

Synthesizing the Everyday World

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James, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty have pointed out the derivative character of the categories of subject and object into which Western thought has split the primordial singleness of experience. Taking its lead from these thinkers, but also from Husserl and Köhler, and proceeding by example-based description, this investigation explores the place of experience in the forming of the everyday world. Insight into this world—a complex, autonomous, and organized world—is a behavior of discriminating in which parts are brought to organization as worldly wholes. Such insightful synthesizing occurs on experience's own level. The world is not outside experience—formed objects do not exist of and by themselves; and experience is not inside a subject—the organism is beyond itself in contact with the world itself. Insight, while a present self-accomplishing, is historically conditioned both by an ongoing temporal context, and by former experiences of world-synthesizing: insight is interpreting. In brief, the everyday world comes to organization in its autonomy and its complexity in a historically shaped, organizing vision that of necessity occurs on the level of experience.

Some Introductory Considerations on Experience

Modern thought from Descartes to the present has tended to dichotomize human experience into a subject world and an object world. Subject and object have been understood to be independent realms of existence, each of which could just as well exist without the other, but which in point of fact have come into relation with each other, as it were, from the outside. Somehow, it is widely thought, the pre-existing object, already constituted in itself, manages to deposit a replica of itself in the subject. In this way reality is split up into two absolute regions which are completely different from one another, which do not really need each other, and which enter into contact with each other only secondarily. This viewpoint, in its multiple variations, is simply presupposed in large portions of contemporary psychology where the division is so *obvious* that it passes unnoticed, and as a consequence is not brought into question.

In this century a number of original thinkers have challenged the apparent naturalness of this subject-object dichotomy. Particularly notable among these are William James, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Taking the lead from these seminal thinkers, the present study attempts to come to grips with human experience of the everyday world from a psychological point of view. This investigation hopes to contribute to current endeavors in the direction of transcending outmoded presuppositions and of attaining "the things themselves," goals especially dear to Edmund Husserl, the founder of modern phenomenology. The realization of such aims would, from this study's adopted perspective, amount to the attainment of "the everyday psyche itself" as this psyche, in the course of time, enters into relations with the world in its given complexity.

The Singleness of Experience

When the forced separation of experience into subject and object is not invoked in advance, and when experience is allowed to show itself for what it is, what appears is anything but two domains split off from one another. There is, on the contrary, a singleness about experience. When I experience something, I and that which I experience become one. This oneness is in and through the experience itself. When, for example, I turn to the painting on the museum wall, what is depicted enters my world. Reciprocally, in the identity of the single experience, I enter the painting's world, the world the painting depicts. The common ground for this give-and-take is the singleness of experience. The one experience is the reciprocal entering of myself and of the painting into each other's lives. In psychological terms, the one experience is my experiencing of the reality depicted. In terms of the painting, the experience is the experienced scene which is depicted. This experiencing on my part and this other experienced are one and the same experience. Experience as singleness of the two is not some additional third thing between myself and the other, but simply our accomplished meeting. Thus, loving the child is the same experience as the child being loved; inspecting the room is the same experience as the room being inspected; believing the testimony is the testimony believed in; and so on. The interested reader might consult James (1971) for a ground-breaking discussion of this matter.

When I experience the painting, what I have never before seen comes to be for my life. What are two and distinct and never before related now intersect in perceptual experience. In the identity of an experience, as I come to intersect with something beyond myself, a shared life is inaugurated. Experience is the relatedness—the relativity—of myself to an other, to something that is not myself. This twosidedness of the single experience is something that is itself experienced: any experience is at once an experience of myself as the person who is encountering an other, and an experience of the other which is being encountered. I-side and OTHER-side are essential ingredients to the singleness that is any experience.

In sum, experience is a relativity in which an other comes to be relative to my life in one and the same singleness in which I come to be relative to its life. Absolutized object and absolutized subject are yanked out of this living context by an abstraction that leads to any number of distortions. Experiencing side and side experienced, both as they intersect in experience, and as they exceed any one experience, of course have lives of their own. But these two sides of human experience, when approached descriptively, are not properly characterized as pre-existing regions which are essentially independent of, and external to one another. The two sides that constitute experience do not present themselves as (absolute) subject and (absolute) object. These sides live in each other, rather, in the singleness of an experience.

