

## Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and Eduard Spranger (1882-1963) on the Developing Person

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**ABSTRACT:** At the end of the 19th century most psychologists conceptualized psychology as a natural science. However, a few philosopher-psychologists, including Wilhelm Dilthey, envisioned psychology as a *Geisteswissenschaft* with understanding as its core method. It is less known that Dilthey also promoted ideas for developmental psychology. This paper addresses the views of Wilhelm Dilthey and his student Eduard Spranger on the human mind and developmental psychology. While Dilthey provided general guidelines for studying mental life, Spranger promoted a holistic characterization of adolescence gained through the method of understanding. It is suggested that a *geisteswissenschaftliche* psychology may offer relevant, yet, neglected insights for contemporary developmental psychology.

I suggest that most developmental psychologists consider their field of study to be scientific, and that they know what the concept "scientific" means. The term is even understood as self-evident, and there is no further need for reflection, as it refers to the research practices of the present scientific community who share an unquestioned paradigm (see Kuhn, 1962). Science in developmental psychology is understood as emulating the natural sciences and not the humanities (see Miller, 1993). It means that a researcher should formulate hypotheses within theoretical frameworks, formulate relationship between variables, use objective and reliable measurements and observations, base explanations on statistics, discover universal laws and processes, and consider the experiment to be the right path to knowledge. But as critics have pointed out (e.g., Holzkamp, 1972), in this process reality is fragmented and research is limited to parts, details, and elements, but psychologists are not able to study the whole person.

Thus, academic developmental psychologists neglect the subject of development, namely the individual, in whose subjectivity all fragmented processes are amalgamated in a meaningful way. Mainstream developmental psychology excludes an important dimension of development: The Gestalt of development, or a subject's development from a holistic perspective, or development based on the real experiences of the developing subject. In mainstream psychology it is not even considered a legitimate research question to talk about the subject in whose mind and body these basic processes and fragmented parts form a totality. Or worse, this problem is not even discussed as a problem. Not only journals and monographs demonstrate that the Gestalt has been lost. A look at contemporary textbooks of developmental psychology - which would be most appropriate to do justice to the Gestalt of development because they are not restricted in legitimizing their content by doing original research - demonstrates that parts are proliferating while the totality of development is nowhere to be found (e.g., Cole, 1996; Berk, 1999; Shaffer, 1996).

As a consequence, attentive students of developmental psychology wonder, how they can merge cognitive, emotional, personal, motivational, perceptual, and physical development into a larger picture. Some ideas on how these parts fit into a totality are sometimes presented at the end of textbooks. More often developmental teachers assume that students themselves will be able to accomplish such a task. Significantly, they do not consider bringing parts into a meaningful totality as a genuine task of developmental psychology anymore. Metaphorically speaking, students get parts of a puzzle and are asked to construct the final picture without having been given the blueprint. From a psychological point of view, however, it would be better to start with the Gestalt of development and then focus on the pieces of the puzzle.

I suggest that an eliminative focus on natural scientific methodology does not allow doing justice to the Gestalt of development. In addition, I suggest that the Gestalt of the developing subject is more than just a simple addition of parts that have been studied. But are there any possibilities for understanding the developing subject in its Gestalt? I propose that an answer to this question requires a methodological shift from natural-scientific to philosophical-scientific thinking. This leads one into the 19th century, to the origin of modern contemporary psychology, where two basic but contrasting versions of scientific research were available. They have been

discussed in nineteenth century German academia, which was influential in shaping American psychology (see Boring, 1929), under the dichotomy of a philosophical-scientific versus a natural-scientific version of science [Wissenschaft] (see Teo, 1999a), natural science versus human science (see Dilthey, 1957), and nomothetic versus idiographic science (see Windelband, 1894/1998).

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) perfected the *philosophical-scientific* version of research at the beginning of the 19th century. It influenced many philosophical psychologists including Wilhelm Dilthey. The *natural-scientific* model was executed by most researchers on nature and found its philosophical reflection in John Stuart Mill's (1806-1873) empiricism and the positivisms of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Ernst Mach (1838-1916). One important feature that distinguished the two versions, important for my argument, is the association of philosophical science with totality, wholeness, Gestalt, and the "larger picture," and the focus of natural science on elements, atoms, parts, and the "detailed picture." Indeed, Hegel's (1807/1986) idea that "truth is the whole" (p. 24) contrasts sharply with an experimental version of science that attends to parts and not to totality.

