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The Study of Expression Within a Descriptive Psychology

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The phenomenon of human bodily expression has yet to be adequately studied even though it is central to a number of practical and interpretive endeavors in social life, in the clinic, and in the arts. A descriptive psychology which is specifically attuned to the physiognomies and expressive movements of the human body needs to be launched. It will highlight the manner in which inner moods and feelings are externalized in the human space of appearances and made available to the reactions and interpretations of both oneself and others, including the way sociality frames these psychological ascriptions. This descriptive psychology — which has a special interest in the study of personality and characterology — can then begin to assume its proper place among several disciplines, serving as a mediator between, e.g., psychiatry and aesthetics, moral philosophy and pastoral counseling, or phenomenological psychology and social work.

The interpretation of human expression is a task shared by those laboring in the arts, in the humanities, and in the social sciences. Literary interpretation, for example, from the exegesis of Scriptures to systematic studies of myth and fiction — has long been well established as both art and science. Likewise, interpreting the traces of human life in history and archaeology, understanding the words and actions of an alien culture in anthropology, and extracting hidden meanings from dream symbolism in psychoanalysis have all been assigned their distinctive places in the study of human expression. But in comparison to these well-worn paths of investigating human life forms, an understanding of how psychological life is expressed through the markings and movement of the human body has lagged considerably.

Indeed, the disciplined study of the expressive forms of the human body and human physiognomies has not drawn a great deal of attention in the field of psychology, perhaps because such a task seems too impressionistic and imprecise. There is however, a special need in psychology to systematically

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study the varied forms of human bodily expression, a valuable endeavor both in itself and as part of a larger project to understand the dynamics of human *personality* within an *interpersonal* context. The task of interpreting visible human conducts as both bodily expression and interpersonal communication is central to what may be called "descriptive psychology."

Descriptive psychology as I define it is a mode of self-understanding that is sensitive to the *expressive forms of psychological life.* It is not the same as phenomenological psychology – though it shares phenomenology's interest in a personal life-world, in an interpersonal "space of appearances," and in the ambiguities of bodily life which diminish the clarity of consciousness. Descriptive psychology also shares with anthropology and sociology an appreciation for the effective use of participant observation, for the interpretation of meaning within a circumscribed human life-world, and for repeatedly probing the *communicative patterns* which envelop self and other. However, it distinguishes itself from these disciplines by finding something radically singular in its study of expressive forms. It is especially concerned with the manner in which psychological ascriptions are based upon an acquaintance with these forms and with even the most shadowy outlines of a singular inner life of vitality or effort.

Furthermore, what I mean by descriptive psychology has some things in common with psychodynamic theories of personality and their application in case studies. It is not, however, essentially dependent on these psychological constructs. Though it shares with clinical perspectives an interest in the dynamics of a person's interpersonal relations and in the distortions of someone's self-perceptions, these ambiguities are always understood in relation to the intrinsic opacity of bodily expression – the body always both disclosing and concealing the "inner" life which plays across its boundaries. Finally, while descriptive psychology is concerned with matters of individual character, temperament, and impulse, it stops well short of a moral psychology preoccupied with matters of the will and normative self-control.

There is, however, no circumscribed body of literature which clearly defines this psychological field, a field which is presupposed in clinical and social work, in a psychology of aesthetics, and in everyday life itself. Indeed, little direct attention has been paid to establishing a descriptive psychology of bodily expression as I have defined it. Still, its main features can be drawn from a number of disparate studies which all share an interest in the bodily display and behavior of animals or with human physiognomies and expression. These works range from descriptive evolutionary studies of biological life-forms to an aesthetics of artistic expression. There is a family resemblance among such studies; they are all preoccupied with the expressive forms of animal and human vitality which surface at the permeable boundaries between inner experience and shared sociality. My claim is that descriptive psychology

emerges when the communications that straddle these boundaries are first witnessed – no matter how dimly. These experiences then become subject to closer scrutiny, whether by the psychologist, by members of a number of other disciplines and professions, or by acquaintances and friends in everyday life.