General Description of Events of Synthesizing the Everyday World

The relativity of the experiencing side and of the side experienced as a single experience is an event that comes about. But the event that is an experience is not something that just happens. It is, rather, brought about. There is an accomplishing of experience. Psychologists are by no means in agreement as to the fundamental character of this accomplishment. The conventional presumption is that experience is an epiphenomenon. Our concern with the everyday experience of the world, leads us, however, to assume the vantage point of experience itself. We will, from such a perspective, be taking a look at most basic and typical human experiences of the everyday world with an eye to their fundamental constitution. These typical experiences are essentially temporal in character. They are events in which I enter into a relation of experience with an other that is essentially composed of a number of aspects (parts; segments) unable to unfold except one after the other. Thus, by way of example, a sentence is read word by word; a song heard note by note; a soap opera kept up with revelation by revelation; a city explored block by block. A composite other comes to be synthesized in such fundamental experiences as these of reading a book, listening to a new piece of music, following a story, and experiencing a city. When involved in such activities, the other absorbs my attention, and, in the process, this other is first brought about for my life as such and such a togetherness of aspects. The behavior of synthesizing is in fact so completely taken with the other that this behavior is itself easily overlooked. The segregated unity that is synthesized, on the other hand, is readily available to my view. What needs to be recovered, then, is this experiencing of mine that in the course of time helps bring about the synthesis of worldly aspects as a segregated unity. We shall turn to this psychological investigation of synthesizing behavior in the next section. Our present task is the elucidation of the general manner in which events of synthesizing take place in experience.

Description of an Instance of Synthesizing the World

We take as an example the following event of synthesizing: Exploring the terrain, I come upon a weeping willow tree. The tree blocks my view. I am curious about what lies on the other side of this tree. I circle around it. The world yields to my behavior, and opens itself in the very direction of my initiative. I find a well-worn path that leads up to the top of a hill. Attaining the summit, a beautiful valley spreads out for my view. I now have a feel for the terrain in its given interconnectedness. The unity tree-path-summit-valley has entered my life as the complex that these individual segments co-constitute. It is to be noted that each of these segments is itself a complex of aspects.

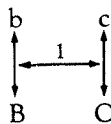
We may now begin to represent this necessarily temporal synthesizing event. If I stands for myself and my experienced encountering of anything whatsoever, and if $OTHER$ stands for any other presenting itself and being encountered in experience by myself, then the following will represent both the twosidedness and the singleness of any experience of an other in the world:



The overlapping arrows moving in opposite directions are meant to convey the previously mentioned reciprocal entering into each other's lives of the experiencing I-side and the experienced OTHER-side.

Now let a stand for my experiencing of the tree from its front, and let A stand for that tree experienced from its front. In my very reaching of the tree, a , it reaches me, A . This relativity of myself and the willow tree is representable by $\overset{a}{\updownarrow} \underset{A}{\updownarrow}$. aA is my experience of the tree from its front.

If b stands for the behavior of experiencing B , the far side of the tree, and if c stands for the later behavior of discovering C , the path on the far side of the tree, then we may represent the temporal event of synthesizing *tree seen from its back leading to seen path* in the following way:

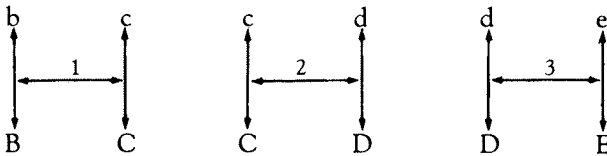


1 represents the event of synthesizing bB (my experience of the tree from its back) and cC (my experience of the path), that is, the event of my first

becoming familiar with the tree and the path in their self-given togetherness. It should be understood that neither bB nor cC —nor any experience for that matter—first arises as an isolated experience, only afterwards to come into contact with other experiences. The experience of the tree, from the first, is not simply defined by an absolute tree self-contained in itself, but by (among other things) my mounting expectations of what is next to come in experience. And when I first experience the path beginning there, I do not experience an absolute path, then go on to join the path to the tree. I rather experience this path essentially defined from the first by the tree that harbors the path (as well as by what I vaguely expect the path itself to lead to). Tree and path are essentially relative to each other in my experience the whole while. Thus what occurs is not: experience a segregated unity, then join it to a context. But rather: experience a segregated unity as possessing its own characteristics, but as always/already defined by its temporal context. An other that I first encounter is defined both by itself, and by the context in which this new other first arises. The overlapping horizontal arrows joining bB and cC are meant to convey the beyond-itselfness in time of the two experiences to each other, and to represent the accomplished relativity of these two as one experience in and through the event of synthesizing. bB and cC are thus being portrayed as defining each other as a single whole. I have now experienced the tree as *that tree whose far side stands at the beginning of the path I am now seeing for the very first time*; the path I now see is first given as *that path which begins at the other side of that tree just there*.

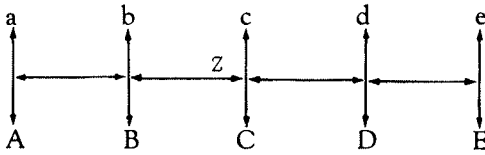
There is a twofold relativity in the represented dialog between experiences bB and cC . On the one hand, there is the relativity that is my experience of each segregated unity (tree; path). On the other, there is the relativity that is my experience of the more complex segregated unity the path and the tree co-constitute. The vertical arrows represent the relativity to one another of myself and individual segregated unities; the horizontal arrows represent the relativity to each other of these encounters of individual segregated unities.

