IDENTITY AND HYPERIDENTITIES: THE REPRESENTATIONAL FOUNDATION OF SELF AND CULTURE[*]

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Cognitive science and social psychology, today, are shifting their self-defining metaphor from the study of human information processing to the study of meaning- making (Bruner 1991, Varela 1989). Culture, a fundamental purveyor of meaning, thus, acquires a central place in the cognitive agenda (Gardner 1985). The goal, according to this author is to develop an explanatory framework in which "the interaction of cognitive factors with affective and cultural factors can somewhat be modeled" (p.387).

We could expect to see a convergence between the contemporary search after meaning, that characterises the "new look" in cognition and the growing research on social representations. This research domain was introduced by Moscovici (1964) to explore the interplay between cognition, affect and culture and as a critical alternative to the then dominant behaviorism and attitude research (Moscovici 1963). Social representations could fit in a model that integrates meaning, culture and the working of the mind. They also provide a psychological construct more appropriate to this task as compared to other concepts. Today, with the entry of culture in psychology, the traditional hypothetical constructs such as dispositions, motives, attitudes give way to ideas of construction, of transaction; social representations research may thrive in this new analytical context. In this paper I will address the interplay between words and representations in the creation of identity and culture.

Culture, identity and representations: a transactional story

According to the emerging transactional contextualism, human actions, mental events or the Self need to be situated, which is to be seen as continuous with a cultural world; any psychological act can be seen as an emergent property of inter-relationships[1]. Since, in the transactional context, the traditional conceptual apparel of psychology, based on individual causation and statistical measures, is becoming useless, the trend has been to borrow the concepts and the methods of anthropology, history, linguistics and literary criticism rather than conceive a specific transactional psychology or by becoming aware of the potential of social representations to that end.

For instance Bruner (1991) argues that in order to understand the nature and the origin of the Self, an interpretive effort is required, akin to that used by a historian or anthropologists trying to understand a period or a people. The Self, thus, becomes a "story teller," and its

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[1] For example, Bruner (1991) asserts that: "Self must be treated as a construction that, so to speak, proceeds from the outside in also from the outside out, from culture to mind also from mind to culture." (p. 106)

narrative provides the basis for understanding identity.[2] Yet, I will argue that transactionalism, contextualism and constructionism are no more logically bound to the interpretive stance and to the study of language and narrative *per se* than to the hypothetical constructs of the nomothetic psychological tradition.

Even the best analysis of a narrative will not answer the crucial question that has triggered the constructivist and transactional "revolution": what happens when a person as a body\ brain\ mind encounters others or a cultural event? For instance, in recent years, all-male workshops organized as wildness retreats by Bly (1990) to initiate men to "the deep masculine", have attracted tens of thousands of participants[3]. These participants listen, among various interventions, a fairy tale by the Grimm brothers, about Iron John helping a young prince to gain power; many of them experience a feeling of empowerment and other gratifying mental states. How can we understand the power of a fairy tale to affect thousands of the educated, grown up men? How to explain this curious creation of a fictitious self?

A linguistic or hermeneutic analysis of Iron John or of Bly's speeches and of the participants' responses as narratives will not reveal the process by which the body\ mind\ brain participates in a communal creation of men, as a general category, and of the private Self as powerful. For this we need to understand how what we call the subjectivity comes into being while prodding the external world.

It may be interesting to know that a narrative can be characterized by its sequentiality, its factual "indifference," its unique way of managing departures from the canonical and by the nature of its dramatic qualities (Bruner 1991). However, the psychological effects produced when being in touch with Iron John stem from a mental activity of another order, which deals with matters of personal and social identities. Nor traditional psychology nor the interpretive stance is equipped to explore it. The specificity of a constructionist and of a transactional psychology will be to understand what happens when the language of relationship or of reflexivity is articulated by consciousness. Instead of a surrender to literary criticism, to linguistics or to anthropology, one could imagine for psychology a future of "transactional cooperation" with these disciplines. Recent developments in the area of social representations indicate that steps in this direction have been taken (Jodelet 1991).

In this paper I will focus on the interplay between social representations and self representations that is to say on the issue of identity formation or creation and identity maintenance.

A psychology of culture and of identity creation would require exploring the exchanges between people on social and cultural matters at their *point of impact* where the external (discourse) and the internal (the representational level) collide. At that moment, the discursive present meets the past (memory) and produces an idea, a representation or a discourse that combines the two. In this psychological domain, each act of consciousness integrates, somehow, the present with the past while reaching toward the future.

The crucial point is that whenever words/ thoughts about the world are produced or received, *something* else is activated at the periphery of consciousness as *background_think-*

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[2] Similarly Gergen (1991) notes the deep interest of researchers to understand how identities are constructed by learning people's common sense beliefs about themselves and others in reference to the narrative tradition with no reference to social representation research.

[3] Bly's book bearing the same title scaled at the top of the best sellers list of the New York Times. As reported by Faludi (1991) the attendants were not marginalized drifters: "Bly's retreat roster were lawyers, judges, doctors, accountants, corporate executives; at one wilderness experience, the group included several vice presidents of Fortune 500 companies and television-station owners".

ing.[4] At this moment the relevant dimensions of the inner world resonate "subconsciously" with the present experience. I will argue that by displaying and analyzing the content of the affective and representational elements that are activated as background thinking, we can construct an approximative model of the agent (self) in transaction with her social ecology as a dynamic energy in a space in which the inner world and the culture meet. This model address simultaneously the process of subjectivity creation and of identity formation as a "cultural engine." From that standpoint, the modalities of culture/ person transactions acquire a new visibility.

Background thinking, a subconscious representational content, triggered automatically, that is to say, outside volitive consciousness, has remained outside the grasp of both traditional psychology and of the interpretive sciences. By exploring its working structure and dynamic, we may understand how the inner world encounters the outer world selecting what it will incorporate, and then responds to the world with its own creations.