Animal Expression

One may trace the beginnings of such descriptive psychology to the evolutionary biology of the nineteenth century and to its new scheme for understanding the place of human life within the animal kingdom. Although from our evolutionary perspective the human species is pictured as riding upon the crest of phylogenetic development, there is still room in this framework for the recognition that human beings share a special kinship with our fellow creatures in the animal kingdom. We seemingly can identify and sympathize with some of the expressions of animals which show us their moods, feelings, and intentions. They are playing or attacking; they are enraged, happy, satiated, irritated, calm.

It is no coincidence that the most notable early treatise in modern times on animal expression is Charles Darwin's own *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals.* In that work Darwin gives consistently detailed and sensitive accounts of animal and human expressions. The following is representative of Darwin's perspective on the expressive media of animal social communication. He writes that animal actions

> of all kinds, if regularly accompanying any state of mind, are at once recognized as expressive. These may consist of movements of any part of the body, as the wagging of a dog's tail, the shrugging of a man's shoulders, the erection of the hair, the exudation of perspiration, the state of the capillary circulation, laboured breathing, and the use of vocal or other sound-producing instruments. (Darwin, 1873/1965, p. 349)

Darwin presupposed that such expressions are rooted in practical activities whose primary aim is animal survival. He believed that animal expressions are genetically linked to a circuit of activity – especially the hunting of one's prey or the avoidance of one's enemies – and are an intrinsic part of a specifiable action. For example, the expression of fear can be seen in the harried look of an animal when it runs away from an enemy. Its cries, tremblings, and efforts to hide all seem to communicate the animal's terror. Or a particular look can be observed accompanying a destructive impulse: the tension of muscles, the protusion of claws, the showing of fangs, and the dilation of the eyes and nostrils are all part of the killing of prey.

These expressions were inherently fascinating to Darwin because they appeared to be exercised by the young animal entirely apart from the impact of idiosyncratic experience, "We are so familiar," Darwin writes,

> with the fact of young and old animals displaying their feelings in the same manner, that we hardly perceive how remarkable it is that a young puppy should wag its tail when pleased, depress its ears and uncover its canine teeth when pretending to be savage, just like an old dog; or that a kitten should arch its little back and erect its hair when frightened and angry, like an old cat. (Darwin, 1873/1965, p. 351)

According to Darwin, humans have in a similar fashion retained – at least in part – many of these same kinds of expressive forms. For example, what was originally part of the look of an animal attack may survive in the form of a human sneer. The latter may even include the showing of a canine tooth, but it does not, of course, lead to an actual physical bite. Or, writes Darwin, an infant "may scream either intentionally or instinctively to show that it wants food; but it has no wish or intention to draw its features into the peculiar form which so plainly indicates misery" (Darwin, 1873/1965, p. 349).

Darwin reasoned further that the human infant who has been least touched by cultural influence or who exercises his or her voluntary will to the least degree will show the effect of these vestigial expressions most clearly. However, the human individual will gradually gain a greater command of his or her volition, and new expressions will result from the deliberate checking of some intentions and movements. Indeed, certain muscles become easily subject to voluntary control. Others, however, do not. For example, the partially voluntary, partially involuntary scream of the infant becomes the adult's look of grief or anxiety: the muscles around the eyes still involuntarily contract, the inner ends of the eyebrows are drawn up, and the forehead is wrinkled. That there is a structural basis here for ascribing feelings and moods to oneself or others was seen by Darwin himself, and he noted the fact that human beings instantly recognize in their fellows – without necessarily any conscious process of analysis – many fine shades of expression (Darwin, 1873/1965, p. 359). A photograph of a grief-stricken man will be recognized by others without any specific reference to the oblique eyebrows or the furrowed forehead. How does this happen?

Once again, a clue may be found within a descriptive psychology which begins with animal expression. Indeed, the animal world, like the human world, is filled with perceptible sights which affect the recipient animal's behavior and consciousness. This world is a realm of appearances and of what Gregory Bateson has called "iconic" or part-for-whole communication (Bateson, 1972). Adolf Portmann has also commented on this visible world of animal social life and communicative exchange. It is a realm of appearances in which expressive gestalts are repeatedly generated for other members of the species to experience. According to Portmann, the typical structures or forms of life of each animal species are the means through which the biological needs and correlated inner moods of the individual animal are transformed into an instance of social communication. Because these sensory forms play across the various sense modalities of the representatives of different species in a

prescribed manner, one animal is enabled to find or escape from another. The individual creature is constantly attuned to the communicative signals shared in the natural space of appearances, attending to them most concretely through the sense of smell but – as the evolutionary ladder is climbed – relying ever-increasingly on greater variations of sight and sound. For example, in higher primates shades of difference are more easily communicated by movements of the tail or by vocal and facial expressions rather than by the secretion of various odor-producing substances. In fact there is, according to Portmann, hardly

