MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION AS VIEWED FROM THE ANGLE OF CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY:
PARADOXES AND POTENTIALS

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CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY – a renewed perspective within psychology that emerged in the 1990s and that looks at HIGHER MENTAL PROCESSES in their SOCIAL CONTEXTS

**Key recent roots**: Lev Vygotsky, George H. Mead, Karl Buehler, Mikhail Bakhtin, Ernest E. Boesch – INTERDISCIPLINARY CROWD

**Key ancient roots**: Wilhelm von Humboldt, Moritz Lazarus, Hajim Steinthal, Wilhelm Wundt (his *Voelkerpsychologie*), C.S. Peirce – also for the 19th century an interdisciplinary group (but DISCIPLINES then were NOT YET STRICTLY LIMITED)

**Key contemporary disciplinary opponents** (*Gegenstand*): cognitive psychology, cross-cultural psychology

**Key contemporary fields of application**: education, international business, communication

CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY IS NOT A HOMOGENEOUS FIELD BUT A GENERIC LABEL FOR A NUMBER OF DISTINCT PARALLEL PERSPECTIVES THAT CO-EXIST (BUT ARE NOT NECESSARILY INTEGRATED) IN OUR PRESENT TIME
VERY NICE WORDS:

EDUCATION

MULTI-CULTURAL

but how can we contextualize them?

By looking at their opposites?

NON-EDUCATION?

UNI-CULTURAL?

BUT WHAT WOULD IT GIVE US FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING?
“UNI-CULTURAL” is relatively easy (I will not try to analyze what NON-EDUCATION means!):

**UNI-CULTURAL = HOMOGENEOUS**

“sharing” of something we call “culture”: the idea is WE ARE ALL THE SAME at least within the designated in-group– e.g. “Estonians” “Americans” “Zulus” etc.– the usual way of thinking in CROSS-CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY where the IN-GROUPs are seen to “possess” a shared quality (“American-ness”) with only quantitative variation (“X is MORE ‘American’ than Y”) and differ as a group from an OUT-GROUP (“’Americans’ DIFFER FROM ‘Mexicans’”)

SO, **UNI-CULTURAL EDUCATION** probably is:

**DIRECTED EFFORT BY THE ONES WHO SHARE MORE OF THEIR OWN WAYS OF BEING** (teachers, parents, etc) **TO CHANGE THE WAYS OF BEING OF THOSE WHO SHARE LESS** OF THEIR WAYS OF BEING (children, pupils, students)

PARADOX: WHAT IS “SHARE LESS” (or “SHARE MORE”)? SHARE WITH THE OTHER… BUT IT MEANS THE OTHER ALREADY IS LIKE MYSELF-- TO SHARE WHAT IS ALREADY SHARED!?
“LET ME SHARE THIS APPLE WITH YOU”

“LET ME SHARE MY PEN WITH YOU”
(or “LET ME SHARE MY CHILD WITH YOU”)

“LET ME SHARE THIS IDEA WITH YOU”

“LET ME SHARE MY CULTURE WITH YOU”

So

WHAT DOES “SHARE X” MEAN?????
THE PARADOX ELABORATED:

UNI-CULTURAL EDUCATION IS A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS (if we accept the axioms of cross-cultural psychology of in-group homogeneity)—

The TEACHER and the LEARNER share ‘THE SAME CULTURE’, there is no QUALITATIVE difference between them—so

EDUCATION MERELY ACTS TO BRING THE LEARNER TO THE LEVEL OF THE TEACHER BY QUANTITATIVE ACCUMULATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

BY THAT ARGUMENT EDUCATION (uni-cultural) CANNOT PRODUCE ANYTHING NEW, it only “fills in the gaps” DUE TO IMMATURITY OF CHILDREN/LEARNERS

(this is implied in “maturationist” theories of learning—education merely makes it possible to let the “inborn” features of the learner to “become acculturated”)

EDUCATION here is CRADLE OF GROWTH, not an ARENA FOR CONSTRUCTION
YET WE KNOW THAT EDUCATION (at least sometimes—when freed from the institutional pressures of testing for outcomes and passing exams)—

does lead to qualitatively new inventions by the learners (and maybe by teachers too—if they are learners-while-teaching)

So there are THREE “cultures” WHICH ARE QUALITATIVELY DIFFERENT involved EVEN IN uni-cultural education

“THE NOVICE CULTURE” ➔
➔“THE TEACHER CULTURE” ➔
➔“THE POST-TEACHER (innovator) CULTURE”
SO—EVEN “mono-CULTURAL” (e.g. French, English, Russian, German, etc) EDUCATION SYSTEMS ARE ACTUALLY - NOT JUST BI- BUT TRI-CULTURAL in other terms—

UNI-CULTURAL EDUCATION CANNOT EXIST, all education is MULTI-CULTURAL

OF COURSE I am fully aware that in the specific Luxembourg case, MULTI-CULTURAL means something slightly different:

-- many languages (Leutzenburgisch, French, German, Portuguese, English etc.)
-- many ethnic backgrounds
-- curricular policies of moving learners through different language domains
-- being the small centre of the expanding giant (of EU)

BUT MY POINT IS THAT ALL THESE LOCAL FEATURES ONLY ADD TO THE BASIC MULTI-CULTURAL NATURE OF EDUCATION WHEREVER IT MAY BE
IT IS AT THIS JUNCTION WHERE CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY (in clear distinction from CROSS-CULTURAL psychology) can bring to the field of multi-cultural education some knowhow, yet there is an extra-scientific condition--(Thesis One):

Any multi-cultural perspective that can be constructive for education needs to be based on tolerance of differences and learning from such differences between persons, social groups, and societies.

