity and fluidity.

In the line of word meaning- thinking- consciousness, language is understood as means and tools to be mastered and internalized for self-regulation, a position closer to the hermeneutic-historical tradition. As Jones (2009) pointed out, that language in CHT is considered as "a self-contained system whose constituent units have an autonomous existence above and beyond the actual concrete practices of communication in real life" (p.168). In the general picture of the individual internalizing linguistic means to regulate self in a social way, "the child appears not as a subject of activity and a participant in the creation of cultural forms of life..... but as an object to be worked on" (ibid, p.178). As Sawyer & Stetsenko (2018) has also noted, the social (including language) is conceptualized as a force exerting influences from outside on the individual. This top-down effect from the social to the individual abstracts both the social and the individual as entities. The urgent task is to establish an active agent to motivate both the social and the individual to enter into continuous dynamic changes. Sawyer & Stetsenko (2018, p.151) pointed out two unproductive directions in developing agency- the direction of abstract mentalist and the direction of objective materialism:

"Acknowledge the role of individuals in their own development yet do not fall into a dichotomization that divides language and speech into subjective processes that can claim autonomy before and outside social practices, on one hand, versus an external and self-contained realm of objective resources to be internalized, on the other".

The problem of how agency emerging from the social processes has a long history not only in CHT but also in general cultural psychology, when the role of culture in human development is seriously considered. For CHT, what would an active individual be

like if the starting point is Marx's famous motto "but the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" ("Theses on Feuerbach", n.d.)? The official Soviet psychology emphasized on an immediate relationship between the individual psyche and the external influence in the form of activities with concrete objects (González Rey, 2016c). Vygotsky was once criticized for deviating from Marxism, as he fought for the developing agent a certain degree of freedom. The difficulty lies in establishing the individual's agency while also firmly holding its rootedness in the social process. The above segment cited from Sawyer & Stetsenko (2018) manifests this concern. That is to say, language should not be regarded as an individual invention (one-side emphasis on the individual as a pre-given agent) nor as objective resources (one-side emphasis on the social as a stable entity).

In sum, Vygotsky highlights the role of word meaning in developing intelligent consciousness and personality with free will. In this conceptualization, there are two risks: 1) intellectualism and a mentalist position; 2) losing the individual's agency to the one-way determination of language as objective resources. The following part will examine the existential orientation for an alternative perspective.

#### **6.2.2. LANGUAGE <> CONSCIOUSNESS REVISITED FROM THE EXISTENTIAL DIMENSION**

A productive line for thinking about the language <> consciousness relation and the problem of agency with socio-genesis comes from the existential orientation in which the work of Heidegger and Marx has huge influences. The basis for the juxtaposition of Heidegger and Marx in this orientation lies in their discussion on the existential dimension of language and consciousness (Dai, 2013; Liu & Zhang, 2011; Wang, 2000b; Wu, 2006, 2016). The existential orientation integrates the hermeneutic-historical tradition and the phenomenological tradition by regarding language and consciousness as human's active grasping and understanding of their own historical Being.

For Heidegger (2000) in *Letters on Humanism*, "language is the house of Being which comes to pass from Being and is pervaded by Being" (p.93). Heidegger distinguishes between computational thinking and thinking of Being (Wang, 2018). Computational thinking belongs to strong metaphysics and it grasps the world as an object at the disposal of the subject. For Heidegger (2000), thinking of Being "brings this relation to Being solely as something handed over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being comes to language" (p.83). In thinking, beings are named into language in their essential relation with man: "Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. This naming nominates beings to their being and from out of that being. Such saying is a projection of the clearing in which announcement is made as to what beings will come into the open as" (Heidegger, 2002, p.46). The historical man comprehends his own Being and

his own destiny in language and makes decisions towards the future. Human's Being, in its reality, is the social practice of human activity, which brings about continuous changes in the field of language:

“Language is not merely one among the many tools man has at his disposal; it is what enables man to come into the realm where Being opens up to him, to stand within the opening, the disclosure of Being. Only when there is language can there be a world, an ever-changing succession of decisions and works, of acts and responsibilities, but also of arbitrariness and clamor, of confusion and decay. Only where there is a world can there be history” (Heidegger, 2014, p.175).

From Heidegger's work, the existential dimension of language is clear. Language is primarily thinking of Being. Thinking of Being makes Being clear. Because human's Being is intangible, this clearing also manifests as an effort of meaning making for understanding the history, the present and preparing for the future, including “arbitrariness and clamor”, “confusion and decay” (ibid). Once achieved, this clearing would also bring about “decisions and works”, “acts and responsibilities” (ibid). Language thus has the power to intervene in real life, a power that comes from the real expression of real life. In this sense, language condenses the cognitive, emotional and volitional dimensions of consciousness, because through language it condenses man's understanding of his own Being, the meaning of his past existence and the direction of his future.

The existential dimension in Marx's work is much more difficult to clarify compared with Heidegger. In Marx's work, the social mechanism in the formation of individual consciousness concerns two kinds of social-individual relationship: ideology and sensuous consciousness (Wu, 2006). Ideology are “enthronement of language and abstract thought”, which loosens the relation between ideas and reality and makes ideas free from the constraints of reality (Holborow, 2006, p. 9). Sensuous consciousness, also referred to by Marx as practical consciousness and consciousness interwoven with “the language of real life” (Marx & Engels, 1998, p.42), is the immediate and primordial one spontaneously emerging from individuals' real social life. Mamardašvili (1986) noted that ideology is secondary, and it not only depends on but also covers the primary sensuous consciousness. The relationship between language, ideology and sensuous consciousness is best illustrated in the following segments from *The German ideology*:

“Consciousness [*das Bewussusein*] can never be anything else than conscious being<sup>2</sup> [*das bewusste Sein*], and the being of men is their actual life-process” (Marx & Engels, 1998, p.42).

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<sup>2</sup> In this citation, Marx's use of “being” is understood as “Being”.

“The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men- the language of real life” (ibid).

“Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of “pure” theory, theology, philosophy, morality, etc.” (ibid, p.50).

For Marx, sensuous consciousness is consciousness of people’s existence as actual life-process. The language of real life belongs to sensuous consciousness and it condenses people’s primordial understanding of their material activity and material intercourse in a pre-logic and pre-rational way. In Heidegger’s words, the language of real life has the power of naming. It names the objects in their essential connection with humans’ existence. Just like sensuous consciousness is pre-logic and pre-rational, the language of real life is also pre-logic and pre-rational. The “division of material and mental labour” (ibid) leads to a separation of ideology and sensuous consciousness and brings about a theoretical attitude towards life process manifesting in ideology.

How to understand sensuous consciousness in “Consciousness [das Bewusstsein] can never be anything else than conscious being [das bewusste Sein], and the being of men is their actual life-process” (Marx & Engels, 1998, p.42)? Does this saying indicate a direct determinism from the social to the individual? The key words in this segment are consciousness, being (Being) and actual life-process. Wang (1996) proposed a connection of interaction- sensuous relational Being- sensuous consciousness to understand the line of life-process- being- consciousness. From the perspective of this proposal, consciousness is substantially about the sensuous relational Being. Emphasis on relations is most highlighted in the following segment:

“Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me; the animal does not “*relate*” itself to anything, it does not “*relate*” itself at all. For the animal its relation to others does not exist as a relation. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product and remains so as long as men exist at all” (Marx & Engels, 1998, pp.49-50).

According to Wang (1996), the most important point is that the three components: interaction, sensuous relational Being and sensuous consciousness, are all pre-logic and pre-rational. That is to say, they are not pre-determined and pre-designed by the individuals as intellectual subjects. He pointed out that for human beings, the relation becomes the new mode of Being constructed by interaction. He also stressed that the

social in “Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product” (Marx & Engels, 1998, pp.49-50) is not an abstract entity standing against the individual, but should be understood as sensuous relational Being. In consistency with Wang’s interpretation, Wu (2006) identified a primacy of the relational process in ontology compared with entities or objects located in the relations.

How does sensuous consciousness develop from the sensuous relational Being? Wang (2016, p. 6) referred to Heidegger and noted that sensuous consciousness “is not the ability to perceive the external world on a sensory level”, but as “the human’s way of Being”, which is “being in objective relations and being conscious about this relation”. According to Wang (2016), sensuous consciousness is the human’s way of Being, because human beings are the unity of objectivity and subjectivity, and of being passive and active. In the definition of humans as an animal who can think, there is a dualism between objectivity and subjectivity, being passive and being active. On the one hand, the aspect of objectivity and being passive is attributed to the animal dimension, while on the other hand, the aspect of subjectivity and being active belongs to the power of thinking.

Both Heidegger and Marx highlighted human’s ability of grasping and understanding his own Being. How is it possible that we can have an understanding of our Being in relations at a pre-symbolic and pre-conceptual level? Barrett’s example of a child’s reaction to being called by name can help me here. This segment is to elaborate Heidegger’s idea of *Dasein* as a field, but it can be used here as a manifestation of the sensuous consciousness of the primordial relational Being:

“Now, there is nothing at all remote or abstract about this idea of man, or *Dasein*, as a field. It checks with our everyday observation in the case of the child who has just learned to respond to his own name. He comes promptly enough at being called by name; but if asked to point out the person to whom the name belongs, he is just as likely to point to Mommy or Daddy as to himself- to the frustration of both eager parents. Some months later, asked the same question, the child will point to himself. But before he has reached that stage, he has heard his name as naming a field or region of Being with which he is concerned, and to which he responds, whether the call is to come to food, to mother, or whatever. And the child is right. His name is not the name of an existence that takes place within the envelope of his skin: that is merely the awfully abstract social convention that as imposed itself not only on his parents but on the history of philosophy. The basic meaning the child’s name has for him does not disappear as he grows older; it only becomes covered over by the more abstract social convention. He secretly hears his own name called whenever he hears any region of Being named with which he is vitally involved.” (Barrett, 1958, pp.218-219)”



*Dasein* as a field is a primordial experience of our living in the world. The notion of field reveals our relational Being with other objects, things and individuals, all of which constitute parts of my existential field. In this example, the child and his vital objects originally belong to an existential field. It is through the power of social convention that the child learns to abstract himself and his vital objects into different categories with different names.

Barrett's example also touches the relationship between language as ideology and language as sensuous consciousness. There are three important points in the above segment. First, the child pre-conceptually identifies his own Being as a field/region constituted by relations. He points to his parents when asked to whom his name belongs, because he is in essential relations with his parents and his parents are vital parts of his existential field. This is also to say, what is primary is the child's relational Being in the social, his primordial connection with the world. Second, attributing the name to the child's physical being is an abstract social convention (ideology), which helps social communication but may also cover the child's primordial experience of his Being as an existential field. Third, abstract social convention only covers the primary understanding of the primordial connection between the individual and the world but can never eliminate it.

From this segment, the dual function of language in revealing and covering our existence as relational Being is clear. Also worth noting is the two different layers of consciousness- as sensuously grasping and understanding the primordial relational Being and as intellectually knowing and organizing the world with the means of social conventions. Social conventions can also appear as crystallization of sensuous consciousness, e.g. rituals, artworks and vivid language produced from daily social practice. In these cases, social conventions become a mediating tool to illuminate the sensuous layer of consciousness.

In sum, from the point of "consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being" (Marx & Engels, 1998, p.42), Vygotsky's way to freedom highlights the aspect of "conscious" in the "conscious being" by stressing the mediating role of word meaning for thinking and consciousness's voluntary control. Being is lost in the emphasis of intelligent development of consciousness. While the existential orientation foregrounds the aspect of "Being" in the "conscious being". In accordance with the relation to Being, language can be distinguished into ideology (covering Being) and sensuous consciousness (illuminating Being).

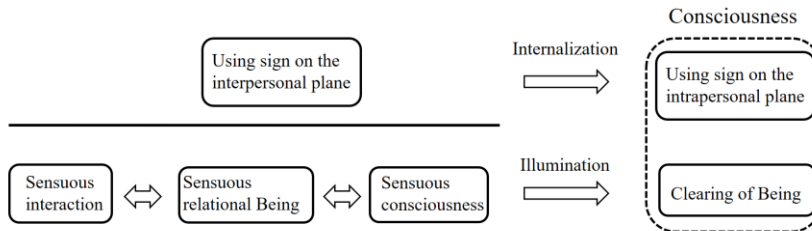
### 6.3. FROM LANGUAGE TO CONSCIOUSNESS: INTERNALIZATION & ILLUMINATION

If we roughly divide two ways of using language: 1) language as grasping the primordial connection between human and his world (e.g. language as art and as real-life's immediate language); 2) language as ideology and abstract social convention, then Vygotsky can be identified as regarding language mainly in the second way in his emphasis on the connection of word meaning-thinking-consciousness. Bearing the two functions of language in mind, it can be further inferred that there are also two different interpretations concerning Vygotsky's general genetic law of development:

“Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First, it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an interpsychological category, and then within the child as an intrapsychological category” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57).

From the perspective of language as a socially conventional semiotic means, cultural development concerns with learning to master cultural tools and means and the first-after relationship between interpsychological and intrapsychological category is not only logic (the intrapsychological category is derived from the interpsychological category) but also successive. The child goes through a process of social regulation and afterwards he learns to use the means and tools to regulate himself. For example, with the aim of self-regulation and self-control, internalization of semiotic mediated regulation for emotional and affective development has been studied (Holodynski, 2013; Ratner, 2000). The focus has been how the socially regulated activities with bodily signs can be transformed into self-regulated activities with mental signs.