> an elementary function of the animal body, even if caused by the very lowest and most basic needs, which may not appear in the service of social relationships in higher ways of life. Vertebrates' breathing apparatus is transformed to produce voice; hair and feathers may bustle to be smoothed down not only to conserve or reduce heat but also to communicate mood. (Portmann, 1961, p. 80)

What is especially important to note with regard to a descriptive psychology of expression is the way in which one animal under the influence of changed "inner" circumstances or moods comes to communicate with another by means of expressive movement or form. Hair plumage may stand up or be slick, or perhaps will be limited to a certain zone of the animal's body like the head or neck, the spine or the anus. At these places the hair or feathers may be longer, have a more complex texture, or be more colorful or strikingly marked. Displays of the body highlight these expressive features and establish the communicative signals of social interaction among members of the same species. Similarly, various expressions and forms may signal the presence of an intruder or represent to one animal the particular intentions and moods of a member of another species. "So," writes Portmann, "through hundreds and thousands of structures and movements, scents, and sounds, creature speaks to creature, to members of the species, to enemies, sometimes even to 'friends' from other species" (Portman, 1961, p. 95).

However, the limited nature of animal communication – in contrast to human exchange – must also be recognized. Take, for example, the showing of fangs which denotes an imminent skirmish; or the exposing of the neck to the victor of a fight which signals the kill. These instances of animal expression and communication – so typical of animal play, threat, and submission, and of pecking orders in general – seemingly include a reference to a future set of circumstances, that is, they seem to imply a self-consciousness of possible future events. Thus, according to Bateson,

> a very important stage in evolution is reached when the organism ceases to respond quite "automatically" to the mood signs of another and becomes able to recognize the sign as a signal: that is, to recognize that the other individual's and its own signals are only signals, which can be trusted, distrusted, derived, amplified, corrected, and so forth. (Bateson, 1972, p. 178)

Animals do indeed recognize that appearances may be deceiving, and they may thus remain wary in certain circumstances. But for most animals these events *are not* situated within a world of self-consciousness. Their meanings are "lived" as part of the animal's world of appearances, but they are not reflected upon. Even if deception remains built into the order of the animal world, it is not a product of the animal's conscious contrivance. Camouflage and mimicry are part and parcel of the natural animal world of appearances. False eye marks on an animal body or certain bodily postures presented by one creature to another may create a deceptive appearance of safety or danger, but the survival or destruction of these animal beings is simply played out to its conclusion. The artifice does not become part of the cumulative structure of the animal's self-conscious mind. That is, one animal may be deceived by the way another blends into the surroundings in a camouflage effect; or an animal may be fooled by the colorings of the body of a "mimic." But this animal will not *know* it has been deceived. Nor will it reflect upon or try to hide the implications of its midjudgments or mistaken anticipations. The animal will merely live out the immediate consequences of the deception and – depending on its survival of the encounter – go on.

The lives of animals are by nature enveloped by their relationships, and individual creatures live in their expression without being aware of the fact and without having to find a position to take with regard to it. Their bodies mirror the changes of inner excitations through typical expressive movements, even if – because they undertake no self-positioning with regard to their own expressions – there is an absence of true gesture and speech. Nevertheless, there is an externalization which occurs on the animal level, an "irradiation" of the animal's vitality outward from the center of its excitation to the periphery of its bodily surfaces. Indeed, it may truly be said that the animal's "inner" life moves outward and becomes visible. In this regard, Plessner has remarked that for an animal

> gripped by excitement, expression, as the outward movement and the shaping of the "internal," takes place immediately on the level of expressive movement. But that this can occur bears witness to a relation of inner and outer that is ambiguous, since inner and outer are reciprocally interrelated. In animals, too, the body as expressive surface is no passive envelope and external layer into which excitations boil over from within, but a felt boundary surface over against the environment. Although external, it belongs from the very first with the internal. Animals live this relation, and – to the extent that he lives on this level – so does man. But only he knows of it. (Plessner, 1961, p. 44)

