

The Researcher's subjectivity as a research instrument - from intuition to surrender

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ABSTRACT

*This chapter tracks different ways of framing the use of subjectivity in psycho-social research, by offering different, yet convergent, ways of understanding its ontological basis. For this purpose, it tracks dualities in the work of Bergson and Bion to begin with. These dualities have to do with both the nature of reality and of processes by which it may manifest itself. This in turn justifies particular ways to learn and research. Some of this territory was covered in more detail in Volume One of *Researching beneath the Surface* (2009). This chapter takes that work further into a relational understanding of the use of (inter)subjectivity in research. To this effect it then moves from dualities to the idea of "thirdness" via brief characterisations of models of transference and counter-transference and their transformation over time. It ends the theoretical journey in the work of Jessica Benjamin (2004), concerned with both process dualities as well as thirdness as elements of intersubjectivity. The focus of the chapter is not so much to compare and contrast the different frameworks from philosophy and psychoanalysis, rather to quote Michael Eigen (1999:24): "My interest is not in "reconciling" (reducing?) so much as seeing ways they help set each other in motion" and in doing so, provoke the reader into a letting go into that motion that might, by the end, have produced a sense of how relationality and intersubjectivity can inform and expand our framing and understanding of psycho-social research. While much of the content may be perceived as a bit abstract, the final section is aimed at translating and fleshing out its relevance in terms of research encounters and psycho-social dilemmas.*

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to introduce different frameworks from philosophy and psychoanalysis by which to approach an understanding of the role of subjective experience in psycho-social research and to link these frameworks so as to develop a sense of how the relation of researcher and research may be understood and developed according to these models. In other words it is about ways of knowing that include the researcher's subjectivity as a necessary element in the research encounter.

As Frosh (2003:1564) pointed out "*the idea of the psycho-social subject as a meeting point of inner and outer forces, something constructed yet also constructing, a power-using subject that is also subject to power, is a difficult subject to theorise...*" and therefore also to research. In addition, the psycho-social subject has an unconscious dimension and is not just a rational agent, which by necessity complicates the picture even further. Yet if as psycho-social researchers we are to seriously engage with this ontological standpoint, we must engage with the complexity this entails particularly in relation to research encounters. Here we are confronted with ourselves and others as such subjects and this is where our subjectivity and reflexivity, as the attention given to it, is a crucial aspect of psycho-social research.

What I aim to demonstrate and offer in this chapter is a way of unpacking and grounding the idea of the psycho-social subject by giving a sense of the development of different frameworks and to arrive at an ontological understanding by which the psycho-social subject can be understood as constituted by encounters between internal and external milieus over time, both partaking of different modalities and processes by which they combine and express themselves in actual life. This chapter is therefore concerned with how we can understand in more detail what may be meant by subjectivity, what underlies it in theoretical and epistemological terms and what its uses and principles for practice might be, starting with Bergson and Bion, then moving through psychoanalysis to changing notions of transference and counter-transference to a relational perspective. The reason to start from here is, briefly and very selectively, to track a trajectory of some relevant development of ideas from 19th to 21st centuries.

Ontological duality and psycho-social studies – qualitative and quantitative aspects of reality

Henri Bergson (1859–1941) is known as a process philosopher, whose work has had a profound influence on Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995). Both these philosophers have an embodied, process focused ontology. While they do not put nature and nurture in opposition, there is nonetheless a dualism in their way of thinking about reality. The focus is on different ways by which reality is constituted. Having trained as a mathematician, Bergson cannot be accused of being inimical to numbers, yet his interest in consciousness led him to argue that the nature of reality cannot be reduced to them. In *Time and Free Will* (1913) he makes the point that, to put it rather simply, intuition is deeper than intellect, and that there is a real difference between deep-seated psychic states and that which can be measured. I will return to his ideas later, but one of the key issues that comes from his (and Deleuze's) work and that frames this chapter, is their interest in the differences between quality and quantity, and their focus on the qualitative, non-verbal and fluid foundational aspects of reality. While Bergson's interest in *Time and Free Will*, originally written as his doctoral thesis, was on consciousness and free will, what he and Deleuze offer is a different way of thinking about the unconscious, not as something just belonging to individual subjects or necessarily as the outcome of repression, but as an ontological basis for all of reality alongside those aspects that can be more easily observable and quantifiable. The term "virtual" is used by both Bergson and Deleuze to denote those aspects that are hard to quantify or even qualify, except by a selective process that always leaves a remainder, though "duration" is the term first used by Bergson in his work on the nature of time and is the one I will restrict myself to for present purposes.