From the perspective of language as revealing the primordial Being, the social plane is the sensuous interaction constructing relational Being (the process of existing in practice for others), and the psychological plane is the sensuous consciousness/understanding of Being (the process of existing for myself). And the first-after relationship between the social and the individual is logic. The interpsychological and intrapsychological plane emerges simultaneously, as it can hardly imagine social interaction without consciousness. Like Liu & Zhang (2011) has stressed, consciousness, Being and actual life-process are different aspects of the same process. Or in Marx's word, language is as ancient as consciousness itself.



*Figure 6-1 Sign use upon the background of sensuous consciousness of Being*

Figure 6-1 illustrates the differentiation of the two layers. The primordial sensuous consciousness, as an understanding of Being, functions as the ground for perceiving, meaning making and using signs on the interpersonal and intrapersonal plane. Understanding of Being is to understand the existential field from which emerges the concrete beings and signs. As Barrett noted:

“Being is the context in which all beings come to light- and this means those beings as well that are sounds or marks on paper. Because man stands in this context, this open space of Being, he may communicate with other men. Men exist “within language” prior to their uttering sounds because they exist within a mutual context of understanding, which in the end is nothing but Being itself” (Barrett, 1958, p.224).

Corresponding to the two layers, the process from the social plane to the conscious plane can also be distinguished into two: 1) internalization of sign use from the interpersonal plane to conscious regulation on the intrapersonal plane; 2) illumination from sensuous consciousness to clearing of Being in consciousness.

### 6.3.1. INTERNALIZATION

The “mutual context of understanding” (ibid) happens before any semiotic activities. It also challenges the notion of internalization, which has been the key to understand the psychological development transforming from the interpersonal plane to the intrapersonal plane. Internalization has been conceptualized as follow:

“Every higher psychological function was formerly a peculiar form of psychological co-operation, and only later became an individual way of behavior, transplanting inside the child’s psychological system a structure that, in the course of such transfer, preserves all the main features of its symbolic structure, altering only its situation... the history of the higher psychological functions is disclosed here as the history of the transformation of means of social behavior into means of individual psychological organization” (Vygotsky & Luria, 1994, p.138).

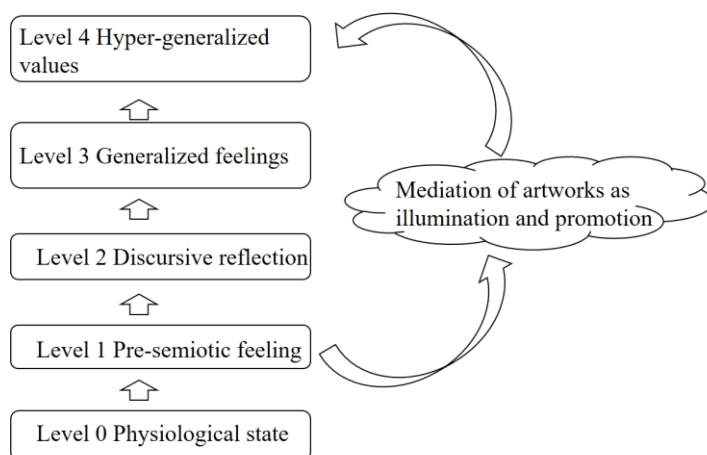
There have been many different interpretations concerning the “what” and “how” aspects of the internalization process. Arieviditch & Van der Veer (1995) summarized different focuses on social materials as the object for internalization from Vygotsky, Leont’ev and Galperin. According to them, for Vygotsky it is the semiotic mediated interaction structure that is internalized; for Leont’ev, it is the object-related activity that is transformed; and for Galperin, it is the form of action internalized into an internal plane with more flexibility and freedom. Also, some authors emphasize on the semiotic dimension of the social material. For example, Lawrence & Valsiner (1993) stressed on internalization of materials with a semiotic nature, which guarantees a bidirectional transformational process between the internal subjective conceptual system and the external social guidance.

Generally speaking, the transformative dimension of the “how” aspect is firmly held by all of the above perspectives to guarantee the legitimacy of the psychological world. However, the “what” aspect gives problem in conceptualizing internalization as transferring social entities to psychological entities. In other words, the notion of internalization is invented to transfer social beings into the psychological plane, not the Being of beings.

How can Being of beings, including our own primordial relational Being, emerge in sensuous consciousness and be brought into consciousness? Do we need to bring back the spiritual dimension to psychology? The psyche’s ability of transcending concrete beings to grasp Being makes human mind the most fascinating object for cultural psychology aiming to examine all the richness and vitality of human life.

### **6.3.2. ILLUMINATION IN ART**

Grasping Being in sensuous consciousness is pre-logic and pre-rational, e.g. the language of real life from Marx’s work and the mutual context of understanding from Barrett’s interpretation. As an old Chinese saying goes, “people use it daily but they don’t know it (百姓日用而不知)”. Sensuous consciousness can be “unconscious” and it can be elevated to the conscious level in art. Vygotsky’s analysis of *Gentle breath* is an example. He showed us how the generalized feeling of “liberation, lightness, the crystal transparency of life” (Vygotsky, 1971, p.154), as one of the truths of our Being in the world, becomes prominent and clear through the affective abstraction in reading the novel. Art’s elevation of sensuous consciousness to consciousness is unique, as in art this illumination happens in the sensuous area, which has been pointed out in the work of Baumgarten and Kant.



*Figure 6-2 Mediation of artworks from pre-semiotic feeling to hyper-generalized values*

Figure 6-2 illustrates the qualitative transformation of pre-semiotic feeling to hyper-generalized values through the mediation of artwork. As the “raw material” for artistic transformation, the pre-semiotic feeling on Level 1 are unique forms of feelings. As proposed in Article B, Wang (2005)’s notion of existential experiences can help me here. According to Wang, existential experiences are sensuous affective experiences arising from concrete and specific objects and situations. However, it is different from normal emotional reactions as it transcends the concrete objects and points to “a general feeling of Being itself” (p.163-164). To summarize Wang, the primary and fundamental grasping of transcendental values, e.g. love, family, home, happens in our sensuous existential experience rather than in rational understanding. They become illuminated as sensuous understanding as a result of affective abstraction in art. Using Article B’s words, existential perezhivanya in mundane life are the premise for the synthesis of aesthetic perezhivanya. The world established by art is a human existential affective world. Understanding in art is an understanding of human existential experiences. Art uses concrete and sensuous materials and formulations to present “an existential world to which human belongs” (Wang, 2005, p.59). Wang (2005) conceptualized affective abstraction in art as re-experiencing of existential experiences:

“Thus, re-experience is singing of existential experiences. Singing is making forms. It is to make presence an existentially experienced world in imagination. In this world, existential experiences are sensuously re-constructed. Because of this re-construction, the original existential experiences achieve their own illuminated meaning” (p.120).

To recapitulate Wang’s idea, existential experiences in daily life can be scattered, overwhelming and vague. It motivates the sensitive artists to create sensuous figures

to illuminate its transcendental meaning. It also constitutes the underlying motivation for the audience to activate his imagination to appreciate the artworks. This process is uncertain for both the artists and the audience. For the artists, they don't work from a pre-given value but are faced with the task of exploring new forms and techniques to home and clarify the existential experiential world in sensuous figures. For the audience, aesthetic experiences are also unpredictable as it doesn't work in a mechanic stimuli-reaction way. Aesthetic experiences are derived from the audience's active meaning making of their own existential experiences through imagination guided by the frame and horizon of the artwork.

The idea of regarding artistic experiences as re-experiencing and illuminating existential experiences in daily life has huge theoretical potential for cultural psychology (Xu & Tateo, accepted). First, the sensuous aspects of the psyche, e.g., feelings, emotions, affects and imagination, can no longer be regarded merely as epiphenomena of other psychological functions or providers of raw materials to be processed. It is in the pre-symbolic sensuous area that our Being is primarily given to us. Second, it makes aesthetic experience both highly personal and highly social. It is highly personal because individuals' own existential *perezhivanie* is recalled and becomes the basis for artistic transformation. It is highly social as through art, the original existential *perezhivanie* is elevated into hyper-generalized values manifesting as a shared humanized world. In this sense, aesthetic experience is a real *perezhivanie* as it contains a re-living and overcoming of the original existential *perezhivanie*. Third, the real mediation of aesthetic experience lies not in the artwork, but in the existential experiences of which both the artist and the audience deeply concerns. Existential experiences, as being pre-logic, pre-rational and highly affective, functions as a complex field-like sign guiding and catalyzing meaning making in artistic creation and appreciation. Being deeply grasped by the existential affective experience and trying hard to clarify its meaning can be a strong developmental potential- SHI in chapter 5- to be involved in cultural-aesthetic activities. The aboutness of Being in the existential affective experiences pushes and facilitates the artists and appreciators to reveal, to see clearly the truth of our unique existence in this world. This deep interest in revealing the essential meaning of our existential affective experience holds firmly the psychological investigation of aesthetic experiences as an active subjective meaning making process.

#### **6.4. BEING-IN-ITSELF AND BEING-FOR-ITSELF: CONSCIOUSNESS AND DEVELOPMENT**

“Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being” (Marx & Engels, 1998, p.42). This means that human beings are born as metaphysical animals. We live in the irreversible time and yet at the same time strive to construct meaning to understand our Being. This ambivalence is the division of labor inside the psyche and it contains all the possibilities for consciousness to both illuminating and covering our primordial relational Being.

The active <> patient mode discussed in the developing agent <> cultural resources dialectics in Chapter 4 can be recalled here to understand the difference between the two orientations of intellect-affect development in Article B and the two ways of cultural mediation discussed here. Intellectual affect for self-control echoes the active mode in which we have a picture of agents actively internalizing and mastering instruments and resources to strengthen his power of understanding to distance and regulate psychological functions from above to below (Zavershneva, 2010a). As a contrary, intellectual affect in aesthetic transcendence is closer to the patient mode in which we dwell in, resonate with and illuminate our Being in the existential world. Yet, it is being active through being patient, as understanding of our Being also brings new light on the past and new directions for the future. As Heidegger (2014, p.175) said, there is “decisions and works”, “acts and responsibilities” in the illumination of Being.

Human’s ability in understanding and consciousness makes human a unique being. Sartre (2021) distinguished human as “Being-for-itself” from “Being-in-itself”. Being-in-itself are beings, which are fused with themselves. As Barrett (1958, p.245) interpreted, Being-in-itself “is the self-contained being of a thing. A stone is a stone: it is what it is; and in being just what it is, no more and no less, the being of the thing always coincides with itself”. While Being-for-itself concerns self-decision and self-transcendence- the dimension of agency. It “is coextensive with the realm of consciousness, and the nature of consciousness is that it is perpetually beyond itself....Human existence is thus a perpetual self-transcendence: in existing we are always beyond ourselves” (ibid). Following the spirit of Sartre, Tarasti (2012) identified a transcendental act in Being-for-itself as a negation, alienation and estrangement. This transcendental act concerns the dialectic relation between being and becoming. The meaning of “what should be” is in constant tension with “what is”. It functions as a promoter sign (Valsiner, 2018b) for humans’ action toward the future. In the present *Zeitgeist*, with science and technology becoming the spirit of our time rationalizing social life, the aspect of “what should be” is understood more as a coercive requirement for self-promotion with a strong metaphysics flavor. The active image of human beings strongly covers the patient mode. Humans are imagined more as intellectual designers treating themselves as materials to be rationalized. The layer

of sensuous consciousness and the existential dimension of language share the same fate of being forgotten.

The perspective of existential orientation adds the layer of Being into the being-becoming dialectics. It brings back the active real-life process and self-innovative sensuous consciousness as the basis for the being  $\diamond$  becoming tension. It deconstructs the culture as an entity and the individual as a pre-given subject and functions as a motivating power for the continuous and intensive negotiation between culture and agency, language and speech, meaning and sense, Geist and mind. The active real-life process, as the layer of Being, constantly produces new social relations and new sensuous consciousness, which re-examines our present being and gives birth to new wishes and desires for the becoming future. This kind of understanding is “what should be” (the becoming dimension) deeply rooted in and derived from “what is” (the being dimension). Language expresses sensuous consciousness both consciously (e.g. in poetry art) and unconsciously (e.g. as “the language of real life”, Marx & Engels, 1998, p.42). In this language  $\diamond$  sensuous consciousness relation, the word, both in the form of the language of real life (Marx & Engels, 1998, p.42) and artistic expression, is “a microcosm of consciousness” (Vygotsky, 1987, p.285) reflecting all the richness and vitality of life. As an expression of sensuous consciousness, the word crystalizes the holistic psyche within the individual  $\diamond$  environment unity.



## 6.5. CONCLUSION

The journey in this chapter has been long. I started from Vygotsky's proposal of constructing psychology on "the full vitality of life" to examine his theorization of holistic psychological development mediated by cultural resources. Integrating the two ways of intellect-affect development and the two ways of language mediation on consciousness, Vygotsky's theorization can be distinguished and developed along two directions, one highlighting word meaning, internalization, conceptual generalization and consciousness's control of psychological functions, the other highlighting language as sensuous interaction process, illumination, affective generalization and clearing of Being from sensuous consciousness to consciousness.