The Emergence of Human Self-Knowledge

The discussion above has attempted to show how much such animal expressions as the changing of colors, the ruffling of feathers, and the erection of crests mirror an inner state which also transcends the individual by enter-

ing into a communicative social structure. A descriptive psychology of *human* expression will find much the same thing, but it will be complicated by the manner in which the human individual comes to establish a relationship to his or her own self-expressions. More specifically, human beings present more than communicative signals – as embodiments of their inner life – to one another in order to stir feelings or arouse action in another. They present themselves, their personalities, and their characters.

In one study of human physiognomy, John Brophy's *The Human Face Reconsidered*, the author suggests that the expressive medium of the human body which most closely parallels the structure of appearances found in the animal world is the face. The human face provides a setting for endless mobility and rapidly changing expressions (Brophy, 1962). There are, for example, the opening, closing, and half-opening of the eyes, the wrinkling of the forehead, the pinching or expansion of the nostrils, the pursing, broadening, and parting of the lips, the creasing of the cheeks, and the movement of the lower jaw, as well as variations in color and muscle tone. All these different movements offer an infinite combination of visible effects, looks which in their continuous changes are striking for their expressive qualities despite their evanescence.

Both the iconic dimension of animal expression and the latter's conscious immediacy can also be recognized in human looks which express such emotions as exuberance, joy, rage, grief, and horror. There need be no self-reflection or intentional artifice involved in the experience and expression of these feelings. The welling-up of one's internal state is directly reflected in the color of one's face and in the activity of small facial muscles, especially around the mouth and eyes. The feeling that is expressed in the furrowed brow, the flashing eye, and the outthrust chin are immediately externalized and just as immediately recognized. Furthermore, in contrast to conventionalized gestures (e.g., bowing, waving, or shaking hands) or words which may be replaced by others without a loss of meaning, these expressive movements are incommensurate, and their forms directly express their meaning.

As in animal life, the meaning of these typical human expressions can especially be recognized when a series of activities has been brought to a psychological climax; the expression then immediately summates or condenses the impulses, events, and circumstances of the moment. The expression involves a release of internal tension and serves to publicly disclose an inner life of effort and feeling. But in humans such expressive movements are less the means for the discharge of tension in a directed action than they are, to quote Plessner, a "symbolic abridgement" (Plessner, 1961, p. 64). As will be seen below, this symbolic substitution in human life will to some degree be subject to self-conscious control and elaboration.

The following question may then be posed: What happens when human expression is no longer subject to the immediacy of reaction and release which

it shares with animal life? More narrowly, what happens when the symbolism of one's expression becomes game for both self-deception and the deception of others? The camouflage and mimicry, the threat and submission, the illusion and reality of animal life becomes something essentially different in the time-bound, self-conscious lives of human beings. Indeed, the immediacy of human expression is irreversibly altered when human beings become self-consciously aware of the role their bodily expression plays in ongoing interpersonal transactions. Plessner emphasizes that an internal distance is created at the moment human beings both *live in* their bodies and *know of* the bodily life they are experiencing (Plessner, 1961, p. 44). At that moment expressivity is set free to become a personal power at the disposal of the individual. That is, the mood-signs and proffered actions at the animal level of existence become meaningful signals at the human level that can be self-consciously and intentionally employed in language and gesture.

Human awareness and personhood may be identified, in fact, by the presence of a distinctive form of social communication, language, and gesture. Rom Harré, for example, has discussed at length in his book *Personal Being* (1984) how the conception of the person and of personality that each individual eventually assumes is drawn from the particular set of perspectives on or propositions about personhood that are part of one's experience as a member of a certain group or culture. Personhood is, he says, essentially a "cultural artifact" (Harré, 1984, p. 20). People learn theories of personhood – and by theories Harré means implicit understandings picked up in the course of everyday conversation. They then order their own personal experiences and their perceptions by means of self-ascriptions and the identification of their own psychological states. One gains the capacity to think about oneself, to manage oneself, and to maintain a sense of oneself in time.