In Bergson, the different foundational aspects of reality are viewed in terms of quality and quantity, as a way of distinguishing and characterising them in the early part of his work. In his last book (1935) they are identified in terms of static and dynamic processes working at social as

well as individual levels. He gives the examples of laws and mysticism as respectively static and dynamic aspects of morality.

Bergson and Deleuze are seen as difficult thinkers, with a tendency to shift their terms and be imprecise in their definitions. This in my view has two main causes: it reflects developments in their thinking, but even more important is the fact that these shifts mirror the shifting quality, the lability of their object of study, which in fact is not an object at all, but the sum of the forces, tensions and processes that underlie their effects and can merely be more easily quantified, qualified and observed. I mention this at this juncture because I wish to follow their example and, rather than seek fixed definitions, try to evoke and characterise what I am trying to set out, approaching it from different directions in an attempt to point at topological (dis)guises or contextually determined depictions of similar dynamics. "*Topology is the science of self-varying deformation*" (Massumi, 2002:134). What is beneath the surface, in other words, has many guises and is never exhausted by one definition, description, qualification or characterisation. This logic allows me to think that the different theoretical understandings I am going to bring to bear are different facets of how we might characterise some principal aspects of getting to beneath the surface aspects of reality. To quote Michael Eigen once more, (1999:24): "*My interest is not in "reconciling" (reducing?) so much as seeing ways they help set each other in motion*". In what follows I will therefore first of all place some of Bergson and Bion's ideas side by side and relate them to each other, bringing out aspects fundamental to an appreciation of the need for researchers to engage with the unquantifiable, qualitative and beneath the surface aspects and the criteria that might be a basis for doing so, all fundamentally requiring reflexive capacities and particular rules of method. This could be understood as a way of holding a "binocular vision" (Bion, 1961), which in turn is a fundamental basis for psycho-social studies with its Janus quality of looking both ways: towards both the psychic and the social, to understand their dynamic interactions.

Bergson's intuition as a method: Bion's "K" and "O", reflexivity and research

"Coming to know means 'to place oneself in a conditional relation to something'; to feel oneself conditioned by something and oneself to condition it - it is therefore under all circumstances establishing, denoting and making conscious of conditions..."(Nietzsche, *Will to Power*: 555 cited in Abou-Rihan, 2008:7)

The above quote tells us that consciousness and reflexivity are never separate from an external trigger. In other words we are psycho-socially conscious, taking the social in an expansive sense to mean all the external conditions of our existence. The affective impact that external stimuli may have is however not something that can be unproblematically qualified and named. That requires a process of selection and discernment, which is culturally mediated and determined,

rather than simply an effect of the external stimuli on the internal individual milieu. In other words, we may learn to distinguish pleasant and unpleasant, we have to be taught and/or learn by experience to think of some things as good or bad, but as we all know, this is subject to cultural variation and can vary not just across different geographical cultural locations, but even in relation to group or class membership and organisational dynamics. What is given to us to begin with is simply a bodily capacity to affect and be affected, what we make of that, its qualifications, is open to interpretation. This is context-dependent and such context has to be factored in, not only in terms of its social conditioning and how it came to be so, but also in terms of our own individual response to it.

How things came to be so is about time. Time is a fundamental aspect of reality in its own right and partakes of the fundamental duality of Bergson's (1913) ontology: clock time is in his view a practical quantification and spatialisation of a more profound qualitative aspect of time, which he calls "duration". *"Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states"* (Bergson, 1913:100). Without delving too far into the philosophical complexity of "duration", let me translate this for present purposes as that aspect of time that makes present what I will call the "affective genealogy" of our subjectivity, but without dulling that affect by putting it in a sequence of separate states or events. What I mean by this is the origin of our consciousness, the way we have been formed by affective experience and responded to it, the necessarily uneven and most of all intense affective circumstances of our development, or, in Bergson's view of the world, the qualitative intense, rather than extended, homogenous and spatialized aspect of time. The difference is one of kind. The artificial evenness and practicality of clock time is obvious, it is a human social convention, which we are barely aware of most of the time, yet dissolves in the affectively intense moments when time seems to stop. The commonly reported slowing of time perception in very intense situations may be a perception of duration itself. The time disordering effects of trauma may be linked to us being thrown into an experience of duration, by its intensity. The way psychoanalysis and other psycho-social methodologies, such as social dreaming or visual matrices, invite one to re-live, to make present, rather than just remember, affectively intense experiences is, in my view, about accessing that qualitative aspect of time, duration itself, in order for us to be able to reframe it with the help of a different significant other than the one/s involved the first time. But here I am giving somewhat negative instances, whereas Bergson (1913) is far more positive in this and some of the emotions he deals with in *Time and Free Will* are of joy and aesthetic experience. For the purpose of accessing pure duration, our conscious state *"need not be entirely absorbed in the passing sensation or idea: for then ... it would no longer endure. Nor need it forget its former states: it is enough that, in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune melting so to speak, into one another"* (ibid: 100, also cited in Crociani-Windland, 2009). This last statement, in my view, speaks of a