Further representing our example we have:



dD , which is my experiencing the path going up the hill, has found its natural connection, 2, with cC (seeing the beginning of the path)—which is to say that the path I experienced as going up the hill and the path I experienced as originating at the far side of the tree have spontaneously come to be

experienced by myself as forming one and the same path, with stretches essentially in self-given continuity with one another; eE , which is my experiencing the valley from the top of the hill, likewise enters into its relativity, z , with dD (the experience of the path going up the hill). The events aA , bB , cC , dD , and eE in actuality have at this point come into relativity with one another as a single encounter by myself of the world, and not just pairs of events such as cC and dD . These several twosided meetings come together in the course of time to form one larger twosided meeting between the world and myself, the experience Z :



Event Z is my experience of synthesizing a tree whose far side leads to a path that winds its way up the hill to a panoramic view of the valley below. This overall relativity is a differentiated unfolding in which several others have come to be given as one other in my experience. New unities—some composed of just two aspects, some composed of an immense number of aspects—arise in the history of meetings that is my ongoing synthesizing of the everyday world.

Synthesizing the World as the Coming to Organization of Wholes

Experiencing the tree from its back (bB) is experiencing a whole; experiencing the tree as leading to a path ($bB \longleftrightarrow cC$) is experiencing a broader whole; experiencing the tree as leading to a path that takes me up a hill to a view of the valley ($bB \longleftrightarrow cC \longleftrightarrow dD \longleftrightarrow eE$) is experiencing a broader whole yet. *Whole* is employed in this study in a specific sense derived from Gestalt Psychology. Gestalt Psychology arose in the second decade of this century as a protest movement against the prevailing trend of explaining psychological phenomena in terms of absolute elements externally pieced together into *bundles*, that is, into atomistic aggregates. The founders of this movement argued that the whole is not the mere piecemeal addition of its parts: "The whole is not the sum of its parts." They pointed instead to the dynamic organization of parts as the parts occur in wholes, and especially to the fact that the properties of any of the parts of a whole are determined in general by the qualities of the whole of which the part is a member, and in particular by the part's location in that whole. In this way the primacy of the whole was asserted, and the conventional atomism challenged.

Whole is used here as follows: a whole is a unity in experience of worldly aspects (parts), a unity which comes to be formed by reason of the present

interaction of these very aspects among themselves. According to this definition, aspects, by defining and deciding one another in my experience, without any piecemeal accretions from the past, presently come to constitute the whole out of themselves. Each of the aspects is defined in the concreteness of the aspect's meaning by the whole, that is, by all the aspects in relation. Synthesizing the world, then, as we have been discussing it, may be described as bringing aspects to determinate organization in experience as wholes of varying extension. Thus, by our account, the words themselves (see examples above) presently come to organization in my experience as the sentence; the notes themselves presently come to organization as the opera; the buildings themselves as the block; the deeds themselves as the person's life; the tree, path, hill, and valley as the terrain; and the series of events themselves as the story being narrated. The aspects themselves, then, constitute the experienced side of an experience. A whole is nothing but a complex of aspects in dialog with each other; there is nothing between the aspects except the very relativity of the aspects themselves to one another.

The Accomplishing of Events of Synthesizing the World

We hold to our chosen example as we proceed in this section to explore the essentially temporal accomplishing of experience as a meeting of the experiencing I-side and the experienced OTHER-side. Our focus will now be on the activity of the experiencing organism in events in which worldly aspects come to represent an organization; which is to say that we will concentrate on the behavior of synthesizing. Such behavior contributes in bringing a whole to its given organization: this behavior is the organizing of aspects into worldly wholes intersecting with one's life.

Insight and the Primacy of Experience

Experience of the everyday world in all its complexity occurs essentially on the level of experience itself. Aspects are first brought to organization as wholes in experience, and only in experience. I perceive the weeping willow tree. It is undeniable that there are physiological processes which underlie the present seeing of this tree, and which are not experienced. These processes support my actual tree-perception, but they do not themselves constitute the event of seeing the tree. And they cannot be used to whisk that experience away as merely the final step in a causal chain. This experience is not simply a result to be referred to something else for its true essence. The seeing of the tree is an event that stands in its own right in that the tree arises in vision precisely when an activity of seeing occurs on my part. The tree is seen at that very moment in which I discriminate it in experience. The tree does not pre-exist as a copy in my nervous system. The tree belongs rather to the terrain.

The tree stands where it stands, and I see it when I presently discriminate it as it is, and where it stands. This only happens when I intersect with the tree in visual experience. If I were not presently intersecting in experience with the tree itself, then I simply would not be in contact with the tree as the tree factually is in the world.