Despite his basic social constructivist perspective, there nevertheless remains a tension for Harré between the individual as a "person" in relation to others and the individual's own reflexive experience as a "self." Harré writes that while persons or social individuals

> are publically identifiable and given social locations as a center of intentionality and speeches, "selves" are psychological individuals who experience a unified organization of beliefs, perceptions, feelings, thought, and action and who can regard their own "internal" complexity – each can say it is "mine." (Harré, 1984, p. 40)

An important twofold structure of self-reflexivity is thus established which is comprised, on the one hand, of a self who is the psychological subject of feelings, events, desires, thoughts, and perceptions and, on the other, of a self who is the personal subject of the exhortations, complaints, condemnations, and congratulations – the praise or blame – of others. Harré defines self-consciousness, therefore, as the unified reflexive awareness of one's ex-

periences as these are ordered through the self-predications that express to oneself one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions.

To summarize, for Harré the psychological person learns the culturally prescribed forms of self-predication, and in so doing learns to be a self-conscious being who has a "mine," to avow experiences that are publicly locatable in one's personal "space," to manage oneself both privately and publicly, and to place oneself in a temporal order (Harré, 1984, p. 158). One assumes a distinctive self-identity, a "personality," for both oneself and for others in a personal space of appearances. Furthermore, one's own expressions, including one's own gesture and language, become a source of knowledge about oneself within a shared, interpersonal world.

A social constructivist position underscores the fact that the "lived" experience of one's own body movements assumes visible form in conjunction with the self-conscious predications that one makes about oneself and one's own psychological life. But, as mentioned above, these same expressions may also be deliberately utilized by the individual in presenting him or herself to others in a less than straightforward fashion. For example, in employing an artifical mask and a self-consciously stylized posture, the individual can actively play a "part" in this deception. This brings us back to Brophy's discussion of the human face.

It is the face which most easily can be used to deliberately deceive. However, it is important to also point out that although facial expressions are subject to deliberate artiface, the face is also the most ambiguously self-perceived part of one's own body. That is, even though one may attempt to mask one's "inner state" – or, as a constructivist would say, to mask one's self-ascribed feelings and thoughts – phenomenologically speaking, the actual expressions of one's face are normally imperceptible to oneself while being open to the scrutiny of those around one. The face is, then, a strange intersection point: it is (1) the principal locus of human expression set at the boundary of one's internal experience and the social world of appearances; (2) the primary vantage point from which both the "internal distance" of self-consciousness and self-knowledge, and the projected or "future distance" of one's plans and life-project, are experienced; and (3) the main switchpoint for the dialectic of concealment and openness in revealing one's thoughts and feelings and one's "personality." I suggest that descriptive psychology is particularly suited to explore human expression as it radiates from this nodal point of human experience.

Reading Human Physiognomies

Because descriptive psychology as I have defined it above is particularly concerned with expressions taking place at the *boundaries* between inside and outside, between self and other, and between self-concealment and self-disclosure,

it does not produce a phenomenology of expression along the lines discussed by Merleau-Ponty or Sartre. Nor does it become an interpretive sociology of typifications following the different descriptive approaches of Max Weber, Alfred Schutz, or Erving Goffman. Rather descriptive psychology is concerned with the act of reading human physiognomies and the manner of ascribing to the bearer of human expressions – to either oneself or to others – an underlying temperament, personality, or character. For this reason, early works in the history of modern psychology like that of Ernst Kretschmer's *Physique and Character* (1925) or Eugen Kahn's *Psychopathic Personalities* (1931) are representative of descriptive psychology while the works of these other authors are not.

In *Physique and Character*, Ernst Kretschmer discusses various types of human characters, temperaments, and biological constitutions. By *constitution* he means all the psychobiological peculiarities which are present at an individual's birth and are considered hereditary. Included among them are the particular conditions of an individual's sensory and motor systems which initially shape his or her experience. By *temperament* Kretschmer is referring to the typical qualities or feeling-tones which regularly accompany the chemical actions of the individual's body and the reactions of his or her nervous system. This includes one's sensitivity to stimulation, one's moods, and the tempo of one's bodily movements as well as one's habitual psychic processes – especially with regard to a person's inhibitions and psychological complexes. For example, an individual's typical reactions may be uncomfortable and stiff, tentative and delayed, or agile and smooth. Finally, an individual *character* subsumes for Kretschmer the totality of all possible affective and voluntary reactions expressed by that individual, especially with regard to developmental changes induced by one's education, milieu, and experience.