The most important innovation in this chapter is the introduction of the existential orientation. For the line of affective generalization in Article B, this effort has two functions: 1) to identify the humanized nature of the aesthetic affects generalized from short circuit; 2) to establish the connection between aesthetic experiences and daily existential experiences and theorize the aesthetic experience as a further generalization of existential *perezhivanie* in mundane life. The existential orientation also responds to the mysterious problem of sensuous knowing in aesthetic experiences back in Chapter 3.

Integrating *perezhivanie* and *Jingjie* theory is a primary effort to theorize development in aesthetic experiences as a dynamic encounter between the different generalization levels of the individual and the artwork. This integration prepares a theoretical basis to conceptualize drama space as an aesthetic ZPD. However, it should be noted that the aesthetic ZPD is special, as 1) the two ends of the zone, as the individual's *Jingjie* in life and DiE's *Jingjie* in art- are intangible and hard to define; 2) the mechanism of development/elevation in this special ZPD is not restricted to internalization for mastering and controlling. It also contains illumination from sensuous consciousness to consciousness. The two together constitute a complex process of development.

The existential orientation also leads to an alternative look at the language <> consciousness problem. It brings the existential dimension of language and the notion of sensuous consciousness into discussion. Different from regarding language as a tool for conscious mediation of psychological functions, it foregrounds language as the home for our understanding of Being, which happens at the level of sensuous consciousness. Aesthetic experiences become an important arena for the elevation of understanding from sensuous consciousness to consciousness. The next chapter will transfer to the area of drama in education to continue this line of investigation.



## CHAPTER 7. NEGOTIATING BEING, BEINGS AND BECOMING IN DRAMA

In this chapter, I will transfer to the area of DiE and focus on the system of developing agent  $\leftrightarrow$  DiE. In Chapter 3, I have reviewed the complexity and multiple modes of experiences in the drama space. I have also pointed out the need to investigate these experiences from the perspective of the interacting process between cultural resources and the developing agent integrating multiple psychological functions. In Chapter 4, development mediated by cultural resources has been conceptualized as culturally constituted agency. When adopting DiE for developmental intervention, the rich experiences in the DiE space serves as a “means” for the emergence of new understanding. However, DiE counts a special type of cultural-aesthetic means as it is through working in/ for the fictional world that participants obtain opportunity to reflect on themselves from an innovative perspective. I have called it “indirect intervention” and “being active through being patient”.

This indirectness, being active by being patient, being real by being fictional, constitutes a unique starting point for investigating the emergence of new understanding in DiE. Being in-between the real and fictional world has been conceptualized as dual affect (Vygotsky, 1967) and metaxis (Bolton, 1984; Boal, 1995), highlighting that belonging to the two worlds is both complete and simultaneous. The theoretical difficulty lies in how the real and the fictional meet each other to produce innovative synthesis of meaning for the real (Elliott & Dingwall, 2017). Schechner (1985) called this meeting the experience of “not-not-me” to stress that the actors making subjective connections with the fictional world through active empathy and identification. The notion of “conceptual blending” has also been introduced from Fauconnier & Turner (1998, 2008) to target on the underlying change of mental representation through an imaginative and creative combination of conceptual structures (Duffy, 2014; Prendergast & Saxton, 2015). “Not-not-me” blending completes a qualitative jump from the metaxis of me as the real and not-me as the fictional. It is the key to understand the emergence of new understanding from the developing agent  $\leftrightarrow$  drama system along the educational and aesthetic orientations depicted in Chapter 3.

The “not-not-me” experience can be extended to more general experiences of encountering the other in Gadamer’s interpretation of Hegel. Gadamer (2013, p.363) called it “reversal of consciousness”:

“This is the reversal that consciousness undergoes when it recognizes itself in what is alien and different. Whether experience moves by expanding into the manifoldness of the contents or as the continual emergence of new

forms of mind, the necessity of which is understood by philosophical science, in any case it is a reversal of consciousness”.

The reversal of consciousness makes understanding self-related rather than being restricted to an alien object. By referring to Heidegger, Gadamer (2013) developed the idea of understanding as projection oriented toward the future:

“the original form of the realization of Dasein, which is being-in-the-world. Before any differentiation of understanding into the various directions of pragmatic or theoretical interest, understanding is Dasein’s mode of being, insofar as it is potentiality-for-being and “possibility”” (ibid, p.260).

According to Gadamer, Heidegger “revealed the projective character of all understanding and conceived the act of understanding itself as the movement of transcendence, of moving beyond the existent” (ibid, p.260). The self-related understanding also leads to a deeper experience in the fictional world: “he comes to belong to it more fully by recognizing himself more profoundly in it” (ibid, p.135).

Gadamer’s point is simple but fundamental. It coincides with our daily experience but can be easily neglected in theoretical conceptualization. Taylor (2002, p.141) summarized it in the slogan of “no understanding the other without a changed understanding of self”. Vilhauer (2009, p.362) called the event of understanding as a “back-and-force process of engagement” in the self and the other. Inspired by Gadamer’s work, the self-relatedness in not-not-me experiences in drama should not be understood merely as sympathy and identification of the fictional world, but as being closely connected to a self-understanding of our own wholeness of Being with future possibilities. This is understanding for “truth that is valid and intelligible for ourselves” (Gadamer, 2013, p.314). How to theorize this *future-oriented* and *self-related* understanding emerging from the fictional experiences in DiE becomes an essential problem in understanding the potential of DiE for developmental intervention.

This chapter begins with two articles. Article C models three different approaches to structuring and highlighting “not-not-me” experiences as emergence of new understanding in DiE. By mediating the immersion  $\triangleleft$  distance relation, these approaches have different focuses on the relationship between the real world and the fictional world and they target on different layers of experiences. A structural analysis of a DiE workshop is also provided. Article D focuses on the interplay between the DiE structure and the spontaneous contribution from the participants. The lens of CPSM is adopted to analyze the unfolding and transforming process of participants’ semiotic generalization under the guidance of the workshop on a micro-genetic level.

In CPSM, the “me- not me - not not me” experience is encapsulated into a hierarchical semiotic construction. It captures the results of meaning construction and synthesis.

However, it has not dug into the underlying synthesizing process and the states of consciousness derived from positioning in the different worlds guided by DiE. Thus, after presenting the two articles, I will continue to discuss the juxtaposition of the plural worlds as the underlying basis for the synthesis of “not-not-me” experiences. By integrating the proposal of existential psychology of art from Chapter 6 and the three layers of experiences in Article C, I divide further the real world into the real social world and the here-and-now intervention context. Also, I highlight the existential dimension of the real social world and the fictional world. Thus, the original two worlds of the real and the fictional are developed into five worlds: the real social world with its existential dimension, the here-and-now intervention context, and the fictional world with its existential dimension. To understand experience blending from positioning in the plural worlds, three areas of dramatization- child’s dramatic play, drama therapy and theatre art- are examined and compared with DiE to elucidate the characteristics of DiE. DiE’s uniqueness is summarized as using highly structured mediation in the here-and-now material context to indirectly guide participants’ development for new understanding through the construction of a strong fictional world. These characteristics are elaborated with the two workshops from Article C and D as examples.

### **7.1. ARTICLE C: DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION FOR UNDERSTANDING: AN INVESTIGATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY OF SEMIOTIC MEDIATION**

Xu, S., & Tateo, L. (2020). Drama-in-Education for understanding: an investigation from the perspective of cultural psychology of semiotic mediation. *Human Arenas*, 1-18.

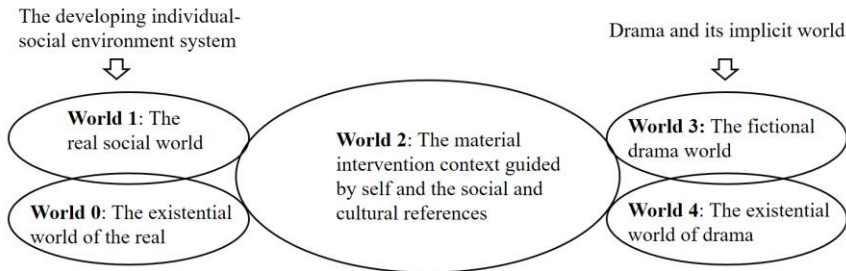
## **7.2. ARTICLE D: DRAMATIZING LIVING-IN-THE-WORLD: AFFECTIVE GENERALIZATION IN DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION WORKSHOP**

Xu, S., Wang, J., & Tateo, L. (2021). Dramatizing Living-in-the-World: Affective Generalization in Drama-in-Education Workshop. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 1-29.

### 7.3. JUXTAPOSITION OF MULTIPLE WORLDS IN DiE

In chapter 6, I highlight the existential experience as the fundamental content for artistic transformation from the mundane to the aesthetic. According to Wang (2005, p.163-164), existential experience, as “a general feeling of Being itself”, emerges in daily life. Existential experiences in daily life are powerful but scattered. They are minimal existential moments in Valsiner’s words (personal communication, 2021.11.27). They appear like pearls shining in the river of life but also being quickly covered by the sand of the mundane. Aesthetic experience, as a special type of existential experience, sharpens, illuminates and elevates daily existential experience from the level of pre-semiotic feeling to the level of hyper-generalized values. Existential experiences establish themselves as a world in the artwork in Heidegger’s words.

Based on Wang’s work, in this section I will develop the two worlds of the real and the fictional to five worlds: the real social world with its existential dimension, the here-and-now intervention context, and the fictional world with its existential dimension. Figure 7-1 describes the co-existence of the five worlds in DiE. The tangible material intervention context is always in juxtaposition with the other four intangible worlds. The five worlds are synthesized in participants’ phenomenological experience in DiE.



*Figure 7-1 Juxtaposition of multiple worlds in DiE for developmental intervention*

The first world, which researchers and practitioners would consider, is the real social world (World 1). The real social world is the social context, which the participants belong to and live in. It is from the bi-directional relationship between the participants and their context that certain behavior emerges as problems needing to be analyzed and intervened (as shown in Figure 4-8). From the perspective of the real social world, developmental intervention is a liminoid and temporary space, a dramatic segment of the real social world and a force introduced from outside into the self-organizing system.



World 0 is the existential dimension of the real social world. It is brought to light only in our existential experience. In the existential experience, a highly affective and value-laden world is opened up and deeply felt by us. Valsiner (personal communication, 2021.11.27) termed it as “minimal existential moment” to highlight the characteristics of the daily existential experience of being transient but powerful: “It is a moment in daily life that instantly emerges in our experience, and equally quickly disappears. It transcends the here-and-now moment affectively, but does not stay. Yet these moments are important for our psychological well-being”. An example comes from *A Lifelong Journey* (人世间). An old couple is about to apart. The husband has to leave home to a very far place for work. The wife is packing for the husband. She is very sad and is trying to put as many stuff as possible into the husband’s bag. Looking at this, the husband gets a little angry, and tells his wife not to damage the bag. The wife gets angry too. She keeps putting stuff in the bag. Looking at his wife, the husband suddenly realizes why his wife behaves like this. He understands it is all because of love. His anger disappears and he becomes sad, moved and peaceful. He sits besides his wife and puts his head on his wife’s shoulder. At this moment, the wife is also brought to the existential field from the mundane setting by the husband. In love is in the humanized existential affective world. They share this existential moment and get strength from this moment to continue their life journey.

The material intervention world (World 2) deals with how the interventional setting, e.g. the space, material objects and activity forms, is set up to enable active participation and meaning construction in and out of the fictional world. This is the world the teacher mediates the mediating function of the drama world for participants’ development. It is also the world of *gegenstand* for constructing, sharing, communicating and reflecting. For instance, in *Castle in a box*, the material setting of the room becomes the starting point for the imaginary journey. The setting of the character’s room locates in the here-and-now context as material objects. They are tasked to distance the participants from the real social world and launch them into the fictional world (World 3) and its potential existential dimension (World 4). Emphasizing on the importance of the material characteristics of objects in launching imagination and involving participants pulls my investigation closer to the semiotic tradition in art. It is through this world that the social reality world and the fictional drama world meet and transfer from being private to public.

The fictional drama world (World 3) concerns what experiences the participants should be launched into and be involved with. The scope of the fictional world can be roughly indicated by choices of themes and cultural resources, such as fairytales and legends. As Gadamer (2013, p.84) has pointed out:

Motif “can be representational as well as abstract; but in either case, as a motif it is, seen ontologically, non-material (an eu hules). That in no way means it is without content. Rather, what makes a motif is that it has unity

in a convincing way and that the artist has carried through this unity as the unity of meaning, just as the viewer understands it as a unity”.

In this thesis, I use the notion of “Being-being meaning complex” to refer to the unity of meaning implicated by motif. This notion highlights that the unity of meaning manifests on the two levels of Being (World 4) and being (World 3). The two layers co-exist with each other, as Being can only appear through beings and beings obtain its meaning from Being. The layer of beings concerns the concrete contents, plots, conflicts and problems to work on in the fictional world. The layer of Being focuses on bringing the general existential affective experiences into light as an intangible, highly affective and value-laden world. As pointed out in Article D, Being-being constitutes two different layers for participants to feel into. Different segments in one DiE workshop can have different focus on the Being-being relationship, as shown in *The Green Children* in Article C. For segments focusing on concrete problems, the structure can be oriented toward experiencing, analyzing the problem and trying out different solutions under the protection of the drama world. For segments specially focusing on general existential experiences, they bring affective generalization to the forth and consider how to use concrete materials to bring Being to light in aesthetic experience, e.g. the use of ritual in *The Green Children*. Being and being penetrate into each other and the two together constitute a holistic fictional world manifesting as a unity of meaning.