Background thinking: the compressed context of identity words

We introduced the term ego\ ecology (Zavalloni 1981, Zavalloni & Louis-Guerin 1984, Zavalloni 1986, 1990) more than a decade ago to account for the modalities of person/culture transactions. In this perspective, identity is seen as a form of consciousness, that is to say as a representational, affective and discursive conglomerate negotiated in a continuous transaction between a person and a particular cultural and historical context.

We found that culture/person exchanges are mediated not only by language, visual means or actions but also, at a subconscious level, by an affectively charged conglomerate of representations, figures and experiential memories that we called background thinking. When a person speaks or thinks about any meaningful group, men, women, Black, White or whatever, the content of e/motional memories, desires, interests is subconsciously activated at the periphery of consciousness.

We could describe background thinking in the area of personal and social identity, as a *compression, experienced subconsciously, of all the contexts in which words, representations, or actions dealing with Self, Alter and society have occurred under conditions of affective arousal.* When we display this "compressed material" through the method of *representational contextualization,* we find an invariant structure that I have called the *affective-representational circuit,* and the content of this structure, evolves in a continuous resonance with the world (Zavalloni 1981, 1990).

The aim of this paper, is to extend the ego\ecological analysis of person/ culture transactions in order to further explore the phenomenon of resonance, as the dynamic element in person/ culture transaction and to develop a model that describes these transactions, the *identity paradigm*. The analysis will focus on how "the past of things present" participates in monitoring the continuous transactions that go from the inside to the outside and vice versa; it will, also, examine the continuous *oscillation* by which a cultural theme moves from the private to the cultural and vice-versa and will consider what this implies for meaning - making. For example, the *power* theme in Bly's usage of Iron John, continuously oscillates between the fairy tale character, men as a general category, and the Self of each workshop's participant. This oscillation allows the *power theme* to strike, so to speak, its various targets,

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[4] Background thinking could fit into what Searle describes as the preconditions for the work of intentionality. Background thinking is where the work of preintentional capacity, is hidden.

and to disseminate, helping to create new aspects of reality both as culture and as men's identity.

We deal with a psychological situation, in which communal history intersects with personal identity. To analyze it, we need to extract from the flow of consciousness and from the sounds of the world, those elements that are common to both. For instance, in relation to social identity, words such as men, women, Black, White designate social groups, but, also denote the social dimension of the person. On the one hand, groups are part of the political process of society, on the other hand as representational objects they are related to a person's identity and part of the cultural landscape. I will use the term *hyperidentity* to characterize groups as the sum of all the representations produced about them. I will, also, use the term *figure* to describe a unique group representation. These concepts seek to express the transactional nature of group representations, as they emerge in the cultural space and address the Self.

Hyperidentities and their figures: groups as cultural creations

A great deal of both political and of "cultural" activity is spent describing, prescribing, legislating about women, men, social classes, ethnic groups, "races" or other collective entities. We can imagine the cultural space as an open "clipboard" to which anyone can affix a *figure* that describes those groups. A *figure* can take many forms: it could be a discourse, a text, a painting, an argument, an exemplary act or a metaphor, ranging from the trivial to the complex, from the innocent to the malevolent, which addresses a social group. These discursive and representational contents will be described as *figures of hyperidentity.* The term *hyperidentity* refers to social groups as a loose collection, of all the *figures* that are produced about them and that are exchanged in the cultural space. Some of these figures are internalized as expressing the Self.

The term *hyperidentity figure* that I use to describe a wide range of cultural creations about humans, hints, also, at the fact that all representations of human nature, whatever their source: philosophical, religious, artistic or "scientific," activate, implicitly or explicitly the representations of persons as prototypes or exemplars of a social group. Also, by looking at descriptive, prescriptive or ontological statements as hyperidentity figures, we acknowledge that they reflect much more than their stated intents; each of these figures emerges as the expression of wider identity processes.

Hyperidentity figures can be described as cultural elements that are embodied and energized by the brain/mind of those who create and of those receive them. Inside the person, so to speak, as part of the identity system, these figures are invested by desires and emotions that were produced, originally, in a different context. We will refer to this identity process as a *resonance effect*. The power of these figures to influence the cultural space is conditional on their capacity to produce a resonance in those who receive them, that is to say activate a pre-existent affective representational circuit.[5] When that happens, hyperidentity figures become

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[5] If, in line with traditional psychology, we think about groups or social categories in terms of beliefs, or of attitudes, we are bogged down in the impossible task of answering questions that these terms impose: what is the relation between attitudes and personality?, where these beliefs come from?, how to determine if these beliefs are true, somewhat true or false, given the nature of the objects that they describe? In this line of research, not only the life of the mind in its complexity, and the passions of the social world are erased, but fictitious entities (hypothetical constructs such as attitudes or motives) are accorded a reality status.

powerful weapons in political and social struggles. The issues of social and cultural influences could, profitably, be addressed in this framework.

Seeing men, women, Quebecers, philosophers or whatever as hyperidentities enables us to analyze social categories or groups as communal creations; this frees us from concerns about their "true" nature, and from any kind of essentialism.

The term, *hyperidentity figure*, also, points to the indeterminacy, or to the polymorphism that characterizes our ways of experiencing the social world. A personal statement, a fairy tale, or a "scientific" theory, seen as hyperidentity figures, become interchangeable. We can, then understand the similarity of the effects that they can produce. Each identity figure, whatever the source, functions by reactivating as background thinking a same *affective-representational- circuit.* Thus, it would not be surprising that often a private belief does not differ substantially from an influential view about a social group. The difference between the two, rests instead, on the context of power and influence within which each acts. As an example let us compare what Freud wrote about men and women in his youth, with an influential text he produced in old age.