History has shown how and that the natural-scientific model triumphed over the philosophical-scientific one in the history of psychology. There are many historical reasons for that. One reason can be found in external contexts, such as the envy-arousing successes of the natural sciences (see Danziger, 1990, 1997). From an internal point of view, it is not difficult to find strengths and weaknesses in both versions: The Gestalt neglects the parts, but parts alone do not constitute the Gestalt. The current chances of success for a philosophical-scientific version of research have even become slimmer with the recent injections of postmodern thought (Rosenau, 1992), which challenges aims for a systematic, holistic understanding of any subject matter, including that of psychology. Pioneers of developmental psychology such as Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Erik Erikson (1902-1994), or Jean Piaget (1896-1980) never gave up on the philosophical-scientific version of research, but their theories have been thrown out of the contemporary scientific discourse by suggesting that they are not doing justice to the detailed empirical parts in their systems. Indeed these authors share concepts and ideas that go back to a 19th century philosophical psychology.

Within a dialectical perspective (see Hegel, 1807/1986) one could reconstruct the philosophical-scientific version of research as

the *thesis*. Rightly the natural-scientific version of research criticized the speculative character of this type of study (Lange, 1865/1950). In consequence only its *antithesis*, namely natural scientific psychology, was endorsed. In the course of this process the Gestalt of the psyche has been completely lost, and it seems necessary that a *synthesis* take place that does justice to issues raised in both programs. Given that there are only a few methodological reflections on what such a synthesis should look like, I suggest reflecting on ideas of two authors, situated at the end of the 19th and at beginning of the 20th century, who tried to do justice to this totality: Wilhelm Dilthey, Eduard Spranger, and Karl Jaspers developed a psychology as a *Geisteswissenschaft* (i.e., as a human science; literally: mental science), with understanding as its core method. Two of these three "most important representatives" (Pongratz, 1984, p. 253), namely Dilthey and Spranger, outlined ideas that are relevant to a developmental psychology that does justice to the Gestalt.

### Dilthey's Groundwork for a Human-scientific Developmental Psychology

The German philosopher Dilthey (1883/1959), the founder for the systematic reflection on the methodology of the human sciences, did not originate but elaborated on the distinction between the natural sciences [Naturwissenschaften] and human sciences [Geisteswissenschaften] (see also Teo, 2001). The latter include history, political science, law, political economy, theology, literature, and art. Psychology may not be counted as a *Geisteswissenschaft* in a categorical sense, as it is the basis for all human sciences. However, as psychology is also based on understanding, as all the other sciences that deal in some way with the historical-social reality, it is a *Geisteswissenschaft* in a methodological sense. Dilthey himself was not completely content with the term *Geisteswissenschaft*, as the term *Geist* (mind) draws the focus away from the emotional and the motivational sphere of humans which are as important as the cognitive aspects and completely interconnected.

Dilthey attempted to establish the foundation of the *Geisteswissenschaften* and to develop a methodology that does justice to their very subject matters. This meant not to imitate the natural-scientific methodology, as the human experience of the mental world cannot be accomplished according to the empirical study of nature. In addition, he demanded from all sciences that their research main-

tains a philosophical intention (see Dilthey, 1958). The anchor for the *Geisteswissenschaften* is the analysis of human experience, the facts of consciousness, and the mind. Based on this distinction between natural and human sciences and the intention of a psychological foundation for the *Geisteswissenschaften*, Dilthey composed his famous *Ideas on a Descriptive and Analytical Psychology* (Dilthey, 1957, pp. 139-240).

Dilthey differed from the mainstream psychology of his time in his conceptualization of the psychological subject matter and methodology. First, he emphasized the socio-historical character of the mind and suggested that mental life is influenced by the objective mind, the mind of a social community or era, as expressed in law, morality, ethics, and institutions. Second, he promoted understanding as the core methodology for psychology. Dilthey was discontent with natural-scientific psychology because of its formalism, and argued that the focus on the forms and processes of mental life prevented an examination of the content of the mind. In contemporary words: He was less interested in a curve of forgetting than in the content of what concrete subjects are forgetting: "Psychological contents are not explained by advancing processes and their laws" (Dilthey, 1977, p. 6) because "if man contemplates the meaning of his life, it is the very content through which meaning is formed" (p. 182).