Participants’ perception of the intervention setting and meaning construction in the imaginary world and in the real social world is mediated by the guidance from themselves and from the social and cultural others. On one hand, participants’ sensuous needs and sensuous consciousness constitute the starting point for meaning making. Participants also actively introduce cultural resources, e.g. memories, narratives, discourses, etc. into the here-and-now setting to construct meaning and understanding. For instance, in *Castle in a Box* in Article D, the *Dream* gestalt and the storyline of *Persistence and success* is generalized (Xu, Wang & Tateo, 2021). On the other hand, the structure of the workshop, the teacher and peers also play an active role in mediating the bidirectional relation between the developing individual and the intervention context.

## 7.4. EXPERIENCE BLENDING IN THE PLURAL WORLDS

What does meaning making in-between the multiple worlds mean for the participants? How are these different worlds integrated into one holistic experience? How can development be intervened towards new understanding from these experiences? How can understanding in the fictional world relate back to self-understanding? From the perspective of the relationship between cultural resources and developing subject, on one hand, construction of the fictional world can be regarded as psychological projection following the psychoanalysis tradition. On the other hand, DiE also enables semiotic transformation under the guidance of the unfolding drama world. This dynamic and transforming aspect brings the notion of “*Einführung*” into discussion (Article D). In this section, I will examine three areas of dramatization to probe into the complex interplay between drama and the developing individual in making the plural worlds: children’s dramatic play, drama therapy and theatre art. These areas offer different ways of experience blending through dramatization. By comparing the three areas, characteristics of experience blending in DiE and its potential for facilitating new understanding can be revealed.

### Children’s dramatic play

The research area of children’s dramatic play is closely connected with Vygotsky’s work. In the Vygotskian legacy, the function of dramatic play is highlighted as fulfilling children’s unattainable needs and desires in the imaginary world (Elkoninova, 2016). Compared with other types of activities of the preschool children, dramatic play has the following unique functions in facilitating children’s development:

1) Emphasizing on the child’s emotional needs and incentives as opposed to a tendency of intellectualization of play. The emotional issues can be generalized feelings and affects which are un-predesignated to specific phenomena (Vygotsky, 1967). Vygotsky’s distinguishing between word meaning and sense can be applied here. Play is the area of subjective sense. Or in Piaget’s world, play is pre-logic and egocentric. Play follows the logic of emotions (Sutton-Smith, 2009). The child in play is a whole person activating all his psychological functions- intellect, affect, will, memory, etc. - to deal with meaningful issues in the arena of imagination.

2) Dominance of meaning on action. Creation of a symbolic reality in play makes children like creative artists (Vygotsky, 2004). Meanings and feelings are liberated from concrete objects and actions through the function of imagination (Hedegaard, 2016). The child manipulates with meanings and endows the meanings to concrete objects. It is important to note that dramatic play for Vygotsky can be regarded as a transitional period to the development of abstract thought. As Vygotsky (1967) has put forward, the child needs concrete objects to operate upon. For instance, a stick may be used to imagine riding on a horse and the child may have difficulty to

symbolize a match as a horse, as the match is too remote to the characteristics of a horse. This is to say, the objects are meaningful symbolization for action and not yet for abstract thinking.

3) Whole development of consciousness and understanding: The child is motivated to enter into the imaginary play world while being unconscious about his own emotional motivation (Vygotsky, 1967). Play is based on narrative thinking rather than logic analytic thinking (Hakkarainen & Bredikyte, 2008). By transferring between the two positions of player and non-player (Kravtsov & Kravtsova, 2010) and noticing what is un-noticed to the child in mundane life, the child actively constructs characters, plots and rules for his play. In this creation of the as-if world, the child lives through meaningful experiences and is able to better understand himself and the events happened to him in the real life.

Vygotsky's analysis of children's symbolic play foregrounds the emotional investment and the holistic development of consciousness and understanding in play. Children's semiotic use in play is closely connected with their overall developmental levels. The young child appropriates concrete objects for their meaning and these meanings are weaved into narratives. To be clearer, in my interpretation, the objects are re-discovered from the mundane background because of their meaning for action and action is facilitated by imagination for narrative construction and illusory satisfaction of wishes. It is the subjective experiencing in play rather than symbolization for sharing and communication (which is essential for art) that is emphasized. As Vygotsky (2016, p.16) wrote: "A child does not symbolize in play, but he wishes and realizes his wishes by letting the basic categories of reality pass through his experience". It may be said that while adolescence creates fantasies inside the psyche, the preschool child has to employ concrete objects with specific material characteristics to create and hold fantasy in action. Thus, concerning the three worlds, Vygotsky's analysis of children's dramatic play emphasizes on the connection between the real social world and the imaginary drama world in illusory fulfilment of needs and desires. The material objects in the here-and-now context is employed for their connection with word meaning (a stick with a horse) and the artistic power of the material characteristics of the objects in conveying emotions and understandings has not been closely examined.

### *Drama therapy*

The area of drama therapy is also very hybrid and huge efforts have been made to understand and conceptualize its therapeutic effects. There are authors emphasizing on the power of using metaphors in providing protection, reducing defenses and supporting subjective expression (Butler, 2017; Lev-Aladgem, 1999; Rousseau, etc., 2005). Concerning the notion of drama as a metaphor, there are also different approaches.

Landy (1991a, 1991b, 2009) regarded the drama world as a mirror equivalent to the real social world. According to Landy, both the real social world and the imaginary drama world can be examined through the functional role structures. Drama therapy offers an opportunity to uncover the implicit role system, experience new role relations and adjust the original ones to gain more control of one's life. Work in the imaginary drama world is to work for a codification and revelation of the implicit role system underlying daily functions. As Landy (1991b, p.10) wrote, "The fictional role serves the client by pointing to an equivalent non-fictional role. That role, in turn, requires the fiction for elucidation. The dramatic mirror has two sides, both of which refer to the other, either of which is meaningless without the other." Highlighting the function of roles to construct the drama world can also be seen in the first approach of framing and distancing in Article C. Landy's focus on role structures largely reduces the richness of the imaginary world. In the "mirror" interpretation, the drama world does not have an independent existence.

Different from Landy, Pendzik (2006) emphasized on the primary position of dramatic reality for drama's therapeutic function. The notion of dramatic reality is synonymous to the notions of drama world in DiE (O'Neill, 1995) and play world in children's dramatic play (Lindqvist, 1995), all of which embrace the richness and independence of the imaginary world. Pendzik (2006) emphasized the public and material dimension of the dramatic reality compared with the internal fantasy: "Dramatic reality is not about imagining, but about manifesting the imagined in the here and now" and "It has to be made visible, to be conveyed in a real form, not just fantasized or talked about" (p.273). According to Pendzik, dramatic reality possess a position between the inner subjective world and the outer social world, as on one hand, the rich subjective contents can be expressed and validated in drama and on the other hand, the dramatic reality is conveyed to and experienced by social others in the here-and-now context. By constructing and giving forms to subjective experiences, the original chaotic and fragmental experiences are transformed into *gegenstand*, which can be shared, reflected and discussed with others.

Pendzik's emphasis on the public and material dimension pulls dramatic reality closer to the semiotic tradition in theatre art compared with children's dramatic play. She also proposed "dramatic resonance" (Pendzik, 2008) as a special type of metaphor: dramatic resonance is ritualistic, poetic and attuned to the mood, flavor and spirit of the original impulse. Semiotic creation as dramatic resonance puts participants more to the position of artists. While its emotional motivation for entering into the fictional world makes it more like children's dramatic play. In Pendzik's work, all the three worlds are emphasized.

### Theatre art

In theatre art, the relation between form and content is the focus. Theatre concerns how certain themes and emotions can be conveyed by the actors' performance to the

audience. It uses dramatic devices to achieve its purpose. In theatre art, drama appears as a strong cultural resource, a self-contained world to influence its audience. Thus, it emphasizes on the here-and-now context and the imaginary world. The connection with the real social world is implicit but necessary for aesthetic experiences. As Vygotsky (1999, p.241) has pointed out,

“The melancholy of Chekhov's three sisters, presented on the stage becomes the emotion of the whole audience because it was to a large degree a crystallized formulation of the attitude of large social circles for whom its stage expression was a kind of means of realization and artistic interpretation of themselves.”

Vygotsky's opinion in the above citation is closer to Heidegger's notion of illumination in art. In theatre art, the drama world is a crystallized formulation and artistic interpretation of audience's attitude in the real social world. These attitudes may be pre-conceptual and pre-logic and become realized with the help of art. From this perspective, the fictional world in theatre art is not an illusory parallel or an equivalent mirror to the real world, but an interpretation and a crystallization rooted in and transformed from the real social world.

In sum, all the three areas believe involving in the fictional drama world can facilitate development in the real social world. All the three areas include the three worlds- the fictional world, the material here-and-now world and the real social world. Nevertheless, they have very different focuses concerning the interplay of the three worlds. From children's dramatic play, to drama therapy and to theatre art, the semiotic function of the material objects in launching and holding the imaginary world becomes more and more significant. Along with this increase is a decrease of the focus on the individual's subjective needs, motivation and investment. Generally speaking, in children's dramatic play, we see a direct investment of the real social world to the fictional world (in the form of wish fulfillment). Although material tools are employed, they are to support the action guided by imagination. Compared with dramatic play, drama therapy shares with it an emphasis on subjective investment. However, it emphasizes more on the here-and-now context and the semiotic dimension of the material objects to strengthen communication, sharing and reflection. Compared with theatre art, drama therapy doesn't aim for a strong and self-contained fictional world. The fictional world is understood more as a subjective projection waiting to be interpreted. For theatre art, the here-and-now context, along with the self-contained fictional world, is emphasized, while the dimension of subjective needs and motivation is relatively neglected.

DiE shares with the three areas the juxtaposition of the plural worlds. Similar to dramatic play and drama therapy, DiE for developmental intervention starts with a consideration of participants' needs, desires and motivation. With theatre art, it shares construction of “an experience” in the imaginary world and the dimension of symbolization in the here-and-now context. Compared with the three areas, DiE

emphasizes on all the three worlds and its unique characteristic as developmental intervention can be summarized as follow: *DiE uses highly structured mediation in the here-and-now material context to indirectly guide participants' development for new understanding through the construction of a strong fictional world.*

## **7.5. TRANSFORMING BETWEEN THE PLURAL WORLDS IN DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION**

Based on the characteristic of DiE in dealing with the plural worlds summarized above, this part will continue to discuss: 1) the existence of the fictional world in DiE; 2) mediation in the here-and-now material context; 3) sensuous consciousness as producing a generalized field-like promoter sign.

### **7.5.1. THE FICTIONAL WORLD AS A BEING-BEING MEANING COMPLEX**

As has been stressed in the previous section, there are two dimensions of Being and being in the fictional drama world. The aspect of Being concerns the existential context of the drama event. For example, in *The green children*, the existential world of the villagers appears in imagination through the dramatic device of ritual. This existential dimension holds firmly the drama as a world, which frames participants' interpretation and decision making within the drama. The drama world is also an other stressing that meaning making in DiE can not be regarded merely as subjective projection or private play, as in projection the medium is injected and covered by subjective feelings, patterns and significance and loses its capacity in facilitating contemplation (Cupchik, 2002). As an other, the pre-structured and mediated fictional world functions as an interlocutor, which surprises and talks back to the participants (Taylor, 2002) in the shared game of "articulating a common subject matter" (Vilhauer, 2009, p.361) together with the participants.

In theatre performance, the fictional world gradually unfolds itself as a given in front of the audience. Compared with theatre, DiE balances between structure and spontaneity. The fictional world starts from teachers' choice of pretext, goes through the formulating process by dramatic devices and completes in participants' construction. The Being-being meaning complex, inherited and preserved in pre-texts, goes through two processes of presentation: in teacher's structuring through dramatic devices, and in participants' interpretation and contribution. Pre-text enables and constrains at the same time both teachers' structuring and participants' construction. Gadamer's idea of artwork as play and his analysis of the relation between the actual being and presentation of the artwork can help me here:

“We started from the position that the work of art is play- i.e., that its actual being cannot be detached from its presentation and that in this presentation *the unity and identity of a structure* emerge. To be dependent on self-presentation belongs to what it is. *This means that however much it is transformed and distorted in being presented, it still remains itself.* This constitutes the obligation of every presentation: that it contains a relation to the structure itself and submits itself to the criterion of correctness that derives from it. Even the extreme of a completely distortive presentation confirms this. It is known as a distortion inasmuch as the presentation is intended and judged to be the presentation of *the structure*. Inescapably, the presentation has the character of a repetition of the same. Here “repetition” does not mean that something is literally repeated- i.e., can be reduced to something original. Rather, every repetition is as original as the work itself” (Gadamer, 2013, pp.165-167, italics added).

Gadamer stressed a dialectic relation between the presentations and the structure. On one hand, the identity of a structure appears itself and is preserved through the presentations. On the other hand, the presentations transform but also “submit itself to the criterion of correctness” (ibid) of the structure. The “unity and identity of a structure” (ibid) of an artwork can be identified as the Being-being meaning complex proposed in this thesis. This also means that continuation, negotiation and distortive presentation can happen at two levels- on the level of existential affectivity and on the level of drama content. For instance, in *Castle in a box*, not only the concrete events of the main character is negotiated and constructed, but also his real pain and hope rooted in his existential context is the focus for understanding. The existential affective world of being an immigrant from the pretext *The suitcase* is selectively distorted by the teacher to highlight its potential connection with the target group. This presentation continues to be interpreted and negotiated in participants’ construction, showing their own understanding and meaning exploration rooted in their existential context.