Kretschmer's main concern in his work was to delineate types, first in terms of physical build and bodily structure but more importantly with regard to variable temperaments and different characters. He recognized two principal types of people, the "cyclotheme" and the "schizotheme."[1] Kretschmer acknowledged that there are an indefinite number of individual temperaments which range between these two polar opposite types of character – as well as a flux of affections in the temperament of a single character. However, his attributions of character, temperament, and affect were primarily con-

[1]According to Kretschmer, cyclothemes swing between gay and sad moods. But whatever their mood and however quickly or slowly they may react, their movements are always rounded and adequate to the situation. These are people who tend to throw themselves into the world with open, sociable, kind-hearted, and "natural-immediate" natures, including both the energetically practical person and the sensual enjoyer of life. The reactions of the schizotheme, on the other hand, range from the extreme sensitivity of the aesthete to the aloof coldness of the cynic. These people tend to a life within themselves, constructing a narrowly defined world of dreams and principles which they oppose to the world of others. Their bearing often takes the form of aristocratic reserve, including a stiff or timid mobility, extreme restraint, and muted affect.

cerned with general types and only secondarily with the even more variable affective and expressive patterns found in the individual instance.

Although much the same can be said of Eugen Kahn's discussion of character types in his book *Psychopathic Personalities* (1931), Kahn's descriptive psychology begins to frame the dynamic expressions of character and temperament and goes considerably beyond a general taxonomy. Kahn proposes that the individual's personality is subject to a constant rearrangement of its different elements – its underlying "stuff" – into many different formations or structures. He speaks of the *temperament* as a kind of preparatory disposition of both the body and the affections (Kahn, 1931, p. 42). Like Kretschmer, he says that one's temperament rests upon a constitutional strata of organic body impulses and that a person's temperament brings together different elementary physical states and vital feelings of the body, including its conditions of health or weakness. One's temperament exudes the tonus of one's psychological life and sustains a fundamental life mood. But, according to Kahn, though moods shift and vary, each individual expresses his or her affects in a tempo, vigor, and form after his or her own fashion. This temperamental style will include either a reactive or active kind of excitability, a distinctive inner course of affective experience and resonance, and a singular style of emotional expression.

Furthermore, Kahn emphasizes that an individual's personality can be seen in all of a person's *efforts*, including the various ways one expresses oneself, how one moves, how one reacts, responds, and is receptive to situations, how one loves, hates, and grows jealous, in what one needs for his or her health, how one strives after values and goals, in what one creates, and in how one conducts one's life in general.

Finally, like Kretschmer, Kahn also speaks of the *character* of the individual as the totality of voluntarily directed strivings which orient the personality. Knowing a person's character thus allows someone to comprehend an individual's life and personality in terms of the generation of meanings, aims, and purposes. If the impulses of the body and the temperament are perceived as being in constant and immediate contact with the social and physical environment, the person's character is assigned the responsibility of self-regulation. One's character is susceptible to change from "within" – one may effect new decisions and goals and gain new understandings – and change from "without" – through education and contact within a wider culture. These regulative influences may likewise have an appreciable effect on the expression of one's temperament and impulses. In any event, while a single element of the three dimensions of personality – the impuslive/bodily, the temperamental/affective, or the regulative/goal-striving – may appear to dominate the individual in any given state or action, Kahn insists that no unidimensional element of the personality stands alone, unaffected by all the rest.

Expression as Self-Deceptive and as Self-Delineating Form

It is of interest here to look at the etymological roots of the words temperament, character, and personality. "Temperament" derives from the Latin and did indeed mean "combining in due proportion." "Character" is from the Greek where it meant an engraving tool, the process of engraving, or an engraved mark or imprint. Finally, "personality" comes from the Latin word *persona* which referred to a mask worn or the part played by an actor, and in late Latin was used in the general sense of "a human being."