At age nineteen, he wrote to his friend Silberstein that: "a thinking man is his own legislator, confessor, absolver. But a woman, let alone a girl, has no inherent ethical standards, she can act correctly only if she keeps within the bounds of convention, observing what society deems to be proper." At age seventy he wrote: "I cannot evade the notion (though I hesitate to give it expression) that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is for men...." (1931) meaning, of course, less.

The original impulse to control women is played back, half a century later, offering the same contrasted figures of lofty men and unethical women. By now, these figures are wrapped in the mantle of "science," and we know how effectively they have been used in promoting the social control over women and in comforting male identities.[6] This example, also, illustrates how enduring identity figures can be as part of the identity system of a person.

Viewing these statements about men's dedication to higher values in contrast with women's lack of ethical standards, as hyperidentity figures, frees us from having to decide, if they represent a stereotype, a prejudice, a belief, an aspect of men's and women's essence, a desire, or even, a subconscious, mental activation of particular people. It also makes it easier to recognize that these contrasted figures are similar to those produced, throughout history, by men to justify their politics of control and domination against women, and have contributed to create a world that, also, reflects their desires.

Stories, fictional characters, just as political and scientific statements about humans as groups, can be seen as hyperidentity figures that contribute to create a cultural space to which, we as individuals, resonate positively or from which we recoil. For example, Iron John, a figure of masculine hyperidentity derived from a fairy tale, becomes in Bly's hand a tool by which the "power theme" resonates with deep seated childhood desires, bringing to

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[6] To contend, as it is often done, that Freud's concept of women (what is being described here as an hyperidentity figure) simply reflects the culture of his time, fails to recognize that this same culture has produced different figures of women. For instance those of John Stuart Mill that young Freud translated into German (to earn some money) and from which, as attested by his letters to Martha Bernays, he strongly dissented.

the many men exposed to it, a feeling of power that spreads to the representations of men, as a general category.

The concept of *hyperidentity* renders perceptible the constructed nature of social groups, but, more importantly, it enables us to identify their building blocks, the hyperidentity *figures* as transactional creations. The idea of hyperidentity figure provides a link between the cultural domain which is of interest to historians, to literary critics, and to anthropologists and the psychological domain. It allows us to navigate between these domains, each offering a particular standpoint, while preserving the full integrity of these figures.[7]

For example, the tale of Iron John, may have charmed and empowered Bly as a person, but this fairy tale character becomes means to give (with a fee) power back to men who according to Bly are threatened by the "feminine" principle. Iron John is the rescuer of "princes" who have become "yogurt-men" (Bly's own invented hyperidentity figure). Bly's success shows the power of fiction to influence the cultural space, while activating, sometimes, dangerous emotions and desires of particular individuals.[8]

Hyperidentity figures can be analyzed, simultaneously, as components of the identity system and of the cultural space. As part of the identity system, these figures are relational tools, or weapons of influence to bend others to our desires; they are also sources of symbolic power, of fantasy gratifications. Once propelled in the cultural space, these fictions can become reality, producing changes, revolutions, or reactionary trends. This analysis, also, provides the basis for a new reading of cultural material that address the identity system in its impulse to create an environment of compatible "minds."

For example an ego\ecological reading of the Futurist Manifesto (Marinetti 1909) demonstrates that what was at stake was the creation of a masculine hyperidentity with figures celebrating speed, war, violence, immorality, disdain of women, and the struggle against feminism.[9] The resonance of these figures expressing a male fundamentalism, can all too well be documented in the personal and political postures of Mussolini, dominated as it was, by the fantasy of an aggressive, triumphant male. A reciprocal resonance could be observed. The writing of Marinetti supplying the soul of Fascism, and Fascism the power to realize the Futurists' program of violence, dishonesty, war and the submission of women.[10] The FuturistManifest has contributed to a process of reality creation whose consequences have been tragic. This process can be reconstructed by studying the collision between hyperidentity figures that were popular at the time (Nietzsche's Overman, Bergson's creative force), the

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[7] This is a central consideration in the epistemological and methodological shift that will permits the development of a transactional psychology. We replace the *variabilisation* of natural data, by embedding these data in their representational and affective context. The generality and lawfulness of the mind will be located not in fictitious hypothetical constructs (such as attitudes or motives), but in dynamic and structural invariances that underlay the production of social discourse and actions.

[8] As reported by Faludi, an attendant of Bly workshops recalled the following exchange: "Robert, when we tell women our desires, they tell us we are wrong." Bly instructed: "So, then you bust them the mouth." After someone pointed out that this statement seems to advocate violence against women, Bly amended it, "Yes I meant; hit those women verbally!" (Faludi, 1991, p. 310)

[9] "We want to exalt the aggressive movement ... the slap in the face and the fist. we want to glorify war the only hygiene of the world ... patriotism, militarism ...We want to glorify war the only hygiene of the world, militarism, patriotism the gesture of destruction of the libertarian and the disdain of Woman."

[10] Marinetti the author of the Futurist manifesto, was the recipient of important honours during the fascist period, and he remained, to the end, faithful to Mussolini. At sixty he volunteered in the war of aggression against Ethiopia, years later, during World War II, he enlisted for the Russian front and then followed Mussolini into the Republic of Salo.

political landscape (the birth of Feminism, social unrest), the identity system of the players, and an unexpected access to unlimited power.

By addressing the identity system as a consumer and a producer of hyperidentity figures, we can confront, more precisely, the transactional processes between the culture and the person. In the ego\ ecological perspective, the identity system has emerged as a *continuous process characterized by a simultaneous activation or "working in concert" of language, representations, affect and biographical memories.* Background thinking, already described, has been identified as a central element in this process and its role will be, now, further explored. We will start by discussing its experiential status which is ignored by traditional psychology. The introspective intuitions of some thinkers manifest some awareness of the existence of this elusive psychological content. They will bring us close to the experiential core of this idea.