### 7.5.2. MEDIATION IN THE HERE-AND-NOW MATERIAL CONTEXT

The here-and-now material context is the world of *gegenstand*. Formulating inner experiences into an externalized semiotic material as *gegenstand* can help to distance and possess a new stance towards the original sensuous existential experiences (von Fircks, 2021). Making *gegenstand* for new understanding also goes back to Dilthey’s formulation of lived experience (*Erlebnis*, same as perezhivanie, Blunden, 2009, 2016b), expression and understanding. *Gegenstand* as creative expression is the objectified version of mind, and it helps to approach the arenas of the psyche, which are inaccessible in introspection guided by consciousness (Throop, 2002; Turner, 1985). The bi-directional process between experience and expression constitutes the dynamic process underlying the structure  $\diamond$  spontaneity dialectics. DiE as developmental intervention consists of high degree of mediation in making



*gegenstand*. In this section, I analyze mediation in the here-and-now material context from two aspects: the use of material objects and dramatic devices.

### **7.5.2.1 From tangible to intangible: material object as semiotic channels**

How can the material objects be used as signs to facilitate meaning making in-between the plural worlds? How can signs and symbols contain feeling and be assigned with meaning (Henry, 2000)? I divide semiotic objects discussed in the previous sections into two categories: objects as artistic symbols and objects as conceptual symbols. These two categories differ in the connection between the material object and its meaning.

#### *Objects as artistic symbols: the shoes and the bowl*

Art as meaningful symbols is discussed by Gadamer (2013). Gadamer compared the difference between symbol and allegory and noted that both are invented to “know the divine..... from the world of the senses” (p.67). For the difference, “the symbol is the coincidence of the sensible and the non-sensible; allegory, the meaningful relation of the sensible to the non-sensible (p.68). According to Gadamer, artworks belong to the realm of symbols with the fundamental characteristic of “the coincidence of sensible appearance and suprasensible meaning” (p.70). Gadamer cited Schelling’s usage of the German word “Sinnbild” to define symbols: “as concrete, resembling only itself, like an image, and yet as universal and full of meaning as a concept” (p.70). Through the concrete sensuousness of symbols, the intangible general meaning is conveyed. Gadamer also pointed out that although there is “the inner unity of image and significance (p.71) in symbols, there are still “a disproportion between form and essence, expression and content” (p.71), which brings ambiguity and indetermination. The gap between image and significance brings about multiple directions for interpretation. Valsiner’s (2020, pp.8-14) analysis of the tension between observing and distancing from the mundane in appreciating Courbet’s painting can be an example. The connection between the presence of material object and the existential field is implicit and vague, rather than being clear and necessary. Gadamer (1991, p.105) called it an event of collision revealing and concealing itself at the same time and this revealing and concealing constitutes the image of the artwork in tension.

Heidegger (2002, p. 24) argued that the coincidence of the sensible and the suprasensible in art is based on the amplification of the material characteristic of objects. His argument sets from a comparison between an artwork and an equipment:

“In the manufacture of equipment- for example, an as- the stone is used and used up. It disappears into usefulness. The less resistance the material puts up to being submerged in the equipmental being of the equipment the more suitable and the better it is. On the other hand, the temple work, in

setting up a world, does not let the material disappear; rather, it allows it to come forth for the very first time, to come forth, that is, into the open of the world of the work. The rock comes to bear and to rest and so first becomes rock; the metal comes to glitter and shimmer, the colors to shine, the sounds to ring, the word to speak. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of the stone, into the firmness and flexibility of the wood, into the hardness and gleam of the ore, into the lightening and darkening of color, into the ringing of sound, and the naming power of the word.”

The equipment obeys the strong metaphysical notion of bringing something into existence in Biesta’s sense. The real essence of the equipment is its usefulness. It is created from adding a form to the material for some pre-determined practical purposes. Usefulness covers the real existence of the material. In mundane life, we don’t strongly perceive the particular nature of the stone, the wood, the ore, the color, the sound and the word. They are used as tools to achieve other aims. For example, language is used as a tool to code and convey information. It is in the poems, that the beauty of the word in naming the world is re-discovered, remembered and appreciated. On one hand, material objects is illuminated in the world set up by the artwork. As in Van Gogh’s painting, the existence of shoes appears in its essential connection with the peasant woman’s world. On the other hand, it is through dwelling on the material characteristics that we are distanced from mundane meaning making activities and obtain the possibility to enter into the art world (Wang, 2005). From the artistic presentation of material objects (e.g. Van Gogh’s shoes and the bowl in *The green children*), we can imagine the existential field the objects belong to. From the existential field, we re-perceive the particular objects as if they are warmed by human’s temperature. Objects as artistic symbols facilitate pleromatization of complex affective field, which can be further generalized under the guidance of the artwork.

#### *Objects as conceptual symbols: the box and the stick*

For objects as conceptual symbols, the connection between the object and its meaning is loose, relatively random and changes according to the needs of the context. For instance, the stick is used by the child as a symbol for a horse and the child operates on it as if he is riding a real horse. The stick can be replaced by other objects for conveying the meaning of a horse, e.g. a chair. It can also be used to symbolize other things, e.g. a wall. For the child in dramatic play, he follows the principle of “good enough” to look for appropriate objects to hold his fantasy. The stick with its particular form and material characteristics is good enough to be symbolized as a horse. What is more important for the child is to continue the game.

In *Castle in a box*, a box is introduced as a key object. Article D has shown that in participants’ narration, the box is exclusively abstracted to a symbol of “dream”. This abstraction emerges from the dramatic device of “narration”. The teacher’s instruction

(Xu, Wang & Tateo, 2021, p. 16) - “Let’s walk along the timeline and back to the day he left home. What story happened between him and the box? What is the connection? Can you imagine? How did he left with this box?” - distanced the participants from the living-through scene to interpret the situation. The meaning of “dream” becomes gradually clear within the whole conventional gestalt of “departing home to a new place with fear, sorrow and hope- totally different reality, faced with stress and frustrations-fighting until dream being realized” (Xu, Wang & Tateo, 2021, p. 17). In this conventional gestalt, the box stands as an equipment to tell the story and disappears with its material characteristic and its essential connection with the character’s existential field. It is unable to break the convention and present its own existence. Here we have a dominance of meaning on the objects. The participants holding the box and standing on the timeline are operating from the arena of meaning. This arena is conditioned by social and cultural norms. They may recall the books they read and films they watched to understand the character’s situation. What is different of our teenager participants compared with the preschool child is that the teenager participants are more capable in turning to cultural resources to interpret the present situation.

In sum, both objects as artistic and conceptual symbols can facilitate semiotic generalization beyond the material existence of the objects. With objects as artistic symbols, there is a coincidence but also a gap between the image and significance. Because of the gap, we distance from the mundane, dwell with the material richness of the objects and make huge efforts to grasp the coincidence. This is what we do with poems. To appreciate the beauty of poems is to read it again and again and to wander among the words. Also because of the gap, there are many bifurcations leading to different interpretative directions (Valsiner, 2020). With the objects as conceptual symbols, we abstract generalized meanings from the concrete objects and continue our semiotic journey in the arena of meaning following the logic of narrative thinking. The connection between objects and their reference can be flexible. As Vygotsky (1967) has pointed out, in adults’ abstract thinking, even matches can be used as a symbol for a horse. Once the meaning is successfully conveyed, the object itself disappears as a means. In semiotic generalization from artistic symbols, we have a highlighted presence of the material objects along with the underlying existential field. In semiotic generalization from conceptual symbols, we have a highlighted meaning and the object is there and not there at the same time under the cover of the meaning.

### **7.5.2.2 Dramatic devices and meaning synthesis in consciousness**

Dramatic devices deal with how the episodes of a workshop are structured to formulate the fictional world and facilitate meaning making. With selected angles and forms, the devices help to slow down time, create intensified and significant experiences in the fictional world (Heathcote, 1984). Devices can be classified according to their different functions for weaving and activating the fictional world. For example, Neelands & Goode (2015) proposed four main categories: context-

building action, narrative action, poetic action and reflective action. These functions can be further analyzed for their psychological influence from the perspective of distance, as shown in Article C. Peter Brook (2017) noted that, immersion enables living the moment, while distanced reflection activates meaning making for the total. Different degrees of distance is related with different modes of involvement and different activated states of consciousness. The modes of involvement relates back to the different modes of experiences proposed by Hohr (2013) in Chapter 3 and the intellect-affect unity within the Vygotskian frame in Chapter 6. As the involvement mode has been analyzed in detail in the form of semiotic construction in Article D, the following part will analyze the dramatic devices from *Castle in a box* with a focus on distancing and states of consciousness oriented towards the plural worlds. The selected devices are: context building, demonstrating, watching and dramatic resonance.

*Context building.* In *Castle in a box*, the segment of context building includes the two processes of teacher pre-structuring the room and the participants constructing the room under the teacher's guidance. For the teacher, the difficulty lies in choosing the right key objects. These objects should be able to anchor and convey the holistic atmosphere of the context, so that participants can continue to construct the details based on the wholeness of the context. It should be noted that both the teachers' choices of the objects and the participants' interpretation and construction of the room are an abduction based on the existential affective experiences. When designing the workshop, the teachers don't start from observing the detailed daily life of the participants and make an induction of their rooms and behaviors. Nor do they make a deduction from the abstract idea of "migration". In contrary, the material objects emerge from teachers' pre-logic grasping of existential affective experiences of the pre-text *The suitcase* and of the participants based on their daily observation and interaction with the participants. From the participants' side, faced with the structured context, they are tasked to interpret the context and search for meaning and understanding. Their interpretation and construction is also an abduction based on recalling their own existential affective experience and feeling into the existential field behind the objects.

*Demonstrating.* The two episodes of enacting and still image belong to the device of *demonstrating*. In *demonstrating*, participants' position of I-as-me in the here and now context is firmly held due to the pressure of audience's presence. They are actively searching their previous experiences from their real social context and imagining the character's state in the drama world to demonstrate and present their understanding in the here-and-now context to other participants as audience.

*Watching.* The segment of teacher-in-role and performance gives the participants a position of witnessing and watching. In front of them, the character entered and lived in the room constructed by the participants. The character responded to and interacted with the objects they have created and sometimes also behaved out of their

expectation- e.g. with the box, the drawing and the newspaper. In watching and witnessing, the participants are more immersed into the imaginary drama world compared to *demonstrating* but also relatively more distanced than a traditional theatre experience because of the tension derived from expectation and surprise.

*Dramatic resonance.* The segment of teacher narrating the image of a little boy constructing a sand castle belongs to the device of dramatic resonance. This device comes from Pendzik (2008)'s work. According to Pendzik, dramatic resonances are based on an initial input but "expand the sphere of influence of the original account in a poetic movement that is attuned to the initiating impulse" (p.218). And specially, "the resonances are performed in a ritual fashion, keeping the atmosphere of a sacred time and space, and with an eye to the aesthetics" (p.218). From the perspective of existential orientation of art, Pendzik's emphasis on the ritual fashion and the sacred atmosphere indicates that the resonance is targeted with the level of Being. As in the image of the little boy, the whole existence of the main character is attuned. With its aesthetic dimension and concern of the existential affective level, this device offers a special psychological distance- it enables distance and closeness at the same time.

In sum, each device is a unique integration of immersion and distance activating different modes of intellectual-affective involvement and different states of consciousness towards the plural worlds. It is through these devices that the light of consciousness goes across the three worlds, the implicit existential dimensions and brings about meaning synthesis and innovation. As a Being-being meaning complex, the fictional world appears not only in the content constructed from the devices, but also in the gap between the devices.

### **7.5.3. SENSUOUS CONSCIOUSNESS AS PRODUCING A FIELD-LIKE PROMOTER SIGN**

In this section, I would like to highlight the function of sensuous consciousness for the emergence of new understanding. Sensuous consciousness constitutes an important condition from the subjective side for participating and gaining new understanding in the cultural-aesthetic activities in DiE.

Sensuous consciousness, as a primordial understanding of our relational Being, is implicit but is always there framing participants' interpretation and meaning making of the situation. It can be conceptualized as "pre-understanding" in Gadamer's words. Martin & Sugarman (2001, p.196) noted that in Gadamer's approach, pre-understanding includes "our prejudgments or prejudices, in which all of our understandings and interpretations inevitably are nested" and it constitutes a background from which "we identify things, pose questions, and know what kind of answers make sense". Gadamer (2013) considers pre-understanding as being historically and culturally mediated. For the notion of sensuous consciousness, it not only includes the dimension of historicity on the macro level, but also on the level of

individual development. Sensuous consciousness is the developing individual's pre-logic understanding of his whole existence, his relational Being in the social, cultural and historical context.

To highlight its function as the background and the reference frame for meaning making and interpretation, the notion of field-like promoting sign from CPSM (Valsiner, 2018b) is adopted. CPSM uses the notion of promoter sign to theorize how signs - existing in the present hierarchical personal culture system - channel meaning making into the future. According to Valsiner (2018b), promoter signs establish boundaries for meaning making of future experiences. Figure 7-2 depicts the co-presence of different signs with different generalized levels (meaning A and general meaning B) in channeling meaning negotiation towards the future, which leads to the construction of new meaning C.