Dilthey (1957) promoted the concept of a *descriptive psychology* as an alternative to the explanatory experimental psychology of his time. In his view, descriptive psychology should focus on a depiction of the parts and connections of mental life as subjects experience them in their totality. The unity and totality of the mind and the unity and totality of the person distinguish mental life from the physical world. He did not oppose the traditional division of mental life into cognition, emotion, and volition but he objected to their opposition: "It is common to oppose thinking, feeling, and desiring as three separate notions, as if feeling and desiring contain no thinking. That is wrong" (Dilthey, 1990, p. 354).

Dilthey (1957) also emphasized the significance of the concept of *structure*: "A life-unit is determined by and determines the milieu in which it lives. This leads to an organization of internal states. I label this organization the structure of mental life" (p. 200). According to Dilthey, it would be the task of psychology to study this structure and the knots that bind the psychological strings to the totality of life. In addition, the concept of structure had theoretical

implications: "Mental life does not grow from its parts; it is not built from elements; it is not a composite, not a result of interacting atoms of sensation or emotion: it is originally and at all times an overarching unity" (p. 211).

Challenging a psychology that focuses on these elements, Dilthey (1957) put forth the notion of the "Gestalt of mental life" (p. 220), a term he already used in the 1860s when he referred to the "Gestalt of our mental life as an unexplained synthesis of ... mental functions" (Dilthey, 1990 p. 27). This concept of a "mental connective structure" which contains a "stable system of relations of its parts" (Dilthey, 1958, p. 324) represented an alternative to the concepts of natural-scientific psychology. In literature, according to Dilthey, there exists an intuitive understanding of the whole structure. However, a descriptive psychology would have to clarify these ideas in a general way (Dilthey, 1957, p. 153). The most adequate method for psychology, according to Dilthey, is understanding: "We explain nature, but we understand mental life" (p. 144). However, he did not exclude other methods of psychology and acknowledged, besides understanding, a variety of approaches to psychology, including introspection, comparative methods, experimentation, the study of abnormal psychology, and the study of the products of mental life (p. 199).

It may be less known that Dilthey (1957) also promoted ideas for developmental psychology and dedicated a short chapter in his *Ideas* to the "Development of mental life [Seelenleben]" (pp. 213-226). He emphasized that the study of the structure of mental life and the study of the development of mental life demand each other (p. 213) and that both are accomplished in his proposed descriptive psychology. Any description of the mental life of an adult must be complemented by his or her biography. Each biography is situated in a connective structure which is "organized from the inside and connected to a unity" (Dilthey, 1958, p. 325).

In order to understand Dilthey, one must realize that he attempted to disclose and propose abstract concepts, in the tradition of a philosophical version of science, which should conceivably grasp the meaning of development. This would not be done from the perspective of an observer but from the perspective of a developing subject. In this sense Dilthey can be reinterpreted as proposing a psychology from the standpoint of the subject (see Holzkamp, 1993). He suggested that development finds its origin in the activity of the following moments: structural connection, teleology, value of life, psy-

chological articulation, formation of a nurtured psychological connection, and creative processes (Dilthey, 1957, p. 218).

#### *Structural connection:*

Development has its origin in the activity of the structural connection of nature, nurture, and culture. Thus, developmental psychology must study the development of the body, the influence of the physical environment, and the surrounding mental world (Dilthey, 1957, p. 214). Each of these conditions "influence the structural connection of mental life" (p. 214). Even further, "development is only possible where a structural connection exists" (p. 218). This structural connection is at the center of development. It is the foundation for all development and differentiation is derived from this structure. Development cannot be explained by an atomistic play of psychological particular forces (p. 214).

#### *Teleology:*

From the perspective of the subject the "final cause" (in the sense of Aristotle) of development will not be found, as later suggested by Piaget (1970), in cognitive equilibrium, which refers to an organismic model of human nature. From the perspective of the subject the structural connection aims at the richness of life, satisfaction of drives, and happiness (p. 215). This teleology is objective and immanent as it relates to the preservation of the individual and the species (p. 216). But it is also subjective and immanent (p. 215) as it is given to our inner experience. The fact that development relates to the meaning of development for the subject is of course a question that is systematically excluded from contemporary developmental psychology.