coming together of past and present that chimes with what will be dealt with later in more detail, namely thirdness.

Bion also distinguished a duality, or difference in kind in relation to learning and knowledge. He posited a difference between the two which he indicated as “K” for knowledge and “O” for not knowing and, as French & Simpson (2000) have posited, learning occurs by holding the two in tension. “O” stands for the ineffable, that which is immanent, in a similar way to duration and quality (and the virtual, as a development of the concept of duration) in Bergson’s (and Deleuze’s) philosophy. “O” stands for the reality of the moment, its truth. This is not an absolute truth, it is contingent. I have gone into more detail about Bergson and Bion in the first volume of *Researching Beneath the Surface* (Crociani-Windland, 2009), and won’t expand on this comparison here. Suffice to say that these dualities seem to me to be attempting to characterise something profound and remarkably similar in processes of learning and therefore also to research.

Bion (1970) advocated the withholding of memory and desire. As a trained analyst he would have wanted to know his patient’s biographical history, yet this was not his main focus. It seems to me, to use my earlier formulation, his interest could be expressed as being in the “affective genealogy” of his patients. His innovation in how he conceived of accessing this is often referred to using the term “negative capability”, borrowed from Keats, and what he called “faith” in “O”. Faith in “O” according to Michael Eigen (1999) is a faith in the body and introspection. It seems to me that intuition could be seen as a commonly used term that approaches some of these issues. This is in fact the word Bergson used as key to his method for philosophy, which presupposes duration and that I will return to shortly.

In Bergson’s and Bion’s binocular way of seeing things it is necessary to acknowledge the role of introspection in how we have come to know and how we can continue to learn about the world. Introspection is a part of what it means to use one’s subjectivity in order to come to know; it is in the tension between “K” and “O” described by Bion and in the capacity to distinguish between differences in kind in Bergson. Yet introspection needs to be practiced, sharpened and trained. Noticing and having faith in one’s bodily responses is a part of that. This requires trust in our capacity to be affected (and to affect. Our bodies responding faster than we can register in any consciously precise way is a feature of this kind of intuition, itself deeply connected to our unconscious participation in duration or, to link all of the above, to the affective genealogy of the present moment, in other words “O”, the qualitative, immanent aspect of the necessarily psycho-social reality we try to learn about.

What Bergson offered was a way to approach intuition methodically that in my view goes beyond Bion’s. Bergson’s idea of intuition as a method is based on three main rules: the attention to the positing of problems; the rediscovery of true differences in kind between quality and quantity;

the framing of problems in terms of time, rather than space (Deleuze, 1991: ch.1). For both Bergson and Deleuze the nature of reality itself is problematic. This is not a negative view; both are known as vitalists, and the term 'problem', in Bergson's view, is a more a positive concept than a need. For example, a baby has a problem in that food (or other conditions to sustain health) is required that she cannot yet procure autonomously. She solves it by devising a particular sign of distress that tunes into a mother's affective response which prompts her to feed the baby. This gives a more positive perspective than portraying the baby as needy and demanding. Crying, in this perspective, is a way of life preserving itself, of solving a problem. This can be seen in itself as an example of a reframing of the problem of a crying baby. The solution is there already: the baby wants to live and be well, for this, the first solution that will address that problem is case food - though it could be other sources of affective discomfort or any condition not sustaining of life and health. At a very simple level, thinking through time, might tell us it has been a while since she was fed, but given a particularly insistent baby we might have learnt from experience that feeding and comfort have become a "composite" of material, quantitative (no food) and psychological aspects, and so offering one solution (food) might alleviate the other problems. On the other hand crying may stop in the repeated absence of solution being achieved, as in the case of neglect.