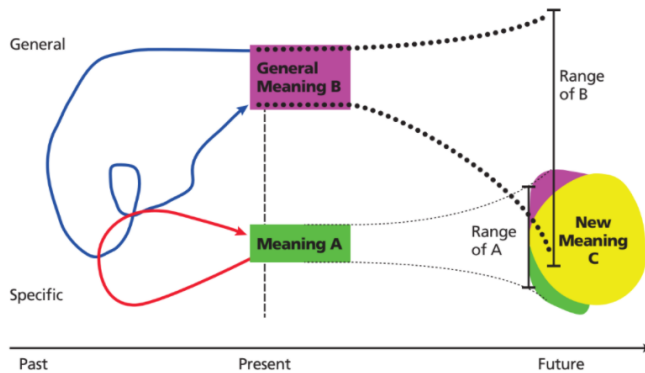


Figure 7-2 Promoter signs with different levels of generalization (Valsiner, 2018b, p.137)

The function of sensuous consciousness for meaning making can be theorized as producing a powerful generalized field-like promoter sign. The produced sign is generalized, as it encapsulates the whole unity of individual <> environment relation and represents individual's sensuous understanding of his whole Being in the social world. It is field-like as it is fuzzing, pre-rational and can be brought to a more conscious level by intervention. Borrowing Barrett (1958)'s words, a field-like promoting sign produced by sensuous consciousness is "some dumb inarticulate understanding, some sense of truth planted, as it were, in the marrow of my bones, makes me know that what I am hearing is not true" (p.222). It guides the participants' interpretation and construction of the teachers' presentation of the Being-being meaning complex. For example, in *Castle in a box*, the participants appropriated the cultural convention of "dream" and developed the hyper-generalization of "PERSISTENCE". As discussed in Article D, the "dream" convention helps to reconstruct the meaning void after the burning out, but it also covers something as a type of smooth kitsch. Vološinov (1973) reminded us that, "a sign does not simply

exist as part of a reality- it reflects and refracts another reality. Therefore it may distort that reality or be true to it, or it may perceive it from a special point of view (p.10)". Whether the sign of "dream" reflects or distorts the reality depends on participants' sensuous understanding of their existential situation.

Existential affective experiences constitute a special type of sensuous consciousness, as they arise from concrete, specific objects and situations but transcend the concrete objects and point to "a general feeling of Being itself" (Wang, 2005, p.163-164). Accordingly, the field-like promoter signs condensed from existential experiences are not only generalized but also highly affective. As can be seen in *Castle in a box*, the room context functions as a holistic resonance triggering participants' existential affective experiences, which further leads to a high degree of engagement in constructing the details.

The idea of sensuous consciousness producing a field-like promoter sign brings a different perspective to understand the social genesis of promoter signs. From the perspective of relational Being in Chapter 6, it is not internalization of social norms, tools and values as given and ready-made entities from the interpersonal plane to the intrapersonal domain, but as pre-semiotic understanding of one's own relational Being in the form of pre-understanding, needs and desires. On the one hand, cultural resources and discourses are powerful in shaping and channeling individual's understanding of relational Being both as covering (ideology) and illuminating (e.g. artworks and language in real-life process). On the other hand, the developing individual also actively employs and creatively appropriates social and cultural resources to understand their own Being.

The perspective of historical relational Being helps us to understand why and how certain signs are emerging or activated in the present as major promoter signs orienting the individual <> environment relationship in the future. It is to understand how the "psychologically constructed ideation being projected to the future" (Valsiner, 2018b, p.111) is born from individual's social practice and his sensuous understanding of his own relational Being in this practice. It is exactly the participants' primordial understanding of their Being as living in the world that guides their construction of the room setting, welcomes the cultural convention of "dream" to fill the meaning void and hyper-generalizes the value of "PERSISTENCE". Following this line, there is an implicit process underlying the bi-directional interaction between the participants and the social and cultural guidance in DiE. This is a process striving for illumination of sensuous consciousness. Meaning making in DiE, as a dual interpretation of the fictional and the self, implicitly aims for this illumination. Striving for this illumination constitutes a strong developmental force- SHI- to be involved in the cultural-aesthetic dramatic activities on the level of disinterested interest and intrinsic motivation discussed in Chapter 3.

## 7.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I start from the qualitative synthesis of “not-not-me” experience as the basis for emergence of new understanding in DiE. Main approaches for structuring the “not-not-me” experience and its movement as a dynamic semiotic flow is analyzed and discussed in the two articles. The notion of “existential experience” from Chapter 6 has helped me to develop the two worlds of the real and the fictional into five worlds. This extension also brings more complexity in analyzing experience blending in DiE. By introducing Gadamer’s work, I theorize the bi-directional movement between the participants and the social and cultural guidance in DiE as interlocutors in a joint articulation (Vilhauer, 2009) of Being-being meaning complex. The participants, as interlocutors in this joint articulation, are faced with the teacher’s presentation of the meaning complex structured by dramatic devices. They are not only interpreting this presentation but also trying to understand the Being-being meaning complex communicated through this presentation based on their own historical sensuous consciousness and existential experiences. By doing this, the self-relatedness in the “not-not-me” experience is identified on a more generalized level of Being. Understanding in the fictional world relates back to participants’ self-understanding on the level of Being-being meaning complex. It is this meaning complex that makes the fictional world an intimate and attractive world for the participants to be involved in and be devoted to for new understanding as illuminating their own existence in the world.



# CHAPTER 8. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Upon the background of neoliberal rationalization, this thesis aims to provide 1) a theoretical understanding of the complexity of developmental intervention and cultural-aesthetic development in intervention; 2) a theoretical approach to investigate DiE for developmental intervention. With Figure 8-1 as a reference point, first I will review what the thesis has achieved concerning the two aims. Then I will integrate the ideas I have introduced in Chapter 5, 6 & 7, and try to locate and discuss their relevance within the CPSM legacy. Limitations of the thesis and implications for future work will also be included.

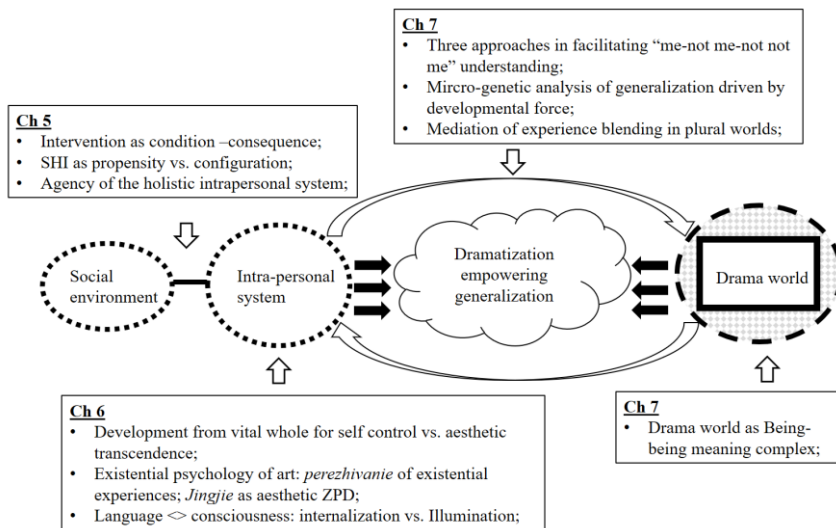


Figure 8-1 Overview of the chapters

## 8.1. LOOK BACK AND REVIEW

The first aim concerns providing a theoretical understanding of the complexity of developmental intervention and cultural-aesthetic development in intervention. The complexity of developmental intervention is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. By introducing SHI and SHUN SHI, a) the becoming dimension of development; b) the agency of the holistic developing system; and c) the relationship between intervention and the developing agent are clarified. The mode of condition-consequence is also highlighted as contrary to the means-end mode in evidence-based intervention research.

The complexity of cultural-aesthetic development under social and cultural guidance is discussed in the Vygotskian legacy in Chapter 6 and in the area of DiE in Chapter 7. In Chapter 6, I approach cultural-aesthetic development from the perspective of intellect-affect development. The notion of affective generalization/abstraction is stressed for development in aesthetic experiences. The key innovation lies in introducing the existential orientation and advancing Vygotsky's psychology of art into existential psychology of art. The concept of *perezhivanie* and *Jingjie* are integrated to elucidate personality development from aesthetic experience conceptualized as re-experience and elevation of existential experience in mundane life from sensuous consciousness to consciousness. The existential perspective also brings in a reflection on the relation between language and consciousness and a comparison between internalization and illumination. This perspective also paves its way to my analysis of DiE in Chapter 7.

In Chapter 7, DiE becomes the empirical field to understand cultural-aesthetic development. My theoretical constructs highlight 1) the complexity derived from the interaction between the individual as an agent and the drama world as a Being-being meaning complex (also Figure 3-5), and 2) the possibility for cultural mediation to facilitate this interaction. These aspects are summarized as the co-existence of five plural worlds for experience blending in Figure 7-1. Following the existential orientation in Chapter 6, individual agency in the form of existential experiences and the existential dimension of the drama world are highlighted. Mediation in the here-and-now context brings in abundant possibilities along the broad cultural-aesthetic continuum.

The second aim deals with the question of how to research the complex developmental phenomena opened up by the cultural-aesthetic space of DiE intervention. Chapter 3 poses the challenge of understanding the unique characteristics of experiences in DiE space, when viewing from the perspective of developmental intervention: experience as highly subjective (integrating different psychological functions) and highly interactive (the individual as an agent and the drama world as an other). As a respond, Chapter 4 provides a semiotic view and a model (Figure 4-8) as a theoretical starting point. Signs become the windows to access the circulating process of meaning

between the intra- and inter-personal processes in DiE. Based on Chapter 4, Chapter 7 provides a theoretical conceptualization of DiE as a liminoid space mediating and catalyzing the unfolding of developmental force on different generalization levels. A model of experience blending on five phenomenological worlds is also provided, highlighting the characteristic of DiE for developmental intervention as using highly structured mediation in the here-and-now material context to indirectly guide participants' development for new understanding through the construction of a strong fictional world.

## **8.2. SYNTHESIS OF THE IDEAS**

### **8.2.1. THE DUAL SETS OF INDIVIDUAL <> ENVIRONMENT RELATIONS IN INTERVENTION**

Based on the individual-socioecological frame proposed by Valsiner (2014a, Figure 4-2), I introduced the dual individual <> environment relations in intervention in Chapter 4 (Figure 4-3) as my starting point for this thesis. The original individual <> social environment system constitutes the condition for intervention design. It determines what is the target problem, and it also frames the individual's meaning making process in the intervention setting.

This thesis proposes two concepts to understand the agency of the holistic intrapersonal system nested in the original set of individual <> environment relation: SHI and existential affective experiences (Figure 8-2). SHI foregrounds the developmental propensity of the individual derived from individual's historical relation with the original social environment (Wu, Xu & Li, 2021; Xu & Wu, 2021). It frames intervention efficacy in two ways: developmental set (or rigid personal cultural system in CPSM's notion) and intensive developmental potential. Existential affective experiences, according to Wang (2005), are sensuous affective experiences transcending concrete objects and bringing Being into light in general feelings. In existential experiences, our whole Being is given to us in affective experiences. Existential affective experiences provide the primary drive for the individual to connect with and explore inside the fictional world (as shown in Figure 7-1). There are similarities and differences between the two notions.

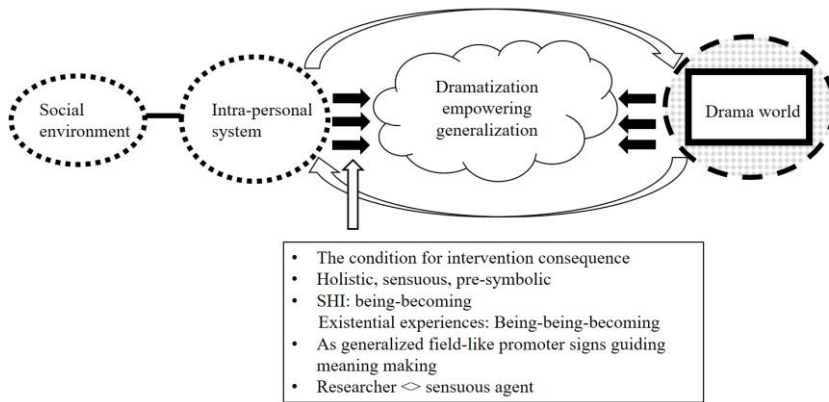


Figure 8-2 SHI and existential experience as the holistic agency in intervention

For the similarities, both the two are based on the Being-being-becoming unity. They represent the wholeness of historical development existing and functioning in the present intervention setting. They are crystallization of the historical individual <> environment unity on the subjective side and they are holistic and sensuous. The notion of “sensuous” stresses that they are pre-rational, pre-logic and pre-symbolic and may not be consciously realized. Both existential affective experiences and SHI locates in the area of sensuous consciousness. As developmental set, SHI can be analyzed and revealed as identity position/ hierarchical personal cultural system. As intensive developmental potential, it functions in the form of subjective needs and desires for new individual-environment relation. For both the two types of SHI, the individual may not be consciously aware.