#### *Value of life:*

From the perspective of human subjects, the value of life is constituted from the richness of life that humans experience, from the richness of the reality of life that humans feel, and from the fact that they are able to realize what lies in them (p. 216). The value of life is also influenced by the life conditions [Lebensverhältnisse] in which humans live. These values depend on our emotions but this does not mean, according to Dilthey, that the value of life consists of emotions.

#### *Articulation:*

The conditions and influences to which the subject is exposed lead, according to Dilthey, to an increasing articulation of psychological life in the course of development. The subject evaluates in the course of development impressions and interests, attentions, perceptions, and ideas. Experiences tell the developing subject to judge the value of various options of life and to develop principles and life ideals (p. 217). Thus, according to Dilthey, the adult person becomes more realistic, and the articulation of drives and emotions, performed under the influence of volition, come to a completion: "In a fierce fight life ideal and dream of the future of the adolescent are adapted to the power of things" (p. 217).

Together with this articulation Dilthey identifies the *formation of a nurtured psychological connection* that dominates particular conscious processes which continue into old age. In old age, however, the nurtured psychological connection of the past is victorious and excludes new realities. Thus, memories reign in very old age. Finally, it is a characteristic of development to create new values that have not existed before. Dilthey calls them *creative processes*.

Besides these moments Dilthey abstracted *progression*, understood as the spontaneous change in a living being, *continuity*, and *teleological connection* as basic features of development (p. 218). He emphasized that each age has its own value, but that in its development a more articulated Gestalt of mental life emerges (p. 219). This process continues into old age when the body declines. However, the mass of ideas may still increase until death. The result of development is the dominance of a nurtured psychological connection, which influences all actions and thoughts. A true psychology should describe these moments of inner experience of a subject's experiences in its totality.

Natural-scientific psychology is, according to Dilthey, unable to grasp the subject of development. In fact, natural-scientific psychology is unable to predict psychological development. He used the following comparison: "It is as hopeless to depict the velocity of a body as the sum of the velocities of its parts, as it is to derive the unitary achievement of comparison, judgment, preference, and the formation of an ideal, from the inner conditions of particular unchangeable units and their interaction" (p. 223). Dilthey suggested a fourth dimension besides nature, nurture, and culture that determines developmental outcome: The individual *meaning* that a subject forms throughout development.

### Spranger's application of a human-scientific psychology to the study of adolescence

Dilthey, rather cursorily, laid out the program for a *geisteswissenschaftliche* developmental psychology. Dilthey's ideas remained abstract and he did not show the relevance of his ideas to concrete research questions. A more precise undertaking was accomplished by Spranger (1924) who applied these ideas to the psychology of adolescence. Spranger, the famous and successful student of Dilthey, incorporated Dilthey's view on the human mind and development in formulating a holistic characterization of adolescence which ranges for him from age 13 to 19 for girls, and from age 14 to 22 for boys. It can be labeled a developmental youth psychology based on understanding. However, the ideas of Dilthey and Spranger on understanding differed significantly. According to Dilthey (1977), "totality and its interconnectedness exist only in experience and in immediate consciousness" (p. 165). Humans experience the totality of their essence and this totality is "reproduced in understanding" (Dilthey, 1958, p. 278).

Dilthey distinguished between *elementary forms of understanding*, which are ubiquitous in everyday life in the form of immediate processes (p. 207), and *higher forms of understanding* should something contradict our everyday experience. In higher forms of understanding human beings start with an examination of the problem, the involved context, and finally reach understanding. From empathy arises the *highest form of understanding*, in which the totality of mental life is effective, or the re-experiencing [*Nacherleben*] of other people's experiences (pp. 213-216). This is another feature of a *geisteswissenschaftliche* psychology, as "re-experiencing of the psychological world ... distinguishes all mental operations ... from the knowledge of nature" (Dilthey, 1977, p. 95). The *scientific form of understanding* and interpretation leads to hermeneutics (Dilthey, 1958, p. 217), with the final goal being "to understand the author better than he has understood himself" (Dilthey, 1957, p. 331).