This way of approaching learning, which in my view is synonymous with research, means asking questions such as these: what was the problem that this this problem itself may have been seen as a (necessarily partial) solution to? How is this problem constituted, in both conscious and unconscious ways? How did it come to be such? How do I use my own affective response in tension with my conscious knowledge and experience, in other words my intuition or faith in "O" in conjunction with more cognitive analytical knowledge and capacities, in order to learn about it?

As already stated, the ontological duality outlined by Bergson is important as it opposes a split between mind and body. It is an embodied view which puts affective and qualitative dimensions at the centre of inquiry, while acknowledging their tensions in co-existence with more finite quantitative, material, aspects of life; in reality these aspects are always together, they are always mixed. Bion's distinction between "K" and "O" can be understood in similar terms of being different in kind. The body and consciousness, taken in their broadest sense, also partake of an important duality in that differences started to be recognised within the neurosciences in the workings of right and left brain (Sperry, 1968; Schore, 2003; McGilchrist, 2009). Our analytical and attunement capacities have been seen as a fundamental duality founded in our bodily constitution and more recent neuroscientific work points out the relationality and complexity of brain hemisphere. This, as I hope will become apparent, only strengthens the points that I am leading us towards. It will become clearer how this has been worked with in later sections dealing with Jessica Benjamin's work and relational approaches. The next step is therefore to go

from duality to thirdness at the hand of a brief mapping of different notions of transference and counter-transference.

It may be useful at this point to summarise the main points so far: what Bergson's, Bion's or neuro-scientific notions have in common is the acknowledgement of aspects of reality which require special conditions in order to be related to and researched. The researcher's subjectivity and introspectively derived material is vital to this. In general these special conditions have to do with a particular attitude the researcher has to be willing and able to adopt – and some rules that feature the attention to the posing of questions and to time in its aspect of duration, not just in its usual spatialized, sequential aspect, as outlined earlier. Techniques from psychoanalysis lend themselves to this kind of inquiry. I will enter into this more fully later at the hand of Jessica Benjamin's notions of thirdness, itself similar to and founded on Winnicott's notion of "transitional space", and her ideas on "one, third and surrender". Suffice to say for now, that both the psychoanalytic and philosophical perspectives of Bergson and later Deleuze make it imperative to inquire into what could be termed as either unconscious or pre-conscious aspects of reality.

Moving from duality to thirdness – a brief history of transference and countertransference

This section aims to offer a brief overview of how notions of transference and countertransference have transformed as they shift over time, from Freud's original formulation to later understandings which allows us to move to a notion of thirdness and intersubjectivity. Let me begin with some very basic definitions of the terms: transference denotes the client's imaginings of the therapist influenced by their past, whereas countertransference denotes the therapist's reactions to the patient. Transference processes have gone on to be seen as so central to psychoanalysis as to lead to the coining and widespread use of the catchphrase "*transference - the total situation*" (Joseph, 1985). They are also seen as central to psycho-social research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). In broad terms (Hinshelwood, 1999) and in spite of deeper analysis qualifying this and showing the pre-Heimann understanding to be more complex than the following outlines (Holmes, 2014), the shifts in understanding and operationalising these concepts can be summarised in terms of three basic models:

Model 1- Freud: the patient imagines, the analyst must be objective: Freud thought transference phenomena were ubiquitous and not unique to therapy and that transference could be a useful tool to understand the unconscious and that this was in fact how the unconscious broke out. For him however countertransference was a hindrance, blocking the transference relation, and resulting from of a lack of self-awareness, and/or insufficient analysis.

Model 2 - Heimann and the Independents: both patient and analyst have feelings that are useful in accessing the unconscious. This reworking emerged after Freud's death, during and

after World War Two. It arose from the so called “Controversial Discussion” (Klein’s Object-Relations theory vs Anna Freud’s classic Freudian instinct/drive based model). Although Klein held to the classic Freudian ideas on transference and countertransference, there were already germs of the new model in Object Relations theory. Klein’s concept of projective identification created a bridge from seeing transference as a block to seeing it as an intelligible response. It was the so called Independents (Fairbairn, Winnicott, Bowlby on and off) and particularly Paula Heimann (1950:81-82) however, who redefined countertransference as a more positive, complex and rich response to the patient’s transference. In Heimann’s her own words:

“the analyst’s emotional response to his patient within the analytic situation represents one of the most important tools for his work. The analyst’s counter-transference is an instrument of research into the patients unconscious. The analytic situation has been investigated and described from many angles, and there is general agreement about its unique character. But my impression is that it has not been sufficiently stressed that it is a relationship between two persons. ...The aim of the analyst’s own analysis, from this point of view, is *not to turn him into a mechanical brain which can produce interpretations on the basis of a purely intellectual procedure, but to enable him, to sustain the feelings which are stirred in him....*” (my emphasis) and “Our basic assumption is that the analyst’s unconscious understands that of his patient. This rapport on the deep level comes to the surface in the form of feelings which the analyst notices in response to his patient, in his “counter-transference”. *This is the most dynamic way in which his patient’s voice reaches him* (my emphasis).

Her use of the words “dynamic way” seems wonderfully apt in relation to my earlier sections on Bergson. The movement here could be characterised as going towards a relational and dynamic understanding and away from advocating the division of roles (in model 1) where the patient’s unconscious communicates in a dynamic way that can be inferred via the transference, and the therapist is relegated to, as Heimann put it, “a mechanical brain”, or in Bergson’s terms, a quantitative or static process using only objective analytic functions.

While Heimann’s position already highlights the importance of relationship, Winnicott took this further. Winnicott’s ideas were already prefiguring the relational turn (Clarke, Hahn & Hoggett, 2008) by positing both the importance of the mother/infant relationship and an intermediate space, a third space that is created by the relationship. His idea of transitional or potential space (Winnicott, 1971:98-101) as an intermediate space between the individual and the environment and between inner and outer reality, where there is infinite variability of phenomena, took this into a more social dimension which also which included non-human elements. This space was, in his view, where both creative play and cultural experience are located, a place of maximally intense experience of a non-orgiastic kind. This seems to me not only a move away from the drives and libido oriented Freudian formulations to object seeking and object relating, but is one

which is also akin to the notion of intensity, which in turn applies to a more Bergsonian understanding of affect as both a deeper and more fundamental level of our existence.

Model 3 - the relationship as key to the therapeutic encounter, creating a joint third space.

While Winnicott prefigures a relational turn in the UK, which did not have much followership, this approach was developed in the US, and came from Ego Psychology's emphasis on Ego, rather than Id. The Freudian notion of "*Where Id was, Ego shall be*" was played very fully into a more social and political direction. Relationship was key. In William Alanson White's own words (Jelliffe Papers, 5 November 1919: cited in Schwartz, 1999:166): "*...the smallest society conceivable would be composed of two individuals, but there is another element that enters that is of great importance and that is the relationship between the two individuals, and that relationship is a higher state than either one of the individuals alone and contains possibilities which are not resident in either one*".

Within this perspective transference and countertransference are dynamic elements of communication which allow modulation and negotiation of relationship, based on intersubjectivity, within a third space. This brings us to the final part of the theoretical journey of this chapter.

Twoness, thirdness and intersubjectivity

Benjamin (2004:1, her inverted commas) defines "*intersubjectivity in terms of a relationship of mutual recognition-a relation in which each person experiences the other as a 'like subject', another mind who can be 'felt with', yet has a distinct, separate center of feeling and perception.*" Her article "*Beyond doer and done to: an intersubjective view of thirdness*" (2004), and soon to be extended to a book (personal conversation, November 2016), helps us to bring together some of the threads I have sketched so far. The fundamental ideas she articulates and names as "twoness" and "thirdness" have to do with two different modalities that I believe chime with what has been previously outlined, while adding to them.

Twoness or complementarity is characterised by power struggles and doer/done to polarised or split consciousness. In Bergson's terms it is a static process, it has structure and power relations that may alternate "doer and done to" dynamics, victim/oppressor roles. These roles are complementary, the one cannot be without the other, and projective dynamics tend to be characteristic of it. Model 1 (above), in spite of Freud's best intentions, is a doer/done unto model, where one person is the object of the other's well intentioned, yet paternalistic attention. Object Relations has the same tendency, both in Benjamin's view and in my own direct experience of that therapeutic modality. In some ways it is relatively easier to map this way of relating. To say what you did to me and what I did to you is not so hard to do. What is more difficult is to go behind and/or beyond that, and to co-construct or allow to emerge a joint space of Thirdness. It may mean going from what we know (Bion's "K" and Bergson's quantity or static

processes) and are willing to acknowledge to something that may be other than that (an aspect of “O” or “duration”, dynamic; or in my own terms, an “affective genealogy”).