The tree presents itself as itself. The path, the hilltop, the valley likewise present themselves. These present themselves as together forming a self-given worldly whole. How is this broader whole synthesized? How is the terrain brought to organization objectively? Just as it is in and through experience that I intersect with the tree, so too is it in and through experience that I intersect with the terrain in its wider extension. Experience allows me to enter into a relation of knowing with a complex of worldly segments as these segments themselves exist, both singly and collectively. It is necessary that I experience the interconnectedness of the given segments in order for a novel complex of segments to come to organization for my life as a worldly whole. An event of synthesizing the everyday world takes place providing the experiencing side intersects in experience with each segregated unity—tree, path, etc.—each in its given place in the worldly order of things. But this event only really takes place when I enter into an experiential relationship with the sequence itself as a sequence, that is, with the segments in their given relations to one another as the worldly whole these segments themselves co-constitute. In fact, a whole is first brought to organization in experience in this way. To grasp the sequence is to be directly determined by the existing segments as they are presently in relation with each other from themselves in the world. Segments that are experienced from themselves will be called *objective* segments (parts) in this study, and relations among segments that are experienced from themselves will be called *objective* relations. (To admit that there are such objective relations among given segments is not to affirm that these “same” segments could not be objectively synthesized in other ways; see below.) Gestalt psychologists have called an experiencing that is directly determined by objective relations *insight* (see, for example, Köhler, 1947, pp. 188-210). An account of human cognition of the world through insight is contrasted historically with an account of such cognition as piecemeal products of blind and mechanical learning processes. While insight has been proposed as the grasping of the internal dialog of parts as these parts come to form a whole, mechanical learning processes would amount to a coming to assemblage of elements, which, all the while remaining external to one another, do not really communicate with and change each other. The account in terms of atomistic elements stands in close historical relationship to British Empiricism, the older Structuralism, and Radical Behaviorism. The account in terms of insight is closer to people’s everyday belief that they are in an understandable relationship with their world, and that they have sensible dealings with this world.

Insight into the terrain occurs when the tree, path, hill, and valley determine my experiencing directly and objectively, both for what each of these segments is from itself, and for what they are in reciprocal relation with one another. Synthesizing reciprocal relations means, for example, coming to see how the far side of the tree factually harbors the beginning of the path; and, conversely, coming to see how this path factually winds down to terminate at that side of the willow tree. "Insight is insight into relations that emerge when certain parts of a situation are inspected" (Köhler, 1969, pp. 152-153). Insight into relations is simply grasping the way aspects objectively decide one another, and in this way come to organization as a worldly whole from itself. Insight is a sponsoring of objective wholes, and thus a sponsoring of the given world.

The terrain is not, in events of insightful synthesizing, establishing replicas in miniature of itself in the brain, or even in the mind. Insight is certainly the direct determination of my experiencing by the other. But insight is not only a behavior of being impacted by the other. The experiencing side is active, doing its part to determine the insightful experience of objective relations. Just as the experiencing organism visually discriminates the tree, the path, etc. in experience, so too the organism must visually discriminate in experience the relations among the tree, the path, etc. Not only is the experiencing I-side being directly determined by the whole that is coming to organization, but the experienced OTHER-side is being directly determined (as the whole being brought to organization) by the experiencing I-side. Insight is being faced with segments confronting me from themselves, but insight is also necessarily a present and active discriminative seeing of these segments, precisely as these present themselves in relation from themselves. The objective world and my activities of discrimination reciprocally condition one another as the two sides constituting an experience of insight into objective relations. Such relations determine me when I actively synthesize them in experience. When that happens, the experiencing organism is beyond itself, and intersects with the given world itself. In sum, the objective world directly determines insightful experiencing, but this direct determination of my experiencing by the world happens at that precise moment when my experiencing directly determines the world, that is, when my experiencing discriminates the world in experience. The experience of insight into objective relations first arises on the level of experience itself. In the present case, such insight is a taking note of the unspectacular fact that the path starts just there. I insightfully synthesize objective relations in the very instant in which I could say, "Oh, the tree leads to a path." My experiencing is directly determined by the way tree and path decide each other from themselves when I effectively experience the deciding firsthand for myself.

My entering into the objective life of the other is an achievement of my behavior of insightful synthesizing. The other, with an existence of its own,

achieves something as well. The other objectively accomplishes its entry into my life. The other comes to determine my subjectivity. These reciprocal achievings are the very twosided singleness of an insightful experience in which a worldly whole is brought to its definite organization. Experience accomplishes itself in its very occurring as behavior of insight into objectively self-presenting relations. The experience of the instant is its own reason, at least up to a point. Insightful experiencing is a function of itself as twosided singleness accomplishing itself.