Background thinking: some "deep" intuitions

Vigotsky

Vigotsky was deeply interested in the relation between language and thought and was probably the only psychologist to foresee the hidden power of the single, meaningful word. He considered the meaningful word as the elemental unit of psychology, comparable to the cell in the living organism. He wrote that: "The word is related to consciousness as a miniature world is related to a larger one, as a living cell is related to an organism, as an atom to the cosmos. The meaningful word is a microcosm of human consciousness" (p.194).

He distinguished between the meaning of a word which is given by the dictionary and the sense of a word. The sense of a word is the aggregate of all the psychological facts emerging in our consciousness because of the word. Here he comes close to the notion of background thinking. Vigotsky wrote: "The word considered in isolation in the lexicon has only one meaning....in living speech this meaning is only a stone in the edifice of sense." Consciousness operates through this infusion of sense. The titles of literary works such as Hamlet or Anna Karenina reflect this law of the infusion of sense in the purest form: "The sense content of the entire work is really contained in one word. (1934 Thinking and speech p. 308).[11] His notion of the "meaningful" word fits our understanding of background thinking as the aggregate of all the facts of consciousness associated to an identity word or figure, which are quintessential "meaningful words".

Vigotsky, also, explicated what has become a recurrent, but unanswered criticism of traditional psychology and of cognitive science. According to him: "The separation of the intellectual side of our consciousness from its affective, volitional side is one of the fundamental flaws of all traditional psychology." In this tradition, thinking: "is separated from the fullness of real life, from the living motives, interests, and attractions of the thinking human" (p.189).

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[11] This aspect of his thinking has been neglected and even criticized by his translators and commentators. The chapter in which this idea was discussed was not included in the first translation of his book (1968). Then, Wertsch (1985), his principal commentator, for instance, argues that, subsequently, linguist have shown that meaning is located in the sentence not in the word. However, Vigotsky's "meaningful" word refers to an entirely different matter. It is not "meaning" in the conventional "foreground" sense, that is being discussed, but meaning as an act of consciousness.

Even today, the challenge remains and it involves finding elemental principles of mental life that are respectful of its "relative" complexity. In the ego/ecological analysis of the identity system, background thinking has emerged as the locus in which thinking, language and affect are embedded into the living experience and in the social world.

Sartre

Another example of the "experience" of background thinking, may be found in a Sartre's note, published posthumously. He writes : "I see these men going by: I say "there are men." At once I am a man. But if I have objectivized my subjectivity, simultaneously I have projected all my subjectivity upon them.(1983 p.22). The expression "all my subjectivity" can be interpreted as the awareness of a wide range of "compressed" mental content (or background thinking) which is activated when Sartre's attention is captured by the view of some men (resonance effect).

This text suggests something more: the experience of a reversible co-construction of the Self and the group.[12] The reversibility between the representations of self and of the group has also emerged as a central finding of ego/ ecological research. In the resulting model, the co-construction of the personal and of the collective is analyzed in terms of a continuous oscillation at the representational and experiential level between the two.

Freud

The awareness of background thinking as "compressed" mental content is also suggested in Freud' introspective reflections about the meaning, for him, of being a Jew. After saying that he was not a believer, Freud added: "...Plenty of other things remained over to make the attraction of Jewry and Jews irresistible - many obscure emotional forces, which were the more powerful, the less they could be expressed in words . . . " He then added: "Because I was a Jew, I was free from prejudice . . . and able to stand opposition." Here, as in the previous example, the experience of a co-construction between the self and the group is recognized but not theorized. In this statement, the saliency of affectivity in the experience of a subconscious link between himself and the group is, also, notable. These "many obscure emotional forces," and the "irresistible attraction" that a group may produce will be revisited as part of the model of the identity system that will be presented below. The " affective dimension as the under theorized aspect of the identity system is, also, echoed in the next example borrowed from Nietzsche.

Nietzsche

The intuition that there are feelings or affects that have not been identified and named, but that operate specifically in the creation of identity (as a mixture of character and of destiny) is suggested by Nietzsche. He observes that language can create an obstacle to our understanding of internal phenomena. When words lack we fail to observe with exactitude: ...."there where the kingdom of words ceases, there the kingdom of existence also ceases. Anger, hatred, love, pity, desire, knowledge, joy, pain - all these words apply to states that are extreme: *states that are softer, more average, and particularly lower, which play constantly,*

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[12] Elsewhere (Zavalloni, 1986, 1990), I have analyzed how, in Sartre's writings, the word "genius" appears simultanously as a characteristic of men's in general and of various dimensions of his identity including autobiographical narrative.

escape us, although they weave the web of our character and of our destiny " (ital. ours p.96).

Because these *lower* emotional states have not received a name, they have not been studied, argues Nietzsche but they *create* our identity (character and destiny combine nicely to convey the idea of identity), and *play constantly.* The notion of a specific identity-linked emotion/ energy has bveen described in the ego/ecological analysis as part of the identity paradigm (Zavalloni 1990). A light, but perceptible, emotional arousal could be observed,and introspectively perceived by our respondents both adults and children and when the background thinking of identity words/ figures (used to describe in-groups and the Self) begins to be displayed. An animated voice, the eagerness to talk, a Self involvement, are the visible signs of an emotion, which in relation to this activity, has no name. The implications of the existence of a particular form of identity - related affect or energy for this area of mental functioning will be discussed below.

These few examples, perhaps not without some ambiguity, illustrate how "compressed" subconscious thoughts and emotions in the area of identity are experienced; they also offer a sample of groping scrutiny to understand this elusive domain. The challenge, then, will be to learn their role in meaning- making processes, in the creation of reality and consequently, in culture/ person transactions.