Thirdness is characterised as a quality or experience of intersubjective relatedness that has as its correlate a certain kind of internal mental space. It is closely related to Winnicott’s idea of potential or transitional space (Benjamin 2004:7). Benjamin (ibid) cites Pizer (1998) as offering the first relational formulation of thirdness and as analysing “*transference [phenomena] not in terms of static, projective contents*”, but in terms of an intersubjective process of negotiation. In her own words: “...I consider it crucial not to reify the third, but to consider it primarily a principle, function or relationship, rather than as a “thing”...” (ibid). In other words there is difference in kind between twoness and thirdness. Thirdness is not a thing, it is dynamic. The space/experience is shared and co-operative. We surrender to the experience (ibid: 8), rather than hold onto it, as we do with concepts, “*maxims or ideals*” (ibid: 7). There is something here which seems to chime with Bion’s idea of “*without memory and desire*”. Surrendering to the other is not the same as submission, which might describe a compliant attitude, but a letting go to being with the other. “*Surrender implies freedom from any intent to control or coerce*” (ibid).

I hope that the reader may be able to glean the parallels between some of the ideas explored so far. What Benjamin is able to do is to track a duality of static and dynamic processes, as different in kind. But beyond that she is able to delve into a more complex elaboration of what it takes to be able to facilitate the creation of thirdness. To do this she analyses different aspects of thirdness and links to aspects of neuroscience and the difference between observing analytical and attunement functions. I return to this later.

This analysis gives a picture of how different aspects of our human capacities for different kinds of consciousness are able to come into inter-relation and of the complexity of how thirdness is constituted, but also how it might get out of balance. To accomplish this Benjamin distinguishes a duality of process, what I would term as differences in kind, within thirdness and calls them *One in the Third* and *Third in the One*, before going into an exploration of how they might integrate (or not) and what might result from that. *One in the third* (ibid: 16-17) is the part of the third that is constituted by oneness, i.e. affective resonance, attunement, oneness of mother and baby in non-verbal rhythmicity or musicality. It is about the non-verbal, gestural, embodied capacity to feel with the other, empathy and recognition. It is a deep identificatory oneness. *Third in the one* has to do with the ability to hold the tension of difference in relation. It is about holding one’s centre and maintaining the capacity to observe, analyse and think.

For Benjamin, thirdness has its foundation in the early rhythmical adjustment of mother and child, rather than an oedipal triangulation. The primacy of a main carer at an early stage (whoever that may be in the atypical post-modern family make up) and that early relation before and beyond language is what lays the foundations for thirdness. This is in my view far more

concordant with the primacy of affect in Bergson and Deleuze's philosophy than with predominant psychoanalytic understandings such as proposed by Kleinian and Lacanian positions, a critique of which can be found in Benjamin's article (2004:11-12). Without getting into a major discussion that might distract from the main argument I am slowly building towards, the relative emphasis of such frameworks on language and projective dynamics seems to have somewhat neglected the affective, embodied, nonverbal attunement and focused far more on twoness and thirdness in their more doer/done to modality - as I hope will be evident from the following sections. This for me does not mean a total rejection of their views. It means acknowledging their value in being able to map a part of real psychological events, but also their blindness to aspects that do not fit that, in my view, incomplete map. It may also be interesting to note at this point that some of Bion's work not mentioned previously may present a step forward, not only by extending to groups, rather than just intrapsychic life, but by having a concept of Work Group, in terms of healthy functioning, and not just Basic Assumption (BA) unconscious and dysfunctional modalities in group behaviour. What is also notable however is that he did not leave us much in terms of Work Group functioning, compared to the work on Basic assumptions, yet here again is a duality within BA Dependency and Pairing, being based on assumptions of dependency, whether from a leader or a pair and BA Fight/Flight being a literal twoness in conflict offering no accommodation, only a kill/be-killed or escape options. The co-operative functioning of the work group is left hanging, much like "O". Which is where Bergson and Deleuze have more to say, as does Benjamin.