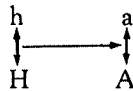
Existing Temporal Context and the Bringing to Organization of Objective Wholes

Our investigation now shifts towards events of synthesizing of objective wholes from another perspective. We have reflected upon the fact that synthesizing the terrain occurs precisely as an experience of discriminative seeing. Experience is not an epiphenomenon. Experience contributes rather in a most essential way to its own accomplishing. There is, nevertheless, more that bears upon the accomplishment of any experience than that experience itself. Present experience determines itself as present insight into objectively given relations. But it is also determined by myself as more embracing world-experiencing history of behaving. It is this latter determination of the present experience of objective wholes by past organismic experiencing that will now concern us. Experiences accomplish a continuing structuring and restructuring of my life, and of my capacities for experiencing. These capacities, as modified, reorganize the world I experience. I come to encounter new worldly wholes, wholes which vary in accordance with my cumulative experience of the world.

Our first descriptions concern the relatively recent past as it influences the present event of synthesizing the terrain as an objective whole. Experiences of worldly wholes emerge from within experiencing as living temporal context. Experiences are in active communication with each other, and reciprocally determine each other within this context. My life is in process, and what actually comes to be objectively synthesized in experience depends on what I have been concerned with, and on how that concern has concretely proceeded to unfold up to the present moment. The objective relations into which I in fact gain insight depend on my present situatedness, and on my having attained my present location; on my current interests and intentions; on what I have just witnessed; on where I want to be later; and on the like. If I am in mourning, if I am chasing butterflies, if I am in a hurry, I may not even notice the weeping willow tree just over there. And I may cross the path where it meets the tree without in fact perceiving their relationship, that is, without insight into the whole they form objectively. Synthesizing the terrain as the unity of tree, path, hill, and valley is not something that happens for someone simply because he or she is in close physical proximity to these segments.

There is always an alternative objective whole that can be legitimately actualized by the experiencing organism as its other side in any immediate world. This historical selectivity—this variable objectivity—is basic to human life.

I am set in our example in a particular way. I am set on exploring. And as I pursue my investigations, I do not merely gaze at trees, then merely gaze at the path, as these make their appearances. I am, rather, responsible for what I actually come to experience in everyday life in that what I experience depends on what I freely turn towards. I see the tree at that very moment when I turn to look in its direction. There are certain necessary consequences which follow the decisions of the moment—some experienced wholes present themselves to my view, and not others. We may represent the developing relationship as follows:



Here *h* stands for looking in the direction *H*, and *aA*, as above, for first seeing the willow tree. I look, then I see. The experienced behaviors of looking, and of otherwise orienting myself, help bring the world I encounter to its actual organization. It is the person him- or herself that is psychologically engaged; a personal history of experiencing that turns, that looks, and that sees; and not a complex of processes that are essentially outside of experience.

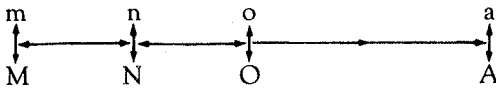
The currently unfolding experiencing of the terrain in turn depends on the broader, yet still relatively recent interests in exploring that have become focal in my life. The world in its given connectedness from itself continues to present itself in keeping with my ongoing preoccupation with it. I have synthesized the lay of the land precisely because I have developed interests in the terrain's layout. Another set of interests would have initiated other encounters with this part of the world, and would have led to the uncovering of other objective relations. But in our example, the tree, then the path, then the hilltop, and finally the valley are exactly what have been enabled to respond to my given pursuits, and to present themselves as a single whole in experience. Insight into the objective terrain is accomplished by a deed of looking, by a deed of seeing that leads to other looking, by a deed of looking and seeing that brings into play experiences of walking, looking around, wondering, deciding, climbing, squinting, looking again, and, all the while, more seeing. Experience as insight into objective relations occurs through such deeds of a life in historical process.

Insight, as we have seen, necessarily accomplishes itself on insight's own level of experience. There could be no phenomenon of insight if insight had to be achieved outside of experience in a world of things and causes, only then to

be reflected in experience—experience ensuing as a thinglike aftereffect. The interchange between myself and the objective complex terrain occurs precisely as experience. And the fact of the matter is that nothing outside experience whatsoever is relevant to such present everyday events as looking and investigating and climbing when such events are taken exactly as everyday events of looking and investigating and climbing. These deeds are a self-governing chain of events lasting for a certain period of time that, for the experienced behaviors they comprise, are simply themselves as they presently determine each other, and as they determine events of insight. Both insight into objectively given relations, and insight's living context occur essentially as experiences. Events of insightful synthesizing of objective wholes, then, are both a self-accomplishing in experience, and a function of other experiences that lead up to and feed into these events of synthesizing.