Thinking about self and culture: the identity system as a species of thought

Until now, we have discussed some aspects of culture/person transaction by using terms such as creation or construction; however, the crucial issue is to understand how this creation/ comes into being. These terms, which are the mainstays of post-positivist and post-modern psychology, all too often are used without addressing the process of the mind by which creations are created.

Bly narrating the story of Iron John, Freud reflecting about men, women, and the meaning of being a Jew; Sartre reacting to passers by, Nietzsche describing unnamed, identity-related, emotions, all these performances could be interpreted as a particular species of thought, the working of the identity system.

The question could be raised of how many species of thought there are. The issue is far from settled. Wittgenstein, for instance, said that he developed the notion of language games to free the philosophy of his earlier work. He thought that he and Russel had been misled by concentrating on one type of thinking and of language, the assertoric sentence, into trying to analyze the whole of language as though it consisted of nothing but that type, or as though the other uses of language could be analyzed as variations on that basic theme.

More recently, Simon (1990) distinguished two "species" of thought: one that can be described by using the problem- solving metaphor, the other which fits the reasoning metaphor. The problem solving metaphor describes those "species" of thought that are at work when playing chess, solving problems of elementary physics, making medical diagnoses and so on. A reasoning metaphor fits research on concept formation or on the validity of formal syllogisms. Bruner (1991) distinguishes between narrative and propositional thinking; another popular classification differentiates between procedural and declarative knowledge (Andercon 1985).

The species of thought thus described, are ill fitted to account for how we think about the world and ourselves, how we steer a course of action or how we justify our beliefs, briefly, how we practice our identity. Vigotsky observed that language combines within itself the function of social interaction and the function of thinking; he would then ask how these two functions are related, what brings about the presence of the two functions, how they develop and how they are structurally intertwined (1934, p.95). This issue could be clarified by accepting the idea that culture, and identity making, reflect the working of a specific species of thought. In this area, the thinking function of language is combined with its function of social interaction and of cultural creation.

It is important to note, here, that what it is usually called the Self, is not something which is *outside* its contents; therefore, I have preferred to use the more inclusive term of *identity*. Psychosocial identity refers to the person as an inner environment which comprises all that a person thinks, feels, and does about Self, Alter and society (Zavalloni 1986). Identity therefore could be seen as the person spelled out in its living context.I will argue that identity as a species of thought consists of an affectively charged memory content that operates through a continuous process of resonance with the world.[13]

The pervasive "species" of thought that accompanies our journey trough life, can be described as a particular orchestration of experiences, memories and affects through which language unfolds in its concrete living totality. This is of course what we "see" when we use the terms "identity", person, or "subjectivity" in order to avoid summoning up an improbable essence.

The issues of how a subjectivity (or a person or a particular identity) comes into being and how culture is created cannot be dissociated. The private Self is also a "cultural engine" that assimilates and sometimes produces hyperidentity-figures, in a continuous collision with what is out there. Automatically, outside volitional consciousness, the identity system engages the world by resonating with what is compatible in the world. Simultaneously, a creative, self affirming impulse emerges, that contributes to shape the world in the direction of the *sameness* with itself. Stated differently, the *inner* and the *outer* environment tend to corroborate each other.[14]

The identity paradigm: some preliminary considerations

The concept of hyperidentity was introduced to free us from thinking about groups in terms of an "essence." It, also, helps us to see groups as an aggregate of representations and of figures that possess *potentially,* an enormous power by their impact on the person as a body/ brain/ mind. Similarly, the concept of identity is intended to free us from conceiving the Self as an "essence" or as a hypothetical construct independent of the discursive, representational and affective content that converges on identity words.

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[13] I first introduced the notion of an *affective identity resonance* to account for the internalization of cultural heroes during adolescence (Zavalloni, 1982). Further research suggested that the "resonance effect" could be the mechanism by which the culture is mapped into brain and by which the brain produces and disseminates new cultural forms, or objects (Zavalloni, 1990). Stated differently, resonance is the dynamic that underlies person/culture transactions.

[14] This elf affirming impulse, may be close to Nietzsche's notion of will to power. Heidegger (1984) interprets this idea as a basic affective state and thus he comes near to what I have described as a basic identity energy, a will to be, that by unfolding can become will to power.

To describe how *identity words* operate we could use as a metaphor, Vigotsky intuition of the "meaningful word" as the basic cell of psychology.

These words receive the physical energy, the power, and the emotions of the body, so that they help to generate, simultaneously, the content of several psychological domains: self-concept, life goals, feelings, values, concept formation, attitudes, group representations; that is to say they function transdimensionally (Zavalloni & Louis-Guerin 1989).

The resonance effect produces the power of identity words by responding to what in the cultural space strengthen and amplify them while interpellating the world. The composite term, *identity word/figure* underscores their double contribution to the identity system and to the creation of hyperidentities. The resonance effect, by reactivating the inner world when meeting some features of the outer world produces a continuous oscillation by which the identity word/ figure creates new contexts of meaning and of relevance.

 For instance, Marinetti's exaltation of war, of militarism, and his disdain for women, are all well documented elements of his biography. These became via the Manifesto of Futurism, hyperidentity figures of men and of women which resonated in compatible minds, and contributed to the arrival of Fascism which in turn realized the political program of the Manifesto.

Identity words are transactional not only as tools of symbolic exchanges in the cultural space, but as means by which Alter as individual (identity prototype) or as a group (of identification or of differentiation) becomes a lasting component of the identity system. Admiration or contempt, love or hatred, feeling of common fate or dehumanization will then be the affective contexts by which Alter lives in the mind (e/motional memory) as the referent of identity words/figures.