Thirdness and its vicissitudes: health and pathologies – moral third and surrender

Work in the neurosciences (Schore, 2003) has associated different predominant functioning to the brain hemispheres seeing right brain as key in attunement processes and left as key to analytical functions. McGilchrist (2009), while acknowledging the limitations of a neat division of labour between hemispheres, nonetheless feels able to say that left brain is characterised by a "what" questioning, while the right is about "how". He further points out that science has been so focussed on "what" at the expense of "how" that it may have missed the importance of how each hemisphere does what. His basic premise is that there two ways of being in the world, in turn associated to different brain modalities: one is *"to allow things to be present to us in all their embodied particularity"* and the other is *"to re-present the world in a form that is less truthful, but apparently clearer [...] explicit, abstracted, compartmentalised, fragmented, static. From this world we feel detached, but in relation to it we are powerful."* (McGilchrist, 2009:92-93), But I might add we are only powerful if someone else is powerless, and that someone else could be us, which takes us back to the identificatory "one in the third" and the need for an understanding of these aspects working together, just like the hemispheres must for healthy functioning.

According to Benjamin's scheme, the different aspects constitutive of thirdness have to be related in particular ways. A deep identificatory "one in the third" is the prerequisite for developing positive aspects of the "observing third", otherwise an asymmetrical relation becomes about twoness and power relations, which might give rise to conflict, submission or resistance on the part of the less powerful party where the observation of the one who has the upper hand turns to judgement. For Benjamin, these power dynamics are not all there is in the face of asymmetrical power relations; the other possibility is what she terms "moral third". The "moral third" accepts asymmetry, rather than uses it; it accommodates, with the intention to connect to the other, which brings about reflections and self-observation. This acceptance of difference and differentials, of both the power to hurt, be hurt and to make mistakes allows for surrender, a conscious responsible accommodation aware of both parties' vulnerability, which is not submission. This is in contrast to a static, twoness morality that uses dictates and rules and puts itself in a position of dominance based on sacrifice and duty, rather than empathy and an acceptance of limits in the common interest. A similar contrast is present in Bergson's (1935) last book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. The observing third, when not in its judgemental guise, is what saves us from falling into the other, from a mindless merging, which can also result in the collapse of thirdness and doer/done to scenario. We have problems if either function is overwhelmed by the other.

How might all this relate to psycho-social research practice based on creating thirdness from these dualities? I started from dualities in relation to the importance of introspection, intuition and reflexivity as a way of accessing beneath the surface aspects of reality. I brought together aspects of Bergson and Bion's work to characterise this duality in terms of process and used Bergson's rules of intuition as a method to give us some indications of how this might help us think about framing problems we might wish to research. Part of that was about how to think about differences in kind, which found their expressions also in Bion's ideas on learning as a dynamic process. I then tracked some movements in psychoanalytic work by looking at the basic changes in ideas of transference and countertransference, taking this as a key aspect of psychoanalytic thinking. There we could see a movement from an objective gaze, which must note yet remain unperturbed by the affective communication in the session, towards an acceptance and valuing of the data produced by affective responses in both parties.

Benjamin's account gives us a more complex set of interconnected elements as necessary for relational practice. I would say this is the proper model for true participant observation, where participation = attunement. Where the participation function takes over the observing function commonly known problems of "going native" or excessive empathy begin to emerge; however just as in the therapeutic relation, when observation lacks attunement, it turns to the judgemental and superior attitudes typical of much social science in relation to non-western cultures and societies. Edward Said's (1978) famous work *Orientalism* seems to map very well the splitting

and projective dynamics that Western cultures have unreflexively inflicted on a host of other cultures, abstractly bunched into a category of Orientals, in the name of objectivity.

Relationality = Inter-est = it is between

To conclude: subjectivity is central to psycho-social research, but requires the use of reflexivity. This is the attention of the mind to itself that comes about only in relation to engagement with a third aspect. It is in the attention to the question and external aspects of reality along with the holding of attention to how we affect and are affected by them that we may find unexpected answers. Those answers may not come as the abstract rules that the objective third alone might insist on, but a more specific “truth in the moment”. This may not give us the answer to everything, yet it may surface far more appropriate answers to the question asked within a contextual time and specific frame.