Although Spranger called his framework a psychology of understanding [*verstehende Psychologie*] of adolescence, he did not share Dilthey's highest form of understanding as the essential method for his studies. His goal "is to enable a deeper understanding through a complete portrayal of the psychological organization of adolescence" (Spranger, 1924, p. 2). This portrayal was not targeted

towards concrete individuals as performed in autobiography and literature because psychologists will never be able to exhaust concrete individuality (p. 3), but rather sought to provide a *typical* picture of adolescence. As a human scientist Spranger was interested in a general perspective and in laws of development while being aware that this typical picture is limited to a certain cultural stage, and cannot transcend time and space. Spranger's motivation for his psychology came from the intention to help adolescents who are in psychological need. Spranger believed that "help can only be achieved through understanding" (p. 1). Spranger discussed four features of his psychology of understanding: understanding, structure, development, and types.

### Understanding

Spranger (1924) identified (as does Dilthey) understanding as the core method for knowledge of the human sciences (p. 3). But for Spranger understanding was not just re-experience, sympathy, or empathy with another subject. Understanding penetrates the mental connection, and seeks to "comprehend mental connections as meaningful in the form of objective valid knowledge" (p. 3). Something has meaning if it can be "subsumed as a constitutive part into a totality of values" (p. 4). This is easier from an outside perspective. Thus, an understanding of the other is less limited than an understanding of oneself and one can understand people of the past better than they have understood themselves (this is a basic hermeneutic principle).

Two methodological statements are involved in this idea:

- (a) True understanding requires knowledge of the objective-mental connections, which transcend immediate life consciousness. Spranger implied that one can understand a person of the past better because one knows the historical context. One can understand a child better than he or she can understand himself or herself because one knows the developmental background. One can understand adolescence better if one understands the "historical and societal conditions" (Spranger, 1924, p. 5). "The totality from which the human being must be understood, is much larger than the totality of his individual world of experiences" (p. 6).
- (b) In contrast to a psychology that limits itself to re-experiencing (Dilthey), Spranger (1924) pointed out that "understanding is not identical with the true mirroring empathy for a subjective being, experiences, and behavior of the individual psyche" (p. 6). This cannot be accomplished, according to Spranger, because simple re-experience is impossible without cogni-

tive concepts. Moreover, one may understand someone of the same generation, age, or class, but this does not allow for the grasping of the meta-subjective meaning connections (p. 7) that are involved and which are significant for a psychology of understanding. Whereas Dilthey's descriptive psychology may intend to represent the specificity of subjectivity, Spranger's psychology of understanding intended to grasp connections that are not consciously given to individual subjectivity (p.8).

Spranger (1924) gave the example of the play of a child (p. 8): Why does a child play? A simple answer would be that a child plays because it is fun to play. Even if you ask a child, she might say because she likes to play. If somebody answers that the child plays in order to practice future activities relevant to her life, then developmental psychology has a theory of understanding that goes beyond the subjective experience of the child. In addition, the questions of "why do we think as we think, why do we evaluate as we evaluate, why do we act as we act" (p. 8) cannot be answered by looking into the individual. To answer these questions one must understand broader connections of meaning and trans-individual mental realities. Similarly, a psychology of adolescence must grasp the larger connections of meaning. An understanding of adolescence must go clearly beyond what is experienced by the adolescent (see p. 19) and certain expressions must be understood as developmental expressions.

### Structure

According to Spranger (1924), a structure is a whole "in which each part accomplishes an achievement for the totality while the achievement of the part is determined by the whole and can only be understood from the whole" (p. 9). The psyche is a structure and a formation that is designed to realize value. Thus, a psychology of adolescence must be a structural psychology (p. 9). It attempted to understand "particular psychological phenomena from their position in the unitary whole and from their meaning in such connections of performance" (p. 10). Structures appear differently at different ages. "It should be the basic statement of each psychology (in contrast to epistemology) that reality is no constant for experience, but that it changes with the psychological organization of beings, with the very developmental stage. The child, we must say firstly, lives in a different world than we do" (p. 32). This sounds very Piagetian as it sug-

gests that the child has a different experiential relation to space and time than the adult (p. 34).