Besides their *transdimensionality,* and *transactionality*, identity words/ figures are *transtemporal;* they survive time as the focus of one's life story (biographical dimension) and they reactivate the past into the present and orient toward the future. To describe the point of impact, the moment zero, when something, out there, becomes part of the identity system (or of e/motional memory), I have tentatively introduced the notion of a synergistic encounter (Zavalloni 1986). It refers to a mental content (word or figure), that emerges in childhood, as the result of an encounter between an interest or need derived from something lacking in the self (experienced as an affective arousal) and a quality (activity, characteristic) of a particular alter. This word or figure and the memory of the original encounter, then, resurface as background thinking, when a resonance is triggered by a compatible feature of the world. From then on, the identity word/figure will become a recurrent theme, an invariant, which accompany a person through life. It works as a filter that selects what will be admitted from the world and a tool capable, eventually, of changing the world.

The triple properties of identity words/ figures: transdimensionality, transactionality, transtemporality can be best appraised when studying influential thinkers who had the power to change the sociocultural space. Mary Daly, the celebrated feminist philosopher, generously explored with me some of her own identity words. I will present some excerpts obtained in 1988 and others obtained in 1991. These excerpts show how the identity system constantly reconfigures past, present and future, while maintaining its basic sameness. Continuity and change, in the context of identity are not antinomic.

Excerpts from a philosopher's protocol (1989)

Identity words produced in association to *we philosophers are*: adventurous, courageous, geniuses, passionate, intuitive and logical.

Representational contextualization of the identity word, *adventurous*:

Word meaning:

To be adventurous is what it means to be alive...it has to do with the work you have to do, with encounters with exciting people and spirits and animals.

Self meaning:

I am adventurous, not in the conventional sense, but in the sense of wanting to journey into the heart of the matter. I have had experience of moving into different dimensions, of travelling across time and space....

Prototypes or referent:

I was thinking of myself..... I cannot say Nietzsche, I cannot say Virginia Woolf.. they all disappoint me somewhat.

Biographical data:

1) Synergistic encounter and identity prototype:

I was four and a half years old and I fell in love with Carol who was five and a half. She was my hero, until she moved away one year later and I lost all contact with her. She was adventurous, breaking the furniture, scratching it. My mother who had strict rules did not want her in the house anymore. Her mother would read us advanced books. I remember a purple, exciting book. I would listen to that. Some years later I remember reading: *The Call of the Wild*. It is about a dog that was stolen, and that escapes into the wild North; he survives, and lives with the wolf. I remember the dog howling to the deep sky. It was a mystical experience, a spiritual travel.

[In relation to Carol (identity prototype) the word *adventurous*, is connected to: breaking, scratching the furniture. The spiritual and existential trajectory that this word assumes should be analyzed in its connection with the other identity words describing philosophers and the Self as courageous, genius, logical, intuitive. Each identity word possesses its own trajectory, while contributing to the meaning of all the others. The original meaning of adventurous as "breaking the rules" will reappear below].

2) Motivation and life goals.

I wanted to be a writer, my family was not educated but they gave me shining books. Not ordinary books, they were shining, they had a kind of mystical coloration. I just knew that they were my world, my reality. The starting point of wanting to become a philosopher was in my adolescence.... I went swimming and as I laid n the grass afterwards, a clover blossom spoke to me: I am. It provided an intuition of being and this intuition led me to write a doctoral dissertation whose title was *The Intuition of Being in Jacques Maritain.* When I was young I attended a working class school, therefore I could not study philosophy, it did not exist there. To do that, finally, I had to cross the ocean, to Friburg; it was a tremendous risk. I was truly an adventurer. Although I had,almost, no money I managed to travel throughout Europe and my mind exploded.

These quotations represent identity words as psychological cells in action. As transdimensional entities, they cut across several psychological dimensions, motivation, values, attitudes. As transtemporal entities, identity words operate as markers of important events throughout life. In its transactional trajectory, *adventurous* sparks in *daring*, remarkable books while creating a hyperidentity figure of women and of feminists.

From identity words to cultural creation:

To be adventurous is what *Pure Lust* is about: desires, the opening on the sky... I invented the word *Be-Dazzling*, it is in the *Wickedary*, and it refers to the Be-Dazzling adventurous voyager, it creates and carries energy to overcome the foreground with the brilliance of the Background. The relation between Be-Dazzling and adventurous is very close. Adventure sometimes means travel, sometimes nature, sometimes connection with another person, or an aesthetic feeling. Sometimes it is the light, the

spirit, the energy; this is Be-Dazzling. All this multiplicity of meaning allows you to overturn everything and it is linked to taking risks; it breaks the taboo against the dullness. All this was not very strong when I wrote *The Church and the Second Sex*. I started to became conscious of it when I was writing *Beyond God the Father* and this consciousness intensified and expanded when I wrote *Gyn\ecology*. When I broke the taboos and threw off some oppressive covering I found happiness. Happiness is activity, as Aristotle said, you seek to know and for that I use the metaphor of the voyager. Words are like carriers bringing the reader metaphorically over the edge. The primary struggle is to be Be-Dazzling and not let the foreground colour it. This means to be in touch with ourselves and with creativity, constantly risking because it is the most important thing.

This excerpt documents the oscillation of an identity word from the inner to the outer and vice versa, and the weaving of new but related words such as Be-Dazzling. As a result new hyperidentities figures emerge on the socio-cultural space. These figures will, then, trigger a resonance in some readers. For instance what resonates in my own mind when reading Daly's books among other things, is the representational context associated to one of my identity words: the *critical fringe of society* (generated by the group, *intellectuals*).[15]

Creating the new from the old: entering the pirate (1991)

Identity words and their representational contexts, as living cells of the mind, do not remain static. During their trajectory in time, they absorb new elements and respond creatively to new contexts. What emerges, not only modify the present but also the past by reactivating forgotten memories. In the excerpt that follows, obtained three years later, Mary Daly explains how a new figure, the pirate, has acquired an important role in her, This figure will be developed in her, just published, philosophical autobiography: *Outercourse: the Be-Dazzling voyage* (1992).