The Relationship Between Earlier and Later Events of Synthesizing the Everyday World

The roots of insightful synthesizing of worldly wholes in the relatively remote past are equally experiential. The relationship between this remote past and my present intersecting with the objective terrain is somewhat more problematic, however, since the remote past, while presently effective, is not presently available to experience. According to our example, relations among segregated unities which I already recognize are what I am presently synthesizing in experience. I am already familiar with trees, paths, hills, and valleys. I depend on my familiarity with segments such as these in order to bring this novel terrain to organization as an objective whole. If I had never seen, let us say, a tree, I would undoubtedly become interested in familiarizing myself with its composition. But I have already synthesized the worldly whole that is a tree in a past that has long since receded from experience. As a consequence I now know trees—and paths and valleys—as familiar, and I can concern myself with the larger whole with which I am not familiar, and to which segments of these sorts stand as parts. Present synthesizing of an objective whole builds upon former expenditures of time and effort. Such expenditures cumulatively shape my world-experiencing. And once I will have completed my current explorations, tree-path-hill-valley will itself be a whole synthesized for my life. Later this whole will in all likelihood be immediately recognized as familiar. My interests will then turn to other terrains. We can represent the influence of the former synthesizing of the tree out of its components on the present behavior of discriminating the weeping willow (*aA*) in the following manner:



Here *m*, *n*, and *o* stand for the former experiences of discriminating *M*, the trunk, *N*, the branches, and *O*, the leaves; the horizontal arrows joining *mM*, *nN*, and *oO* represent the experienced organization of the parts as the whole (tree).

Events of first synthesizing any whole essentially occur on the level of experience. Former events of synthesizing, then, originally proceeded as experiences. Now, however, these former occurrences in which I first came to discriminate trees, and to grasp their composition are withheld from experience. Nor do I experience the experiencing by which I presently recognize this tree as familiar. I do not experience myself as cognitively capable of perceiving the tree. I simply immediately recognize this whole as a tree. My former synthesizings, then, enter into my present synthesizings unobtrusively, nonconsciously. These former synthesizings are not of minor consequence: They are in play in all my experiences of the world; in this sense all experiencing is remembering. On these former events rest all new synthesizings of unfamiliar, and perhaps still more differentiated worldly complexes. Through experiences in which I have already synthesized the world, more and more can be packed into a single experience as ever more complex, yet experientially still compact unities are segregated. Thus, by way of illustration, the single word *Hitler* has acquired the power, in no more than the time the word takes to be heard, to speak worlds.

Furthermore, by reason of the great number and variety of my former events of synthesizing objective wholes, a certain world is presently available for immediate organizing on my part. At any given moment in my life, I can readily actualize certain objective relations among worldly segments—certain wholes—and not other relations. In other words, I presently have the capability of synthesizing certain unfamiliar objective wholes, while certain other unfamiliar objective wholes are presently, and perhaps forever, beyond my reach. I can, for example, follow the plot of most movies. I am lost, however, when confronted with an advanced text in economic theory: I am unable to grasp the way in which the parts dialog to form the whole. The capacity to grasp relations among parts is an acquired capacity. This capacity is not acquired in a piecemeal fashion, but is rather a matter of the coming to organization of wholes in experience. All in all, then, the world is presently synthesized differentially for people in accordance with their acquired capacities for synthesizing. Thus, in the "same" locale where I readily and objectively see a path beginning, someone else will readily and objectively see types of rocks, or patterns of vegetation, or whatever it is that he or she has in the course of time become able to synthesize out of givens such as these—

whatever it is he or she "has a mind for." Of two people listening to the same performance of a Bach fugue, one hears a divine masterpiece and the other only notes rising and falling. The "same" notes are not the same for the two listeners. The notes dialog differentially in the two encounters, modifying each other in two distinctly different ways: $iI \longleftrightarrow iII \longleftrightarrow iiiIII$, etc., as opposed to $iI' \longleftrightarrow iiII' \longleftrightarrow iiiIII'$, etc. (the lower case Roman numerals stand for hearing the notes; the upper case ones for the notes as heard). Each note sounds as it does by reason of the other notes to which it is relative in the piece. In our example, however, the "same" notes form a different whole for each of the listeners. The "same" notes are relative to one another and change one another in opposite ways; that is, the "same" fugue is heard as different by our two listeners. The actual way the "same" notes modify one another—as beautiful or as boring—depends on my history of synthesizing classical music. That history determines how, on a first hearing, notes constituting pieces of a certain style come to form a whole in experience.

Insight and Interpreting

Former synthesizings of objective wholes, whether they took place this morning or ten years ago, shape later experiences. The present is a conditioned present. Present insight into objective wholes is necessarily limited by my past. Insight into the terrain is an event that has been conditioned historically. The past—both the relatively remote past, and the past in which I have been orienting myself only now—influences the present event of insight in such a way as to determine in advance, from my side, how the terrain will be synthesized. Insight, as historically shaped behavior, brings to light certain objective wholes. At the same time, other wholes which are potentially equally valid are prevented from making their appearance.

Discriminating a certain set of aspects as some one particular whole, and not as some other whole—grasping something from some one particular point of view—is the behavior of *interpreting*. Since I am always situated historically in one way or another, it is impossible that I not discriminate worldly wholes from one perspective or another. As a consequence, the behavior of insight—always historically limited—is always behavior of interpreting.

