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Olga V. Lehmann • Jaan Valsiner  
Editors

# Deep Experiencing

Dialogues Within the Self

 Springer

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ISSN 2192-8363                      ISSN 2192-8371 (electronic)  
SpringerBriefs in Psychology  
SpringerBriefs in Psychology and Cultural Developmental Science  
ISBN 978-3-319-68692-9              ISBN 978-3-319-68693-6 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68693-6>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017956904

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature  
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# Series Editor Preface

## Dialogical Tension Within the Self

The book *Deep Experiencing: Dialogues Within the Self* written by Olga V. Lehmann and Jaan Valsiner offers a glimpse of that restless search for novelty which characterises the very first steps of almost all the younger researchers who, often, are prematurely sacrificed at the altar of the so-called scientific research. Nowadays, academia is becoming more and more the place of repetition and homologations instead of the place of innovations and “cultural revolution”. Psychology (and Social Science at large) is progressively losing its “developmental” habit and its interest in understanding the complexity of the human experience with the dramatic consequence of detaching the researcher from the phenomena.

This book has the declared scope to bring into the highly polyphonic scientific arena new “fresh voices” that are frequently silenced by a chorus of gloomy complaints about the recurrent crises facing psychology. The solution found so far is to add “More data” and another extra dose of quantification. Contemporary psychology, instead, is undergoing a theoretical crisis due to its incapacity to grasp the intricacy of the phenomena of human existence that is “reduced” either in the form of quantitative measurements or in the form of highly detailed yet fragmented “snapshots” (Engelsted 2017).

Can psychology overcome this state of “distress” and “crisis”? How can it handle the complexity and wealth of its objects of study? One potential pathway could be that which contemplates a challenging of the basic “myths” of psychological science (Marsico 2013), a re-alignment between data and theory in research, a rethinking of the methodological approach, a critical analysis of the language used in psychology and its capacity to produce generalised knowledge (Valsiner 2017).

One of the myths to be reconsidered is, precisely the idea that science is exclusively quantitative, i.e. that scientific evidence is automatically quantitative and that, given the idiographic nature of human science, any form of generalisation can be reached.

This volume of Lehmann and Valsiner represents a fresh counter-voice opposite to massive glorification to the “God of Objectivity” in contemporary psychology. By stressing the higher-level organisational processes and activities of human beings, it nicely contributes to the current effort in cultural psychology to make the study of specifically human ways of being the centre of psychological science (Valsiner et al. 2016; Marsico and Valsiner 2017).

Hence, psychology will be able to survive its own mistakes and “myths” – avoiding the perpetuation of forms of pseudo-empiricism and reductionism (Smedslund 2009) – only if it learns to respect its intrinsic, processual and qualitative nature. After all, this Book Series *Psychology and Cultural Developmental Sciences* is supporting (from its first volume written by Rayner 2017) the interdisciplinary project of psychology as the new science of the human nature.

Thus, this book of Lehmann and Valsiner is not only a pleasant catwalk of the new and exotic research trends (as a hasty reader could superficially think), but it goes straightforward to the core of the psychological investigations questioning the very definition of what science is, what we consider to be knowledge and which methodological tools are appropriate for psychology (Marsico 2015; Valsiner 2012).

In addition, all the chapters in this volume have to do somehow with the researcher’s “internal dialogue” that is the main source for carrying out a significant study. All of them, as well as the book editors themselves, are deeply immersed into the phenomena under investigation.

This internal dialogue is never easy. It deals with introspection as a primary method in psychology and extrospection as the act of introspection turned outwards.

The excerpt from Munch’s diary (1892), reported in the conclusion by the editors, is a perfect example of this inward/outward process in the knowledge production where tension plays a crucial role.

Tension is essential to the human existence. The “current” understanding psyche is still based on a view of tension as perturbation of the organismic balance, while, instead, the psyche should be understood in terms of a tensegrity system: that is, a system in which the organising principle is not equilibrium and homeostasis rather dynamic tension (Marsico and Tateo 2017).

This is the crucial point for linking the dialogicality of inner selves with the dynamics of cultural meaning systems. Lehmann and Valsiner, together with all the fresh voices (of young scholars) they have brought in, have the merit to make a step further towards the idea of Self as a system of dynamic tension where tension is a vectorial force with a specific direction that makes possible developmental changes and the movement towards the future. In this vein, the deep human experiences accounted in this book illuminate the new perspective of the dialogical tension “within” the Self.

Aalborg, Denmark  
July 2017

Giuseppina Marsico  
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