### Development

"Mental development is the growing of the individual mental life from an inner point of view to a larger inner structure and the growth of value of the psychological unit of performance" (p. 18). Development is structural development. Adolescents themselves do not experience the objective meaning of their development (p. 17). A developmental psychology of understanding has the task of not only understanding development but also of understanding certain expressions as developmental expressions - even when they are not experienced as such by the adolescent. The adolescent's perspective is also limited, according to Spranger, because he or she may experience their adolescent psychological structure as final. Spranger addressed the problem of achieving an understanding that goes beyond the subjective contributed meaning. He pointed out that from an evolutionary point of view one could understand the meaning of development in terms of the survival of the individual and that development contributes to this goal. But if one considers the meaning of development as a development that allows participation in the objective mind (in Hegel's sense), psychological development refers to the development of a personality and becomes much more complicated.

### Types

Spranger (1924) clearly envisioned his psychology of adolescence as a typological psychology (p. 19). As each individual is unique, science will not be able to reach each individual. According to Spranger, one needs concepts that represent something in a general way while at the same time these concepts are very concrete (p. 20). A concretization of the general is realized in the concepts of a type. Spranger suggested that he incorporated the average type (gained by induction) as well as the ideal type (gained by deduction as an a priori construction). Self-critically he pointed out that the psychologist is part of a culture (p. 27) and that such a typology is very limited.

As the development of human beings is not only a function of nature, a typology is part of the historical-societal reality, based on the concrete culture and cultural society. Therefore, it is impossible to develop a psychology of adolescence in general. Spranger provided, according to his own account, a psychology of the German

adolescent of his cultural time (the last 150 years). He added that some features identified in this context may be valid for the English, French, and American adolescent, but that this is certainly not the case for all features. He also pointed out that class, gender, and education play a role and that his focus was on the educated male adolescent.

In this context Spranger (1924, pp. 21-30) was also critical of physiological psychology. For example, any explanation of development that focuses on the change in the human glands from childhood to adolescence cannot solve the psychological problem of development. He argued that such an explanation is as successful as one that says that Socrates was in prison because his muscles moved him into prison. If an individual is hit by lightning, then changes in the individual's plans, mood, and attitude towards life must also be explained by the individual's interpretation of this experience. Similarly, the psyche of the adolescent male cannot be explained by the production of semen. Physiological psychology, according to Spranger, is not without relevance, but it does not add to psychology proper. Anatomical facts are interesting, but they do not contribute to an understanding of adolescence. Spranger challenged that one can explain the feelings of isolation or loneliness, radicalism, or tendencies to idealization through understanding the activity of genital glands. For Spranger, anatomical-physiological changes of structure represent one realm of facts and psychological-mental changes of structure a second realm of facts.

### Spranger's description of youth

Spranger started out with a holistic characterization of adolescence (pp. 31-51). As one can understand particularities only from the totality, a psychology of adolescence must start with a holistic characterization and therefore it is discussed at the beginning of the book. From a methodological point of view it is interesting to note that he characterized adolescence by discussing middle childhood, which allowed him to understand the distinguishing features of adolescence (p. 36). Spranger suggested three basic characteristics of adolescence: discovery of an identity; emergence of a life-plan; and growth into different domains of human life.

### Discovery of an identity

Spranger (1924) pointed out that the discovery of a self in adolescence does not mean that children do not have experiences of the self – children have a sense of self. Spranger meant that the perspective of the adolescent is turned inwards in reflection, and the self is discovered as having its own reality and world. More precisely, the adolescent is in search of the self. Part of this process is *self-reflection* in which the adolescent becomes entrenched within his or her own emotions or philosophical contemplation: "Why do I live?" "Why is there more than nothing?" (p. 41). This self-reflection is accompanied by inner restlessness. Adolescents, according to Spranger, may use diaries, and letters to peers are sent not in order to talk about things but to mirror one's self in writing and receiving. Friendships serve the purpose of subjective self-understanding. In the process of finding one's identity the adolescent shows *sensitivity*. As adolescents have the problem of not being taken seriously, their peer relationships express the desire for respect and the need for love and guidance. The search for identity is also accompanied by an *urge for autonomy*. Even more so, it is a sign that a new self is emerging. Therefore, desires for emancipation are necessary and not the product of disobedience or lack of caring.