For the difference, SHI highlights and distinguishes the two dimensions of being and becoming, with the relational Being constituting the background for understanding being and becoming. For instance, the empirical examples reported in Article A and in Xu & Wu (2021) showed that only by considering the history of the individual’s social practical activities in the school context, can we understand the psychological meaning of individual’s externalized behavior. Based on this understanding, it is possible to further distinguish the behavioral problems as being derived from rigid developmental set (in Article A’s example) or intensive developmental potential (in Xu & Wu, 2021). The notion of existential affective experiences highlights the dimension of Being, and concerns the question of how to approach Being from beings (e.g. from the concrete room setting to the general feeling of “being an immigrant”) and how bringing Being into light can generate different understandings on being and becoming.

The existential experience can be regarded as a special type of SHI for cultural-aesthetic intervention. It embraces the Being dimension and provides a strong propensity to construct *gegenstand* and illuminate one’s own existence in the world.

Regarding the two types of SHI distinguished in Chapter 5, it is closer to the intensive developmental potential, in the sense that this state is tensional and its illumination may lead to significant changes in the individual <> environment relation (as personality development from aesthetic experiences in Chapter 6). Again, the difference is still there. SHI as intensive developmental potential directly points to new social practice and new individual <> environment relation, as shown in our three-grade students' desire of "being smart". While the existential experience points to the illumination of Being, and changes in individual <> environment relation is a derived consequence. Here I allocate the existential experience to SHI only to highlight its propensity dimension for meaning making activities. When SHI and existential experience become the target for intervention, they bring in the mode of condition-consequence for thinking the efficacy of intervention. The Being and becoming dimensions demand to include the intangible, imaginary, future-oriented layer of condition into consideration, and the consequence is inevitably open-ended and uncertain, as a complex interaction between directionality and possibility. .

The two notions highlight the dimension of historicity for future-oriented development in intervention. They can be used to understand how orientation towards future is closely connected to historical development. The historical dimension is necessary for understanding the psychological reality in the intervention setting. For example, Thommen & Wettstein (2010) proposed three different systems- the bio-physiological, the psychic and the communicative- to investigate students' classroom disruptive behaviors. According to them, the bio-physiological system targets on manifest behaviors, the psychic system attributes meaning, and the communicative system records interpersonal construction of meaning. These three systems can capture well the unfolding of the dynamic process in the immediate context. The dimension of historicity introduced here can greatly extend and deepen researchers' analysis of the psychic system by not restricting to students' interpretation of the present ongoing process, but also referring to their developmental history to understand their motivations and needs underlying their semiotic construction of the present situation.

Vygotsky noted, "The behavior of man can be understood only as the history of behavior" ("Primitive Man and his behavior", n.d.). By this saying, he pointed out the historical configuration and formation of certain behavioral manifestations. The Being-being-becoming unity brings more complexity in analyzing behaviors by integrating the two dimensions of Being and becoming. The unity of Being-being-becoming is condensed in SHI and existential experiences. This characteristic differentiates the two notions from conceptualizing local or scattered developmental segments as certain "causes" from past influencing the present development (as in Freud's theory). Highlighting SHI and existential experiences as pre-logic and pre-rational also brings a necessity to examine the different states of consciousness underlying agency in intervention, which is discussed in the following section.

### 8.2.2. RELATIONAL/ TRANSFORMATIVE/ SENSUOUS AGENTS IN INTERVENTION

The notion of agency, with its image of individuals being active and effective, is important for cultural and developmental psychology. It relates to ideas of self-organization, self-regulation and self-reflection in considering the individual-environment relation (Bandura, 2006). CPSM shares with these ideas by highlighting the important functions of individual intentions, goals and plans in future-oriented meaning making. As Valsiner (2018b) pointed out, with the mediating function of signs, the person is not only immersed in the immediate context, but also is an agent being distanced from and reflexive upon the setting. This ability renders human beings proactive future-maker rather than passively adapting to the environment.

Many efforts have been made to develop agency in psychology without falling into the pitfall of free will. For instance, Glăveanu (2015) developed the idea of “co-agency” to show how agency is built within concrete social, cultural and material constraints. Efforts in this direction have been identified as the relational-developmental paradigm highlighting holism (Budwig, 2021) and the relational approach (Stetsenko, 2011, 2019a, 2020) depicting agency as “being situated in context and contingent on socialcultural interactivities and dynamics” (Stetsenko, 2019a, p.2).

With the relational perspective as the foundation for understanding human agency, a key problem follows: how can human agents act to go beyond the status quo? This problem is picked up in Stetsenko’s work. Based on historical materialism, Stetsenko sensed a certain degree of passivity in the relational approach, as it regards the present context as pre-given. She developed the notion of transformative agency to understand how agentive individual actors emerge from collective and collaborative social practices (Stetsenko, 2019b). The ethical and political dimension is inherent in transformative agency, as it sees the present situation not as given but as undergoing historical changes by human’s collective practical activities. It also brings a close connection to Freire’s critical pedagogy, as it demands individuals to take a stand and commit to transformation for future (e.g. case reported in Stetsenko, 2019a).

Human agency is evident in human’s collective change of the nature. However, the relation between agentive individual and agentive community seems not very clear. In Stetsenko’s work, the dimension of agentive community is necessary to save the agentive individual from falling into the mentalist stance. By emphasizing the community dimension, Stetsenko moves to critical social issues for developmental and educational implication. There is a relative lack of a developing individual perspective on a more micro-genetic level in her work.

The notion of “sensuous consciousness” is not prominently emphasized (if not rarely) in present Western reading and interpretation of Marx’s work. In common sense, Marx’s work relates to macro social changes and it seems hard to relate this tradition

with cultural developmental psychology. By Wang's interpretation of Marx in the light of Heidegger's work, the notion of "sensuous consciousness" is highlighted (as discussed in Chapter 6). Theorizing sensuous consciousness as pre-logic understanding of one's relational Being brings a developmental perspective on the individual level, which is missing or not elaborated directly for psychology in Marx's original work.

From Marx's work, Stetsenko foregrounds the birthplace of individual agency in the collective practical activities. For the problem of social genesis of individual agency, sensuous consciousness can be the bridge to connect the collective and the individual. As has been clarified in Chapter 6, from the relational Being process constantly emerges innovative sensuous understanding of one's whole Being condensing the past, present and future. From the perspective of "sensuous consciousness", the future oriented goals, as "what people imagine, deem important and strive for in the future and a commitment to bringing this future into reality" (Stetsenko, 2020, pp.10-11), are not values or visions external to the present reality. That is to say, it is not from pre-set values that we problematize and transform the present situation. The demand for transformation, as their aspirations, hopes and desires for the future, is born from people's social practical activities. As Wang (2004) stressed in his interpretation of the Frankfurt School's critical theory, a critical agent is

"historical and sensuous, that is, situated in the real historical life itself. He is the conscious expresser of the practical consciousness in this present life, and therefore it is in this life itself that he forms the critical demands and extracts the critical elements." (Wang, 2004, p.25)

Here I am appropriating discussion in the area of critical theory to understand intervention and the developmental agent. The notion of sensuous agent is especially relevant here. If a critical agent is a "conscious expresser of the practical consciousness in this present life" (ibid), then the developing individual may not easily count as a critical agent, as individuals may not be conscious of their own developmental potential and developmental needs. Intervention can help to illuminate their sensuous consciousness into a conscious level. This immediately brings in a question concerning the relation between educators and their target groups (e.g. in the work of Freire, Stetsenko and this thesis). It concerns the question of how to deal with the relation between auto-catalyzing and allo-catalyzing back to Chapter 4 & 5. For educators stepping in from outside, the efficacy of the intervention as allo-catalysis should be based on comprehension of developing individual's present life and social practice. This comprehension also includes comprehension of the historical development of the individual and his aspirations and potential for the future from the social practice. Both aiming to change individual's practical activities (as intervention reported in Chapter 5) and to change individual's self-understanding (generation of new understanding in DiE in Chapter 7) are contingent on this comprehension. Only based on this comprehension can developmental intervention avoid functioning merely as external reflection (Chapter 2), which is superficial and blind to the

developmental tendency of history as the higher level of reality. In this sense, the allo-catalytic intervention is first of all illumination of the auto-catalytic state of the developing individual. This is to synthesis different sources of data to analyze and reveal individual's developmental state, which constitutes the condition for the intervention consequences.

More importantly, Wang (2004) also pointed out that sensuous consciousness functions in the form of emotions and feelings to a large extent. This perspective brings a new light to conceptualize the function of emotions, feelings and affects in CPSM. The following section would pick up this line and discuss affective generalization and new understanding.

### **8.2.3. AFFECTIVE GENERALIZATION**

The function of feelings, affects and emotions has long been downplayed, bypassed or even excluded in psychology's image of human beings as rational animals and information processing machines (Branco, 2021). In CPSM, efforts have been made to endow emotions a key position for the meaning making process. Various theoretical concepts have been introduced from different traditions to capture the unique functions of emotions, e.g. pleromatization (Valsiner, 2020), undifferentiated yet generalized field-like signs (Valsiner, 2020) and sub-symbolic sensemaking (Salvatore & Freda, 2011). From the semiotic perspective, a vertical dimension of emotional experiences (Klempe & Lehmann, 2021) with different generalized levels has been highlighted, as shown in Figure 4-7. From this perspective, feelings, emotions and affects are not merely embodied activation in a passive and reactive mode, but as possessing an active and generative power for meaning making (Salvatore & Freda, 2011).

In this vertical model, a key question concerns how the pre-semiotic and pre-rational feelings would interact with various forms of semiotic devices (e.g. rational discourses, artistic resources) to rise to a higher level of generalization. This question is approached in the development of intellect-affect unity in Vygotsky's legacy in Chapter 6. Chapter 6 also highlights different mediating functions of language for consciousness development: as word meaning, as language in real-life processes and as art. The notion of illumination, compared with internalization, responds to the problem of emergence of new understanding from aesthetic experiences in Chapter 2 & 6. The arena of art is foregrounded as being special in bringing existential affective experiences from sensuous consciousness to consciousness. This line is picked up in Chapter 7 in discussing DiE's unique characteristics for facilitating new understanding.

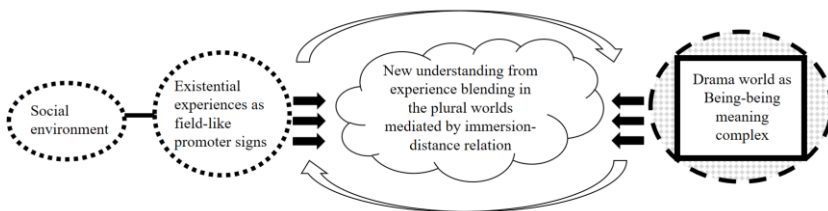
The notion of existential affective experiences opens up a new way to investigate affective generalization from Level 1 pre-semiotic feelings to Level 4 hyper-generalized field-like signs (Figure 6-2). Pre-semiotic feelings on Level 1 have been



theorized from the psychodynamics perspective in the notion of affective context (Salvatore, Valsiner, & Veltri, 2019; Salvatore & Zittoun, 2011), which is global, embodied, generalized, undifferentiated, homogenized and functions in a primary logic as the grounds orienting and catalyzing rational thinking. Existential affective experiences shares with affective context the pre-semiotic dimension and the catalyzing function. Yet, there is Being given to us in existential experiences. The Being dimension deeply concerns ourselves and brings a different catalytic effect: not as a flavor or tone adding to and influencing rational thinking, but as a strong orienting drive for meaning making and illumination. Grasped by overwhelming existential experiences, we act like artists trying to speak out what is unspeakable in mundane language by employing different forms of expressions, e.g. narrations, stories, paintings, poetries, etc. This strong drive of illuminating and understanding our own Being is not inherited in the notion of affective context. It constitutes SHI for cultural-aesthetic intervention.

#### 8.2.4. SHUN SHI IN DRAMA'S CULTURAL-AESTHETIC SPACE

DiE, with its fictional, multi-modal, aesthetic and highly mediating dimension, becomes an important arena for the existential experience to unfold, formulate, distance and illuminate itself (Figure 8-3). From the perspective of SHI and SHUN SHI in Chapter 5, existential experiences constitute a strong propensity for engaging in cultural-aesthetic meaning making activities in DiE. This is empirically seen in *Castle in a box*, where participants' existential experience of being an immigrant, once triggered by the holistic setting of the room, becomes a strong force<sup>3</sup> for meaning making.



<sup>3</sup> In Article D, I used the notion of “developmental force” as being derived from transitions and struggling to make meaning to overcome the ambiguity and uncertainty of transitions. This saying is not contrary to my discussion of existential experience as SHI here. It can be clarified that the struggle for meaning making brought out by life transitions lands itself in struggling to illuminate existential experiences in *Castle in a box*. This is because *Castle in a box* is special as it targets on participants' existential experience at the very start- with the room setting as a resonance.

Figure 8-3 DiE as SHUN SHI intervention

In DiE, the cultural-aesthetic space is highly mediated by the teachers' deliberate structuring. Chapter 7 shows how different material objects and dramatic devices can be adopted to SHUN SHI in the cultural-aesthetic space- that is to follow and scaffold the unfolding process of existential experiences. Through these objects and devices, inner, subjective and pre-semiotic experiences are recalled, re-experienced and formulated into *gegenstand* to support a circulative movement between immersion and distance, pre-representation and representation. As shown in Article D, when affects are designated as SHI, the process of SHUN SHI can be highly delicate and sensitive to educational guidance.