Self meaning:

It is related to the word adventurous. I had to be a pirate to steal the idea of the pirate so that the very concept of piracy is an act of piracy. Pirate as a female image, is close, across time, to witches, and crones. It represents an outlaw that steals back the identity of the pirate.

Biographical data:

During childhood I loved the book *Treasure Island*. Before that, I remember a woman who was peddling books and who came to our house. My mother wanted to buy for me some books about ships. The woman snapped back: "What an idea to buy this for a little girl." So my mother got, instead, some book advertisement about a little engine... I felt that something had been taken away from me. I also used to take a boat up and down the Hudson River when I was a little kid. I used to have a captain's hat and to sail in this boat. Later on I realized that Ireland is an island.

Synergistic encounter:

A few years ago I was in Ireland on a boat with some friends, wearing some head cover, one of them said: "If there are pirates, I certainly see one." This amused me; I was on a boat sailing toward Aron Island. It was very misty and I got the idea of the subliminal sea [an important theme in *Outercourse*], I also thought of a woman pirate: Granuaile (Grace O'Mally) from County Claire; she lived in the 16th century and was a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth I. The Queen received her at the royal palace.

Identity prototype:

The pirate is an outlaw and, and this makes me think of Carol. As I wrote in the first chapter of *Outercourse* Carol was my hero, she broke all the rules

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[15] The ego/ecological perspective could be usefully applied to the psychology of the reader which is an emerging topic in the field of literary criticism. Currently, researchers work with the idea of the reader's identification with a fictional character. This one-way approach obscures the transactional processes by which the identity system and a cultural object communicate.

...[see above], this is what a pirate does. I also remember reading *Treasure Island.*

[As I noted that this book was absent in the first interview she added: "before I could recapture the image of the pirate, I ruled out any identification with the unlikeable, and very cruel pirates described in *Treasure Island*].

Cultural creation:

I have the feeling that in my books I have plundered the treasures that have been stolen from women and that I am bringing these back to them. Several women to whom I have spoken about the pirate told me how important and powerful this figure was for them.

In the second protocol (1991), adventurous acquires a more combative meaning than in 1989, and recaptures the image of "breaking the rules" which was the first association of this word with the memory of Carol breaking the furniture. It also resonates in the adoption/creation of the pirate as a hyperidentity figure and as a metaphor for the Self.[16] All these elements can be found in *Outercourse*. Obviously, the book contain an additional and dazzling wealth of creative data that go well beyond what the display of a single identity word can offer, yet it does not alter the basic identity dynamic and validates the proposed model of the working of the identity system.

Earlier in this paper, I suggested that in order to understand narrative as a mode of thinking and as a key to person-culture transaction it should be read in its relation to identity processes. The display of the background thinking associated to each *identity word* becomes the crucial element for an identity oriented narrative analysis. In this protocol, the display of the word adventurous leads us to a polyphonic narrative while demonstrating the transdimensionality and transtemporality of the word. That is to say, if a word is produced to describe an in-group it would, also, in the majority of the cases be applicable to the Self. If this is the case, it will necessarily appear as expressing a commitment, a desire (motivation), a project, a preference (attitude), a value, something that interpellates the world and the centre of a biographical narrative. All of this will resonate whenever something in the world appears as compatible with it and this resonance will produce the condition for the *assimilation* or the *internalization* of the event. What is of particular interest in understanding how Mary Daly's narrative unfolds from an identity structure, is, that in this case, with the publication of *Outercourse* we can document how an identity word, adventurous, leads to the creation of the pirate, a hyperidentity figure of women who are radical feminist, the *pirate*. Something new has entered the cultural space and interpellates the world.[17]

If the display of the background thinking associated to the word *adventurous* validates, the identity model that we have proposed as an account of the modalities of person/ culture transactions, it also, justifies our reading of Bly's Iron John and of the *Futurist Manifesto*. These analyses suggest a new kind of literary criticism that could weave a transactional web between the author, h/er world, and the reader. We could develop a programme of transactional cooperations between psychology and the literary disciplines, rather than simply borrowing from them as Bruner (1991) suggested.

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[16] Once created, the figure of the pirate works retrospectively. As Mary Douglas notes on *Outercourse* (1992), in 1973, when she was writing her first book "I had not yet had a chance of seeing all - or most of the implications of my Dis-coveries. For example, I did not explicitly see myself as a pirate even though I was actively engaged in that profession" (p. 151).

[17] The New York Times review of *Outercourse* notes that Mary Dale in this book, "touches a collective nerve in women". This is close to what we refer to as *resonance*.

The *resonance effect* as modus operandi of the identity system

These excerpts not only illustrate the basic characteristics of identity words: transdimensionality, transtemporality, and transactionality, but also the process that underlies them, what I have called the *resonance effect* (Zavalloni 1990). The conclusion seems inescapable that the reactivation (resonance) of an affectively charged psychical material produces in the brain a condition (chemical, electrical or whatever) for recalling past events and for new mental creations that are culturally relevant.

In the preceding pages I have used the term, *resonance*, as it is commonly used in everyday language. We constantly meet this term; for instance, "It is enormous, to hear our thoughts resonate in (others)" (de Beauvoir 1954). In spite the popularity of resonance as aword that names the impact that some experiences produce, the psychological phenomena that it addresses have not been studied.[18]

In the present context, the resonance effect refers to the reactivation as background thinking, of the compressed context of identity words (intrapsychic resonance). This implies that in every act of thinking is engaged a psychic totality that reaches beyond the particular context where this act occurs.

When an identity word enters the field of consciousness, the representational network associated with it, vibrates, amplified, as it were, by the experience, the imagination and the emotions that form the sedimented layers of meaning of the identity word.