### Emergence of a life-plan

It would be shortsighted, according to Spranger, to think that life-plans refer only to vocational choices. Spranger included here the direction that the inner life takes. The life-plans that emerge in adolescence can impact one's whole life until old age. The perspective of the adolescent is directed towards the future and ideals are formed. Among the many identities that the adolescent can choose, a main identity must be chosen (p. 45). In order to understand "aberrations" of adolescent life-plans one has to understand the connections of motivations. Spranger pointed out that inner tensions could reach so far as to lead to suicide based simply on the imagination of pain that another person suffers.

### Growth into various life domains.

Different life domains are not merely assimilated but rather, according to Spranger, are filled with the adolescent's own experiences. They impact the adolescent's creativity in art, reflection, and contribution to society. In this sense the adolescent achieves cultural, not only biological, reproductivity. Using material from history, lit-



erature, and the method of understanding, Spranger described in a detailed manner, fantasy and creativity in adolescence, pubertal eroticism and sexuality, the ethical and social development of youth, and the legal, political, ideological, work-related, and religious consciousness of young people. Similar to his personality psychology (Spranger, 1928), Spranger identified different types of adolescent life and ego affection.

Spranger also differentiated between basic forms of developmental rhythm and basic forms of adolescent individuality. Types of developmental rhythm are based on the character of personal experiences. He discriminated (a) rich and stormy developmental types (p. 336) where experiences take the form of revelation and reincarnation. Experiences tend also to be without a border and sect-like behavior may be observed. For example, adolescents in this category may have personal experiences in which they feel like a totally new person. In contrast, there is the type of (b) slow silent growth (p. 337). Adolescents work consciously on themselves without major disasters, continuously, and are goal-oriented and energetic. A third form can be characterized through (c) self-conquest (p. 338). Adolescents in this category control themselves and can be understood by the attempt to discipline their mind. This typology is informative as Spranger argued that each person does not experience adolescence in the same way and that there are individual differences in the rhythm of adolescence.

Spranger also portrayed the formation of individuality through pairs of attributes. He depicted in detail sober-minded versus ardent-minded adolescents (p. 345), susceptible versus creating personalities (p. 346), and melancholic and cheerful natures (p. 349). He also characterized forms of intellectual direction in adolescence (pp. 353-363). Some adolescents thrive on the physical dimension, by focusing on sports, and show a lack of intellectuality. Other adolescents devote themselves to the aesthetic domain. Spranger called them Hölderlin types, in reference to the German existential poet. He also pointed out problematizers, adolescents for whom each experience and emotion is turned into a problem. Again other adolescents are interested in acquisition. According to Spranger they can be depicted in the context of Americanism, according to which all goods are seen in terms of success, business, and personal progress. Other adolescents are driven by action and by the need to dominate. He also included the devoted adolescents who are, for example, devoted to the welfare of their parents. Some adolescents are ethical enthusi-

asts who follow an "all-or-nothing" mentality. And finally there is the religious type who is oriented towards transcendence.

### Critical Reflections

I suggest that the methodology of understanding - in contrast to explaining - offers relevant, yet neglected insights for contemporary developmental problems. However, it must be pointed out, that understanding in Dilthey's framework and in Spranger's conceptualization is limited by the social and historical context of the researcher. Spranger was aware of this problem and admitted that his typologies do not transcend time and space. Thus, it becomes important for an evaluation of human-scientific psychology to understand the person of the researcher and his context. This is not only valid for human-scientific psychology but also for the natural sciences (see Harding, 1998). Spranger, for example, was trapped in his own conservative political orientation and the German Zeitgeist. This becomes evident with regard to gender and ethnicity.

In an enlightened manner Spranger (1924) accepted the limits of his approach to a certain group of adolescents and states that his psychology is not valid for all adolescents. He was fully aware that understanding has historical constraints (see Schnädelbach, 1984). Thus, Spranger admitted that his main concern is the German male adolescent. He argued that "of course we know that the psychological development of the female adolescent is different, and her psychological structure is different from the male one" (p. 21). However, it is instructive to see how Spranger, who emphasized the socio-cultural context when it comes to the mind, rejected the idea that, for example, female sexuality of his time is a product of his time's morality. He suggested that "nature is more powerful than each artificial societal system" (p. 127) and he called attempts for new conceptualizations of femininity as intellectual constructions; "Eternal femininity in its weakness and greatness is untouched by such sociological ideas; its roots are not to be found in the sociological, but in the natural-metaphysical world" (p. 127). It seemed that Spranger understood male change as socio-cultural but female development as biological.