It might be objected that a perspectival characterization of insight as interpreting invalidates insight as any kind of grasping of objective relations. This is not, however, the case. In my everyday synthesizing, limit is a condition of vision. It is, as we saw above, precisely through turning and looking that I come to see the objective tree itself. The tree that stands over there is not really seen until I have appropriately oriented myself to it. To truly see the Taj Mahal, I must situate myself by traveling to India, and by doing whatever else might be necessary to gain the proper ground. Attainment of the proper perspective is exactly what permits me the vision of everything

whatsoever I know objectively. Limit and vision are complementary in our knowledge, not antithetical. It is precisely within the variable limits of history that insight is to be gained. Moreover, if I had not already in fact synthesized one particular world, I would have no set of familiar wholes upon which to build. I would, as a consequence, be severely restricted in the new objective wholes I could presently synthesize.

Furthermore, in my everyday experiencing, interpreting is not an exercise in arbitrariness. Interpreting is rather an attempt on my part to bring a legitimate meaning to light. To interpret is to strive to uncover objective relations. Interpreting is, to this end, unavoidably the taking of a stance. If the stance is adequate, the sought after whole comes to objective organization for my life out of its parts. In sum, insight is itself only as interpreting, but interpreting is truly itself only as insight. Looking at synthesizing objective wholes now as insight, now as interpreting, is in fact looking at one and the same behavior from different points of view.

The event of insightful synthesizing of the terrain is an experience in which segments come to organization as an objective whole. The segments individually—and as they connect with and continue one another as this worldly whole—are, so to speak, laid out all around me. They are givens. Nevertheless, these given segments forming the terrain are thus laid out only in and through experiences in which they are encountered. The given single segment is essentially an experienced single segment; and the given relations among segments are essentially experienced relations. Above we discussed the fact that active behaviors of insight, as well as other behaviors—behaviors that took place only now, or that took place some time ago—help bring an objective whole to its given organization. In the light of these discussions, it becomes clear that no matter how available an other is of and by itself—no matter how given and obvious an other is—any other simply has to be taken up, and has to be discriminated by some experiencing organism, for it to be experienced from itself. Every other has to be appropriated by somebody in order to be objective. The terrain must be interpreted for it to be objectively synthesized as the self-giving terrain it is. It is thus that the terrain “becomes what it is.”

My worldly others, then, are not absolute objects. And insight is not the lifting of a veil behind which lie such pre-existing objects already constituted in themselves. Insight is rather an active process on the part of a historically situated experiencing organism. And my objective others are wholes that are brought to organization from themselves through my organismic activities.

I have synthesized my whole objective world in experience, and this world continues to unfold, in part, through my doing. The terrain depends on the contribution my efforts make. My world—the only world I know—is essentially relative to my life. I contribute most fundamentally to the face this world turns my way. It is, nevertheless, an actual layout of the world that I

come to actualize through my behavior. And anyone who has the capabilities and the inclination, and who adopts the perspectives I have adopted, will see the objective terrain I have seen. The terrain offers itself to anyone who makes the effort. My world, then, is at once self-given and determinative of my experiencing, and an achievement of this experiencing. The terrain is organized at once by myself and by itself. Once again, we see that experience is a singleness consisting of two sides reciprocally entering into one another's lives. Experience is a transaction between two active powers, the experiencing organism and the presently available world. Experience is not *in* a subject, but is, to the contrary, an exchange in which the experiencing organism is outside of itself, in contact with that which is not itself.

It should be pointed out that the present study, which owes an enormous debt to Gestalt Psychology, departs significantly from this movement in describing insight as an event essentially occurring on the level of experience, and as an interpreting of the world. Köhler, the champion of insight, proposes that insight into objective relations is ultimately accomplished within brain processes that are essentially neither experienced, nor historical. In keeping with its ultimately phenomenological orientation, the present study finds that parts meet and change each other in the world, where I interpretively sponsor them, and not in the brain.

The Structure of Person and World

Whole has been reserved in this study for a worldly unity that has come to objective organization. The world *structure* is now set aside to designate the transaction of person and world. Formally, structure and whole are closely related concepts. Both name functional totalities in which parts depend on, and define one another. The difference between these functional notions lies in the character of the interdepending parts: worldly segments interdepending as a whole, or person and world interdepending as structure.