What is the medium through which the resonance effect operates? I propose that this medium is the affect. Earlier, I have described the representational context of identity words as an *affective- representational circuit* (Zavalloni 1986) in which each element is invested by a particular feeling, love and admiration for the prototype and other exemplars; pride for the Self, feelings of common destiny with the group to whom the word applies. Also, the interest, value, commitment that are conferred on the activities to whom the word refers (for instance being adventurous) are forms of emotion.

Resonance effect and the creation of the identity system

I propose that the range of emotions that accompany identity words and their various contexts, reflects the conditions by which this mental content is memorized. we have already described the identity system as e/motional memory (Zavalloni & Louis-Guerin 1984); presently the notion of *resonance effect* provides a key to understand how the identity system emerges, grows, and operates as a species of thought in transaction with the world.

Whenever, in the socio-cultural space, an element is experienced as compatible with the content of an identity word/ figure/ episode (identity complex), it will trigger the affect originally associated with it. This affect will be experienced as awakened interest, desire to act, a reactivation of the past (background thinking). The brain will, thus, automatically and unconsciously, attain a *readiness for remembering*; the new element will be integrated as part of e/motional memory, of the inner environment, that is to say of all that we have defined as the identity system.

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[18] Recently Lazarus (1991) noted that more attention should be paid to "unarticulated processes" like resonance, to fully understand how emotions are generated For him *resonance* refers to "an amorphous or ineffable sense of connection between what is in us and something in the outer world" (p. 154).

What is important, here, for a theoretical understanding of the identity system as a species of thought, is the demonstration, that in this area, affectivity plays at every moment of person/ culture transaction. It is always a precondition for reacting to and then memorizing an identity related event. The identification of how the resonance effect works, may settle the lingering debate as to whether cognition precedes or follows affect. For the first time, we can conceive affect as memory-creating and the resonance effect as the trace of an *elemental identity energy* that operates transtemporally, as we just saw, but also transdimensionally. Nietzsche above mentioned observation, on the impact of lower affective states on character creation can be expanded into a general theory of mental functioning in the area of Self, alter and society.

As the identity word and its representational field inhabit a range of psychological dimensions: values, motivation, interests, actions, identity prototypes, so the affect will produce a particular feeling specific to each dimension: liking, attraction, admiration, desire, and so on.

In its elemental simplicity, the resonance effect provides the dynamic, the energy by which the identity system, as e/motional memory, is continuously created, while remaining, in many important ways the same. The system assimilates, in its transactions with the world, what is congruous or desirable. When this is not possible, pain, discomfort, depression sets in. Negative resonance is as powerful as positive resonance.

Resonance effect as rehearsal of e/motional memory

We have described the resonance effect, as uncovering a function of affect (emotion and feelings) that has not been studied systematically: that of creating and not of accompanying or of anteceding a cognitive content. Simultaneously we can argue that the resonance effect, by reactivating the content of e/motional memory produces, automatically, the *rehearsal* that memory researchers (Norman 1972) consider as required to preserve all types of memory content. What James and then Erickson have described as a feeling of continuity that characterizes a person's identity may, also, be linked to the resonance effect. It perpetuates childhood elements in adulthood.

To summarize the argument so far, the resonance effect:

1) produces the psychological link between words, thoughts and experiences.

2) By reactivating the past as background thinking, the resonance effect produces the necessary rehearsal to keep it alive.

3) therefore, is responsible for the conservation of our thoughts, feelings and experiences as e/motional memory *(intrapsychic resonance).*

4) predisposes the identity system to assimilate what is compatible with it in the world. It is through the resonance effect that we respond to the environment and to a cultural, artistic, political discourse by integrating it as part of our e/motional memory[19] or by refusing it with boredom, aversion, or fear *(interpsychic resonance).*

5) is responsible for the coherence and predictability of the discourse that we produce about Self, Alter and society. The resonance effect is that by which the identity system comes

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[19] *In Mary Daly Wickedary of the English Language* (1987) E-motion is described as "Elemental passion which moves women out/away form the fixed/framed State of Stagnation" (p. 74). The connection between identity and e/motional memory is clearly described.

into being and then retains a sense of continuity, while changing, by assimilating what in the world is compatible with the content of e/motional memory.[20]

6) it reactivates as background thinking, a representational and affective content, which is not acknowledged in foreground arguments, while influencing them, all the same. As a result, it produces a type of mental functioning which is pervasive in human experience, but not acknowledged as such. By identifying this species of thought, the assessment of everyday thinking in relation to logical thinking become irrelevant. Approximative concepts such as stereotypes, prejudice, ethnocentrism, can be reassessed.

The identity paradigm: a model.

These considerations enable us to outline the notion of an *identity paradigm* as a model of the identity system.

From the structural point of view, the model is founded on three sets of equivalence: 1) linguistic, 2) psychological, 3) affective.

Linguistic equivalence means that in terms of identity, an adjective, a verb, a noun, an adverb are interchangeable. To borrow from our previous example, to be adventurous, adventure, to act adventurously all point to different accounts of a same underlying, referential complex.

Psychological equivalence refers to what has been identified as the *affective- representational circuit* . If an identity word appears on one psychological dimension, it will necessarily appear on all the other dimensions. When one of these dimensions is in a foreground position (as the focus of consciousness) the other will be activated as background thinking.

Affective equivalence means that the different feelings that are activated in association with the psychological dimensions comprising the affective-representational circuit, are experienced simultaneously either in foreground or background positions. These feelings are all part of the original affect which was triggered when a feature of the external world became encapsulated in an identity word.

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[20] The temporal dimension of identity word/figure, would require a full analysis. Background thinking activates the biographical past related to identity words/figures. These words/figures live through time; each different moment of their temporal trajectory confer upon them a particular status: a status of desire, of project, of realized goals, or of a dream clearly out of reach. Only time will decide which of these words/figures will remain a fantasy and which are a prefiguration of reality.

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