By manipulating the immersion-distance relation in different approaches, DiE fluctuates along the cultural-aesthetic continuity and functions as a hybrid cultural-aesthetic space. From a narrower sense, the notion of DiE as an other in Chapter 3 and DiE as a Being-being meaning complex in Chapter 7 makes the DiE space a unique aesthetic ZPD. As shown in Chapter 6, affective generalization at the highest hyper-generalized level can be conceptualized as *Jingjie*, which is generalized values and beliefs crystalized in individual as *Jingjie* of life and in artwork as *Jingjie* of art. The different levels of *Jingjie* of the individual and the artwork constitute the two ends of aesthetic ZPD. This ZPD enables *perezhivanie* of existential experiences in daily life, in the sense of re-experiencing, overcoming, sublating and elevating to higher level of understanding.

### 8.3. LIMITATIONS AND REFLECTION

#### Theory

Setting from the lens of CPSM, I introduced different ideas and philosophy traditions- Chinese philosophy, Marx, Heidegger and Gadamer- to explore alternative understandings of developmental intervention and cultural-aesthetic development in drama. At a first glance, the thesis seems a messy playground of these quite different (maybe also outdated) ideas. When introducing them to developmental and educational psychology, each tradition should be "psychologized". That is, it becomes necessary to find appropriate concepts and theories at the level of individual psychology to successfully inherit the merits of these ideas. For instance, the concept of SHI from Chinese philosophy depicts system's "propensity at work in configuration" (Jullien, 2004, p.13). How to understand this "propensity" and "configuration" in psychology? In this thesis, I made efforts to transform them: theorizing propensity as rigid personal cultural system and as intensive developmental potential (needs); integrating *perezhivanie* and *Jingjie* theory to explore existential psychology of art for personality development; theorizing the existential world in artwork as a Being-being-meaning complex; conceptualizing sensuous consciousness as producing a generalized field-like promoter sign, etc.

Integrating these ideas is not easy, because of the difficulty of reading the original works and of accessing the corresponding psychological phenomena. There are also long discussions and debates about the interrelations between these quite different traditions. My work in this thesis is not perfect. There are many gaps left for future exploration. Still I think this introduction is productive for advancing CPSM in understanding human development, as they prompt new angles to think about the systemic nature of human development, the socio-genesis of agency and the complexity of cultural-aesthetic development.

### Data

Although this thesis is mainly theoretically oriented, empirical data were included to elucidate the theoretical construction. Looking back, there are much more to be done to verify and advance the theoretical constructs presented in this thesis:

1) The idea of SHI and SHUN SHI is primarily derived from the rich empirical studies from my Chinese colleagues' work, especially the grade characteristic research by Li (2010). My contribution mainly lies in tracing its root in Chinese philosophy, further generalizing and also contextualizing it in developmental and educational psychology. In Article A, one of my co-authors provided an empirical case to clarify the process of identifying SHI and conducting intervention as SHUN SHI. The key for SHUN SHI intervention lies in successfully identifying SHI, which is the hardest part with most messiness, uncertainty and ambiguity. To inform this part, Li (2010)'s research of collecting and synthesizing different sources of data to infer and verify the nature of SHI of primary school students can be examined as an important layer of theoretical construction. This aspect is touched in Xu, Wu & Li (2022).

2) In Article C, I summarized three main approaches in facilitating "me-not me- not not me" understanding. While the first two approaches are well established and theorized in the present area, the third approach was inspired by the existential orientation and proposed by us (Xu & Tateo, 2020). I used the drama device of ritual in the workshop *The green children* to clarify how the layer of existential experiences could be included. More empirical workshops and drama devices can be examined for structural analysis to elucidate how the third approach works through different types of devices. Online videos of DiE workshops can also be included to shed light on the interacting process between the participants, the teacher and the drama world.

3) This thesis reported one empirical study of DiE intervention in Article D. The video recording of the workshop process was the focus for analysis. Data on the teachers' designing process of the workshop can be included to elucidate how the participants' developmental state was analyzed and how the workshop was structured along the idea of SHUN SHI. From the side of participants, the embodiment dimension of the process was relatively ignored when focusing on the discursive signs, while the bodily experience is crucial for higher level of mental functions (Lehmann & Klempe, 2016).

Also, as have been pointed out in Chapter 7, the signs only capture the result of experience and consciousness blending within the plural worlds. What is missing is the self-related and future-oriented dimension of the new understanding. Other forms of data could have been included to reveal the underlying meaning making process of the developing individual. For example, interviewing the participants who were most touched as special cases after the workshop. Along the line of *perezhivanie* of existential experience- personality development in Chapter 6, it becomes also necessary to examine the more enduring influence of the workshop on individual's development. For instance, a follow-up interview could be conducted to examine how the newly emerged value "PERSISTANCE" guides the participants' daily social practice and how this value goes through changes. Last, the workshop *Castle in a box* is highly structured compared to the spontaneous dimension. Other designs of DiE stressing more on improvising and spontaneous contribution from the side of participants could be included to elucidate the transformative process in the DiE space.

In sum, sketching the possibilities to include more various forms of data is not to put everything in the basket, nor to shift to bigger samples. Rather, it is to find relevant and unique events as "minimal data" to enhance theoretical precision (Valsiner, 2018c, p.6). Here the organic connection between theoretical constructs and data collection is emphasized within the whole methodology circle (Figure 4-9).

## 8.4. GENERALIZATION

As this thesis is theoretical-oriented, many of the theoretical constructs developed in this thesis are generalizable for other contexts. Future work is also needed to bring these proposals further both on a theoretical and empirical level.

### SHI and SHUN SHI research

As has been pointed out in Article A, SHI and SHUN SHI are Chinese philosophical ideas concerning change of systems. These two notions do not contain detailed theories or methods for direct application in psychological researches. The philosophical nature also makes them generalizable to intervention researches in different contexts. In this thesis, SHI has been identified as rigid personal cultural system (identity position) and intensive developing potential (developmental needs). There may be other ways to conceptualize SHI in psychological development. The key for future theorization is to grasp SHI as the holistic developmental propensity of the intrapersonal system nested in the interpersonal system. The general idea of SHUN SHI can also be a guiding principle for intervention design in other contexts.

### DiE as a cultural-aesthetic intervention space

Chapter 7 approaches researching DiE intervention from different angles:

- The three models of facilitating new understanding of “me-not me- not not me” (Article C).
- A structural analysis of the workshop *The green children* based on the three layers of experiences (Article C).
- A theorization of DiE as a cultural-aesthetic space catalyzing semiotic generalization at new levels (Article D).
- An analysis of participants’ emergence of new understanding in the workshop *Castle in a box* (Article D).
- The model of five plural worlds for experience blending (Figure 7-1)

These theoretical constructs together provide a general framework for researching DiE from a psychological, developmental and semiotic perspective. They are generalizable to examine other different workshops. Theorization of DiE as a cultural-aesthetic space mediating the unfolding of developmental force and the model of five plural worlds can also inform analysis of other forms of art (e.g. literature) with a high degree of social mediation (e.g. teacher guidance, group activities). The case reported in Article D is unique, qualitative and ideographic in nature, but the dynamic mechanism of facilitating new understanding can be generalized to inspire intervention design in other contexts.

## 8.5. FUTURE IMPLICATION

### Vygotsky, Marx and Heidegger

From Vygotsky’s discussion of the language <> consciousness problem (Chapter 6), I introduced the existential orientation through the juxtaposition of Marx and Heidegger. From this introduction, the notion of “sensuous consciousness” is highlighted, which brings in new perspectives to conceptualize the relation between consciousness and Being, the social layer of consciousness, the mediating function of language on consciousness, and the developmental mechanism of internalization and illumination.

Here Marx’s work was not interpreted in a “common sense” way. In the light of Heidegger’s work, the ontological dimension of Marx’s work is foregrounded. Concerning the long debate of the complex relation between Vygotsky and Marx, this reading of “not common sense” Marx may be productive to discuss the problem of consciousness in cultural-historical theory (e.g. for Shotter (2006)’s discussion of “con-scientia”) and to explore the full theoretical potential of “sensuous consciousness”.

The psychological meaning of sensuous consciousness is scattered in Marx’s work. Wang (2016, p.6) identified sensuous consciousness as “being in objective relations and being conscious about this relation”, and he summarized Marx’s use of sensuous consciousness as language of real life and as passion. He also included existential

affective experiences as sensuous consciousness (Wang, 2005). Future theoretical work may continue to make efforts to “psychologize” this concept. The following questions are fundamental: how to understand sensuous consciousness upon the psychoanalytic model of sub-consciousness, pre-consciousness and consciousness? How would sensuous consciousness regulate psychological functions and manifest itself? Empirical researches are also needed to elucidate theoretical elaboration.

### *DiE as a research space*

This thesis introduced the existential orientation to cultural-aesthetic study and showed how the existential layer brought in the notion of illumination and how entering the existential world of the artwork can be mediated in the here and now context in DiE. Following this vein, a promising direction for future research is to theorize DiE as a research space for cultural-aesthetic experiences containing hyper-generalized affects (Xu & Tateo, in preparation). Valsiner, et al. (2021, p.4) pointed out,

“How is it possible to investigate hyper-generalized affective sign fields? It is clear that by their nature, these fields cannot be studied by methods that primarily rely on verbal accounts ... We need to find ways to access these- large, important, but at the same time nebulous fields in the soul- by techniques that bypass the regular verbal overdetermination of the methodology of the human sciences”.

Responding to the difficult task of investigating hyper-generalized affective fields, Valsiner, et al. (2021) proposed the “inter-modal preconstructive methods” (p.1) by repeatedly expressing and producing feelings in different modalities (e.g. poetry, drawing, dance, music, etc.). The hyper-generalized affects are “intuitively available but analytically not accessible” (Valsiner, et al., 2021, p.3), locating in the area of sensuous consciousness. DiE can facilitate, slow down and amplify the illuminating process from sensuous consciousness to consciousness and bypass the difficulty of direct expression in art forms. It can be regarded as an advancement of this method, with the following advantages:

- It uses powerful pre-texts to induce and frame potential affective experiences;
- It provides distance, which is necessary for both protection and aesthetics;
- There is a natural and spontaneous process for the unfolding and accumulating of affective experiences along with the progress of the workshop;
- It manipulates the experience-reflection relation by adopting dramatic devices and material objects as *gegenstand* to facilitate schematization and pleromatization, the interaction between which is essential for the emergence of hyper-generalized affective fields (Figure 4-1).

The processual, open-ended and highly mediating characteristics of DiE, along with its wide cultural-aesthetic amplitude, can well capture and facilitate the emergence of hyper-generalized affective fields. Emergence should be the focus of psychological research, as it sheds light on the dynamic and developmental nature of psychological phenomena (Branco, 2016; Valsiner, 2018b). What methods can target on the emerging process of phenomena, rather than drawing data as snap shots (Abbey & Diriwächter, 2008), which risks de-contextualization and de-temporalization? With the various dramatic devices, individual's fast and highly subjective experience are slowdown, objectified, re-experienced and reflected. The circulation between intra- and inter- personal plane, between experience and *gegenstand* opens access for research investigation and also brings new possibilities for development. The various dramatic devices can be separately developed into different research methods. They can also be artistically weaved into one holistic workshop.

## 8.6. FINAL CONCLUSION

It has been my ambition in this thesis to resume developmental intervention as a *craft* against the direct production mode advanced by the neoliberal rationalization process. Intervening development is to intervene the poesis of life. Human life and development is contextualized, holistic, interpretive, subjective and intentional. All these characteristics demand to transcend the narrow means-end scheme to capture development in intervention as a dramatic event.

Based on the dual systems model located in CPSM, in this thesis I have highlighted the dual sets of individual  $\langle \rangle$  environmental relation in the intervention context. The efficacy of intervention is conditioned not only by the tangible state of being, but also the intangible dimensions of becoming and Being. The developing individual is not raw material waiting to be processed, nor is an abstract and random agent with infinite free will. Rather, the developing agent is a sensuous agent, who is constantly in social relations and aware of these relations in his sensuous consciousness. From these social relational practices emerges the personal cultural system, the desire for new individual  $\langle \rangle$  context relation and the possibility of a primary grasping of his own Being in existential affective experiences. Correspondingly, intervention is not direct production, nor brutal conquering, nor sneaky penetration, but a poetic craft of following, cultivating, illuminating and transforming. In this vein, intervention research is essentially realist rather than external reflection, as it demands to understand the individual as a Being-being-becoming unity stepping into the intervention space.

The threefold unity has its fullest manifestation in cultural-aesthetic activities. DiE, with its abundant devices for mediating experience blending in plural worlds, becomes an appropriate space to facilitate, guide and research the interplay between Being, being and Becoming. This interplay demands to reconsider the unique role of pre-semiotic feeling in emergence of new understanding and its multiple ways to rise to

the conscious level under cultural guidance. The vertical dimension of intellect-affect development, with its deep social root, challenges researchers to innovate theoretical and methodological constructs to capture all the richness of human development.

Being and becoming are the real targets for developmental intervention. They are not mysterious. Without becoming, human beings are reduced to static entities; Without Being, becoming risks getting appropriated as a never-ending project of self-control, self-planning, and self-promotion. With the Being-being-becoming unity, I end this thesis with the image of a historical individual actively understanding his past and preparing for the future in intervention.



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