A relational stance acknowledges the subject(s)-in-relation both inter and intra-psychically, but it is not about self-disclosure per se (Benjamin, 2004:34). The same is true of research. Within the Social Sciences reflexivity has been seen as key, particularly in Anthropology. For some time in the study of “other” cultures, the problem of subjectivity’s potential bias has been somewhat amplified by the necessary acknowledgement that we are products of our own culture and it is ultimately impossible to shake that off. Thus it has become accepted practice to be transparent about one’s own background and positioning in Anthropological writing (see for example Clifford & Marcus, 1986, or Behar, 1996). However, as an explicit example of the importance of the different modalities by which this might be done, it is not unusual to find this gets focused on a self-assertive statement of role or status, whether it is in terms of powerful or subservient positioning or a narcissistic flavour of self-exposure. Less reflexive attention is given to what might really matter in relation to what is being researched (Murphy, 2002, has a critique of this in justifying his own autobiographically based account of fieldwork). This is qualitatively different to what comes across from a narration that really engages with those aspects of subjectivity that might chime with or bring about tensions with what is being researched. A good example of this engagement is Karsten Paerregaard’s 2002 article entitled *The resonance of fieldwork: ethnographers, informants and the creation of knowledge*, which while not mentioning transference as such, maps how the people of a Peruvian village tried to make sense of who he was by projecting different kinds of identities/labels to him, going from fantasies of him being an exploitative coloniser through progressively less negative ones as they got to know him and accept him. Paerregaard’s use of the words resonance and knowledge creation in the title are not co-incidental as his focus was on intersubjectivity.

Where someone is really interested, they bring about a thirdness in themselves between the “one in the third” and the “third in the one”, between attunement and observation. This in turn allows for the thirdness of encounter with the truth in the moment. Interest as a word gives us a clue. Its

etymology tells us it is made of two roots: *inter* meaning between and *est* from the Latin verb *esse* meaning to be. *Inter est* means “it is between”. Thus language itself gives us an indication of what being interested in something, which is key to learning and research, is about: it is about the space between, in other words thirdness. Interesting that the word interest has been hijacked (in my view) to indicate the profit one might gain from money and particularly lending, which basically is about a very asymmetrical arrangement, being indebted to, implying power and mostly doer/done to arrangements.

Interest, as intellectual and emotional curiosity, makes observation keener and attunement stronger. Recognition is then possible in a way that is based on the space between, one which is able to apprehend both quantitative and qualitative aspects of reality in their ever-mingled actuality of lived life. In an ideal world, researcher and researched both partake of these aspects and create together new located understanding. Research in this way of looking at things is fundamentally about an encounter, it is about relationship. The resulting data is a co-created shared third element that does not belong to one or the other, in that sense it is truly about participatory research and the ideal we ought to be deploying our subjective and objective capacities in relation to each other, in tension, to put it as French & Simpson (2000) have, and with the intention to learn. Power in this approach to research can and should be about creativity, rather than domination.

The problem comes when this shared co-creation does not happen. How can this way of seeing things help us when we come across the fraught problem of disputed findings? When our respondents don't agree with our conclusions? Whose interpretation counts? The word “counts” gives us a clue again of how this problem is usually framed. In terms of “counting” we have an ambiguity of meaning in the word itself: counting is obviously about numbers, counting the “whats”, which in turn also means what is most important. In this kind of framing only one can be right, only one can win, whichever one that is. In Benjamin's scheme this conflictual situation is a clear example of twoness, complementarity and obviously “doer/done-to” dynamics. The problem really comes to light when the researcher's interpretation varies from that of the research subject and the researcher seeks resolution, either by submitting and giving primacy to the respondents' views or, opting to take authority and stick by theirs. I suggest this framework may help us to think about this not as an either/or, but possibly a both/and with a focus on “how” rather than “what”. Here we might be able to reflect that attunement processes may be hard to sustain and that the conflict in findings is itself “the” finding or a major component of them, that data itself may give a clue to the underlying dynamics. This may have to do with what is being researched in itself creating what Hollway and Jefferson (2000) refer to as the “defended subject”, but it could also be about a “defended researcher”, a researcher holding too tightly to “K”. Paying attention to transference and countertransference would be appropriate in terms of what this might be communicating, rather than in terms of projection. This would require increased reflexive attention to affective and embodied aspects of both researcher and respondent,

carefully held in tension with other aspects of triangulation, be they detailed factual observations, peer supervision and data analysis processes based on free association. What it may also mean is that the research is not quite done yet, which of course is true of any study, which like this chapter has to come to an end at some point.

I will close by surrendering to the limitations of time and space as well as to the limits of knowledge in its written and linear form. I have tried to bend that linearity to characterise the importance not only of using our subjectivity in psycho-social research, but the importance of the why and how we need to use it. The limited bringing together of different frameworks, I hope may have mirrored the relatedness I have advocated and hopefully elicited a thirdness in their interrelation within the mind of the reader.

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