This stream of thought becomes even more questionable when Spranger (1924) referred to Jewish and Russian adolescents in Germany of the 1920s: "Already the Jewish adolescent shows essential deviating traits - what is usually not seen - and for the Russian



psychological type we have the urging feeling of far-reaching strangeness" (p. 28). The focus on difference versus the focus on universalism is a problem that is still discussed in contemporary thought (see Ernst, 1999; Malik, 1996). A focus on difference to acknowledge the historical and social situatedness of knowledge and to see the specificity of the development of various groups and individuals does not necessarily lead to an enlightened position. It can lead to the construction of strangeness of marginal groups and, in its worst form, to a construction of inferiority (see Teo, 1999b).

Psychological theories are part of the society and history in which they emerge. Even my own criticism and understanding of Spranger must suffer the same fate. But are Spranger's studies based on understanding more involved in the *Zeitgeist* than those of natural scientific psychologists? Are they more biased than the ideas of G. Stanley Hall (1884-1924), the father of American developmental psychology, who suggested, based on empirical "evidence," that so-called lower races are not in a state of arrested development but in a state of adolescence? According to Hall (1907), "most savages in most respects are children, or, because of sexual maturity, more properly, adolescents of adult size" (p. 649). Hall also complained about Islam as being more effective than Christianity in subjugated parts of the world: "The reason is that Mohammedanism has been elastic and adaptable ... its very inferiority as a religion has caused its success" (p. 675). It is clear for Hall that non-European groups are inferior: "The fact of mental inferiority according to the established standards of measuring culture and civilization is unquestionable" (p. 676). Hall's ideas provided the rationale for segregation and separate education for Whites, Blacks, and American Natives in the United States.

I am not challenging Spranger for his ideas by quoting Hall but rather seek to emphasize that all of developmental psychology has to be understood from a *historicist* perspective in the context of time and space. From a *presentist* point of view we are allowed to judge and evaluate these statements ethically. Beyond such a focus, one should look at the substance of ideas and methodologies proposed in order to grasp development. It may allow for the fusion of various horizons (Gadamer, 1960/1997) and contribute to understanding important psychological issues. Contemporary developmental psychology is a patchwork of ideas, theories, research programs, and empirical results. It has accumulated a vast amount of information on a variety of developmental problems. One should ask: Has it

not lost its understanding for the wholeness of the developing subject? I do not suggest that developmental psychologists must necessarily subscribe to Dilthey's or Spranger's ideas on understanding, but I think that one can learn from such approaches in order to develop a more comprehensive description of development. Maybe it is time to rediscover and understand the Gestalt of development again.

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## Splendid Isolation: Breakfast and Self-Actualization In The Dream Society

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**ABSTRACT:** Using a recently published book for entrepreneurs, Rolf Jensen's *The Dream Society: How the Coming Shift from Information to Imagination Will Transform Your Business*, a case is made that the commodification of the story is an inherent aspect not only in the market for things, but in psychotherapy as well. Special attention is paid to the Depth Psychological tradition and its recent resurgence in popular culture. This paper argues that a therapy grounded in the buying and selling of stories necessarily leads to the commodification of the client herself, who is forced to redeem herself through the process of therapy, within the bounds of the capitalistic frame such a therapy imposes upon her.

### I: Feeling Better

*Winning is important to Americans because it makes them feel good, and good is the American thing to feel. Americans spend thousands of dollars on books, drugs, and various forms of psychotherapy in order to feel good. The most widely prescribed psychiatric drug in America is an anti-depressant. Americans attend therapy, groups, participate in self-discovery retreats, experience 'primal scream therapy' and 'rebirthing', and so forth. (Much of this takes place in California, the feel good state.)*

-Stephanie Faul, from *Xenophobe's Guide To The Americans*

We have spent a century and a half ruthlessly bringing our sense of alienation from 'meaning' into ever sharpening focus. This project has stretched at least from Marx, through the various modali-