HOWEVER, IN REALITY—
Tolerance is rare in human social life where different political and economic interests as well as interpersonally emerging jealousies work towards establishment of partitions that set the stage for emergence and fixation of conditions of intolerance.
Contemporary cultural psychology includes three sub-areas that are relevant for multicultural education:

- **social representation** (Serge Moscovici)
- **dialogical self** (Hubert Hermans, Joao Salgado)
- **semiotic regulation** (starting from Charles Sanders Peirce, Lev Vygotsky and Karl Buhler)

that can be of use in the blocking of the emergence of new versions of intolerance or neutralize the existing ones.

Contexts of multi-cultural education can be arenas for mutually trustful educational settings—BUT HOW?

**THESE THREE SUB-FIELDS OF CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY PROVIDE COVERAGE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ANALYSIS**
MAPPING OF LEVELS:

“MACRO-LEVEL”: SOCIO-POLITICAL DISCOURSE LEVEL – SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

“MESO-LEVEL”: IMMEDIATE DECISION-MAKING BY EDUCATORS – DIALOGICAL SELF

“MICRO-LEVEL”: PROCESS OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIONS – SEMIOTIC REGULATION
First Contribution: the PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

→ Initiated by Serge Moscovici in France from 1960s onwards
→ Currently popular all over the World, but particularly in Italy, Switzerland, Brazil
→ built on the notion of COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS of Durkheim

The basic function of the SR perspective is to demonstrate how persons act in accordance with internalized social schemata (and themata) as they go about doing their mundane everyday things. The PROCESS OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATION (representing) is based on such SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS.

The process is INHERENTLY DIALOGICAL (Ivana Markova’s look at SR)

EXAMPLE:

“MULTICULTURAL” + “EDUCATION” + “CREATIVITY”

are all social representations that guide our actions THROUGH US
Our society is an institution which inhibits what it stimulates. It both tempers and excites aggressive, epistemic, and sexual tendencies, increases or reduces the chances of satisfying them according to class distinctions, and invents prohibitions together with the means of transgressing them. Its sole purpose, to date, is self-preservation, and it opposes change by means of laws and regulations. It functions on the basic assumption that it is unique, has nothing to learn, and cannot be improved. Hence its unambiguous dismissal of all that is foreign to it. Even its presumed artificiality, which might be considered a shortcoming, is taken, on the contrary, for a further sign of superiority, since it is an attribute of mankind.

Moscovici (1976), p. 149.
ACTION IMPERATIVES ENCODED IN THE ENVIRONMENT:

Building on SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS of cleanliness, control, and protection from the dangerous unknown for action suggestion IT IS NOT MERE INSTRUCTION
Thesis 2: IN THEIR MOST GENERAL ABSTRACT FORM, ALL PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA ARE CHARACTERIZED BY THE FOLLOWING SCHEME OF GEGENSTAND:

KEY COMPONENTS: DIRECTION, BARRIER, RESISTANCE, OVERCOMING, RELOCATING (of the barrier, or of the direction)

This in contrast to psychology’s traditional look at projecting a causal essence to represent the representation:

3 75 “correct”

each of these are representations of some phenomena that are explained by projecting causal entities into them for explanation
IN HUMAN ACTIVITIES, THE PROCESSES OF

CONSTRUCTION

AND

DESTRUCTION

are mutually united in our movement towards the future.

IN EACH ACT OF CONSTRUCTION (of the new) IS AN ACT OF DESTRUCTION (of the previous)
CONSTRUCTION OF ANTICIPATED DESTRUCTION
IN OTHER TERMS--

ETERNAL DIALOGUE OF CONSTRUCTION AND DESTRUCTION guided by social representations

THIS LINKS OUR STORY OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

WITH THE PERSPECTIVE OF DIALOGICAL SELF
Second contribution:

from the

DIALOGICAL SELF

traditions

in cultural psychology
THE SELF IS NOT UNITARY, IT IS A CONSTELLATION OF SUB-UNITS THAT ARE ALL COORDINATED IN SOME WAYS

AND THE SCIENTIFIC QUESTION IS HOW?