Structure and Experience

Person and available world transact as a structure in events of synthesizing the everyday world. In such happenings, person and world determine one another as a functional unity (structure) along lines all of which are not experienced, at least not at the moment. The upshot, however, of this reciprocal conditioning is an experience in which person encounters world. An emergent experience arises as it does precisely as intrinsically belonging to a particular structure of synthesizing, precisely as this structure is presently organizing itself in accordance with its own law. There is a requiredness of the experience (intersect of I-side and OTHER-side) by way of relation to the structure (functional union of person and world embracing both experienced

and non-experienced components) to which the experience belongs. When the structure of the person synthesizing a worldly whole is organizing itself (on the experiencing side, as organism set upon exploration and arriving at this location, and, on the world's side, as self-presenting ascending clearing of such a width), a path going up the hill is exactly what must arise in experience—in the very dynamics of the existing system-relations. So long as the present structure of synthesizing organizes itself in approximately the same way, a certain continuity will maintain itself in the experience of insight into objective relations. When the structure changes—that is, when either the person or the available world changes on its side, or when person and world interact in different ways—then the experience must change in turn. New experienced wholes arise in accordance with the changed structure. If, for example, I suddenly remember some task that has to be completed that morning, the structure presently and freely—internally of its own accord—reorganizes itself; the terrain disappears as terrain being explored, and encounters of a different sort begin to arise.

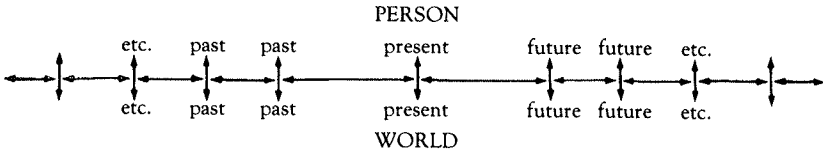
A relativity of experiencing and experienced sides that is newly accomplished in turn modifies the structure of person and world as it has been unfolding. Thus, having been structurally geared to attain the hill's summit, I attain it in fact and glimpse a beautiful scene, which triggers a structural orientation to look at the valley below from all available perspectives. A disappointing experience, by contrast, could well lead to the structure's radical reconstructing. Experience, the living core and *raison d'être* of structures of synthesizing, co-determines the structure that is in process. Experience itself, then, is not without its functional significance.

The description of an event of synthesizing an objective whole as structure of person and world helps make clear that experiences are not events which are mechanically pre-programmed by former circumstances. Present experiences certainly do arise from the past. But they arise as well as present experiences in which I am encountering the self-giving world with which I am functionally in present transaction. Experience is a current relativity arising from the past, not the predetermined reactivation of mechanically linked absolutes. Since there is a current structure, and since experience is a current relativity of myself to the world, it is possible to understand how I can be said to experience the world itself.

The Broader Extension of Structure

Person and world, beyond being considered as a structure of synthesizing lasting for a definite period of time, can also be taken as forming a structure of synthesizing that lasts a lifetime. Thus broadened, the notion of structure encompasses any number of particular structures. All these particular structures of synthesizing—such as that of an organism exploring the terrain,

or reading a book, or following a story, or getting to know a person or a city—freely of their own accord, interdepend with one another to form the single all-embracing totality. This overall structure of a life may be represented in this way:



The self-forming of the overall structure of a life is at once the self-forming of the person, and the self-forming of the world of that person. Person and world form themselves by forming one another. Each becomes itself by transacting with the other in the course of time. Person determines world as a whole. World determines person in its totality. The world is not an absolute and finished one, but exactly the human world that comes to formation in the course of some person's life as that life's total other side. Such a world is a world in process, a formed world open to reformation and transformation. It is the person's own world, a whole made up of all the wholes the person has helped bring to organization in a lifetime. The experiencer of this personal world is neither an immaterial soul nor a material brain. A psychology that concerns itself with process discovers, by contrast, that the person is a concrete historical entity, a unity of a temporal series of particular encounters with the world. All these personal encounters, by themselves, find their fit with one another as one continuous and continuing experiencing. They organize themselves as one life.

A descriptive psychology, like any psychology, necessarily concentrates on only one side of the overall person-world structure. Such a psychology is concerned with bringing to light the experiencing side of the structure engaged in events such as synthesizing objective wholes out of complexes of aspects. The overall structure always has to be kept in mind by psychology as it strives to understand human behavior. Keeping one eye on this structure, the psychologist may with some confidence focus on the person: on behaviors of experiencing in all their connections and ramifications, and above all in their relativity; on the various kinds of such behavior—for example, on willing, imagining, and feeling; on the regular, even universal constitution of human behaving. By accomplishing such tasks as these, the descriptive psychologist will help push back a frontier that psychology has largely overlooked. This frontier does not appear within the horizon of a psychological theorizing committed to the metaphysics of objectivism. The objectivistic assumption—the principal variation of the subject-object dichotomy in psychology—supposes that objects alone, of and by themselves, are truly real; that

subjective experience is at best a reflection of the realm where the real work is accomplished, namely, the realm of objects; and that, as a consequence, the science of behavior is conceivable only after all serious, all final accounts of human behavior in terms of experience have, as a matter of principle, been ruled out in advance. The frontier is sighted when, beyond the subject-object dichotomy, insight is gained into the objectively self-given transaction between person and world that we have called the overall structure of a life. The time is right for psychology to transcend the absolutes that have tended to dominate its history, and to become thoroughly imbued with the relativity that can be seen to constitute the very essence of human behavior.

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