HERE WE FIND THE DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY FITTING as it is:

- Relatively new– 1990s
- Clearly innovative: A and non-A united
- Allows to conceptualize complexity
Hubert Hermans’ DIALOGICAL SELF consists of I-POSITIONS which...are organized in an imaginal landscape. In this conception, the I has the possibility to move, as in space, from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time. The I fluctuates among different, and even opposed, positions and has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between characters in a story, involved in a process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement. Each character has a story to tell about its own experiences from its own stance. These characters exchange information about their respective ME-s, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self. In this multiplicity of positions, some positions may become more dominant than others, so that the voices of the less dominant positions may be subdued. (Hermans, 1996, pp. 10-11, added emphases)
The Portuguese Group (University of Minho, ISMAI) has been elaborating the dynamics of the DS along Meadian lines (I <> ME relations),

... self-identity processes can be directly associated with the mythical figure of the double-faced Janus: there is always the active I that addresses an Other-in-self, but this Other is still Me. Human existence always becomes co-existence, even if only with oneself; and co-existence is an ambiguous kind of existence. In each passing moment, the self becomes a new blurred image and a challenge to the last image we have just created to ourselves. Thus, we are constantly thrust in a space filled with our own ambiguous features. (Ferreira, Salgado & Cunha, 2006, p. 31)
FROM HERE WE EXPAND-- The SELF PROCESS IS A TRIALOGUE (based on G.H. Mead, 1912,1913): OUTER LOOP A-B-C, MIDDLE LOOP A-C, INNER LOOP F-E
WHAT IS A TRIALOGUE?

Coordination of **three** dialogical processes

\[ \text{I} \leftrightarrow \text{ME} \]
\[ \text{ME (to other)} \leftrightarrow \text{ME (to self)} \]
\[ \text{ME to YOU} \leftrightarrow \text{YOU to ME} \]

in the actual movement through time
BUT HOW IS THAT TRIALOGUE ORGANIZED?

this question brings us to THE THIRD CONTRIBUTION:

SEMIOTIC REGULATION

traditions in cultural psychology
CULTURE (semitotic mediation) IS A TOOL THAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO FACE THE FUTURE
as we are constantly making the future out of the present moment

HUMAN SYSTEMS ARE SELF-REFLEXIVE AND PRESCRIPTIVE ABOUT THE FUTURE
Human activity entails the process of meaning construction, use, and selective maintenance of the constructed meanings—

together with the regulation of ongoing action, i.e.

→ **HIERARCHICAL** semiotic regulation—signs guide signs (and conduct)

Meanings regulate the ongoing action by guiding them in **selected directions**.

→ **TEMPORAL ORIENTATION**—semiosis for the (immediate) future
SEMIOTIC REGULATION IS ACCOMPLISHED BY DYNAMIC HIERARCHY OF SIGNS OF VARIOUS ORIGINS— ENCODED IN ENVIRONMENT, INTERNALIZED FROM EXPERIENCE, CREATED ON THE SPOT:

Social representations in the environment
“clean is good”

Anticipatory meanings
“washing hands/feet/face is necessary after encounter X”

Immediately emergent meanings
“I had to do X”
THEREFORE IT MEANS?

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESS THAT IS CONSTANTLY GENERATED AND UNDERGOES RUPTURES AND TRANSFORMATIONS— ANY STUDY OF IT IS NECESSARILY MICROGENETIC
The growth of the self-regulatory processes through hierarchical reflexivity

The first level of reflexivity beyond \(A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C\) sequence grows out of goal orientation ("I am orienting towards \(C\)" \(\rightarrow\) "I intend \(C\")).
FOUR LEVELS OF SEMIOTIC REGULATION

CULTURAL PHENOMENA OF THE PSYCHE

LEVEL 4: Hypergeneralized field signs
LEVEL 3: Generalized verbal signs
LEVEL 2: Verbal signs (schematizations)
LEVEL 1: Pre-verbal signs (iconic, indexical, hybrid)

Range of EXPLICIT EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSES

PHYSIOLOGICAL = NON-CULTURAL LEVEL OF OUR BODILY FUNCTIONS (level 0)
SO, IN MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION:

WE TALK BY WAY OF LEVELS 2 and 3

BUT OUR AIM IS

LEVEL 4

that we promote (but cannot guarantee) through LEVEL 2+3 guiding LEVELS 1 and 0

So, consider the LEVEL 4 phenomenon that can be TALKED ABOUT at LEVEL 3 as

“RESPECT FOR OTHER CULTURES”

(in everyday life, in classroom practice, in administrative decisions, etc)
AS I HAVE OUTLINED TODAY: Contemporary cultural psychology includes three sub-areas-- work on social representations, on dialogical self, and on semiotic regulation-- that can be of use in the blocking of the emergence of new versions of intolerance or neutralize the existing ones.

BLOCKING, NEUTRALIZATION (of undesired possibilities), BYPASSING (of set barriers) ARE PRACTICAL TACTICS OF HUMAN ACTION

Thesis 3: Contexts of multi-cultural education can be arenas for mutually trustful educational settings.
FINAL POINTS--POTENTIALS FOR MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION from CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY:

1. Decision about in which SOCIO-POLITICAL CONDITIONS discourse about multi-cultural education is *de facto* an empty façade, and in which conditions it can be a workable task for creating arenas for innovation.

2. Coordinating the “multi-cultural voices” with the educational settings in maintaining mutually benefitting differences (rather than divisive breaks)—joint action approach.

3. Analyzing the construction of new meanings through the exposure to other-cultural worlds in educational settings.