These roots – "combining," "engraving," "assuming a mask," or "playing a part" – suggest that an active, self-constructing, self-moderating, and self-regulating personality can be recognized in its expressive forms. But expression has a socially communicative and attributional dimension as well. As discussed above, human beings, unlike animals, possess a self-reflective capacity and the possibility of self-consciously deceiving others. That is, human expressivity reflects a "knowing" – correlative to an internal and temporal distantiation – which is responsible for (1) a person's self-constructing nature and (2) the nature of one's personality which has already been constructed. Human expression thus occurs at the boundary between the externalization of internal affects and the self-conscious presentation of one's life to others. In turn, the attributions of others about one's personality and character influence one's internal knowing and the manner in which that personality is expressed.

An important part of personal development thus includes the active decisions which mark each person's character and which help to delineate the whole of one's personality. Not only are new social roles assumed but a distinctive self-consciousness, self-mastery, and self-identity becomes characteristic of each person. Indeed, throughout one's life, one's self-reflexivity, character, and social persona shape and give form to the invariants of constitution and temperament. Beginning in childhood, an increasingly active employment of expressive movements directs the energies of the person into more finely differentiated patterns of action and experience. The global and inarticulate bodily excitement of childhood will be gradually restrained and displaced into the facial looks, the hand gestures, and the slight body movements of the enervated adult. In her book *Personality Assessment Through Movement*, Marion North draws attention to precisely this contrast between the expressive life of adulthood and that of childhood. She writes that where

> an adult reveals his agitation by quicker breathing, clenching fists, beetled brow, tense shoulders, tense hips, tapping foot, a healthy young child will have his whole body vibrating in jumping, stamping, banging movements; he leaves no doubt about his mood. (North, 1975, p. 39)

Furthermore, though a child may learn to feign attitudes and feelings, adults become even more skilled at masking their affective reactions and conceal-

ing their irritations, excitements, or tensions. An astute observer, however, can still often see small, but telltale, signs. The latter often involve *involuntary* movements which are expressive of an "inner state" that remains mute and outside of the normal circuit of social communication.

There may also be a kind of "layering" of expression. For example, one person's unwitting anger may be glimpsed while he or she is overtly expressing friendliness. Another person may become self-consciously aware of previously unknown feelings of anger and begin personal efforts to establish control over that expression. A third individual may involuntarily assume the role of an angry person in an ongoing family drama even when no real anger is experienced. Indeed, he or she may learn to express this fictional anger in such a convincing manner that the self-ascription or attribution by others of anger naturally follows. In time this anger may be readily expressed and felt at the least suggestion.

There will be a corresponding difference in the moving patterns of a person in a state of uncontrolled rage, of a person unwittingly expressing anger, of an individual hiding feelings of anger from another, of someone intentionally conveying his anger to others, and of someone feigning to be angry. In this regard, David Best writes that perhaps

> it will clarify the point to cite an analogy of an actor playing first the part of an angry man, then the part of a man pretending, convincingly, to be angry. Performed by a competent actor, the differences in gesture, and facial and verbal expression may be slight indeed, yet they may give a new perspective which will affect one's view of the whole performance, and indeed of the play itself. Irony, too, can be used again to provide a good illustration of the same point, since the ironist trends a tight-rope – the better the irony, the narrower the rope. And the cost of failure is that the work will be taken as support for what it is in fact deriding. (Best, 1974, p. 196)

Of course, the stage actor or mime deliberately trains his or herself to express particular emotions. The portrayal of conflict and tension is, after all, the very stuff of drama – both within and between characters – and this tension must be deliberately enacted. In dance and in ritual action, too, we find that the natural expressive movements of the body are not only spontaneously effected but are also rigorously stylized by means of both formal dance elements and conventional gestures. However, are the self-presentations of everyday life really so different from the artifice of the stage? It was after all precisely Rom Harré's point above that each individual designs his or her own psychological life and personality in a similar manner. One learns to identify one's own feelings, thoughts, and attitudes in the course of social interaction and communicative exchange. Self-ascriptions, the attributions of others, and the use of the *lingua franca* of one's group are all part of the same web of human activities, and the boundary between social role and personal identity often becomes blurred.

Does all this suggest that personality and personhood are "nothing but" dramatic presentations of self in everyday life, that there is no distinctive individual nature, no singular personality, no "inner self" behind one's self-presentations and bodily expressions? The social constructivist position of Harré discussed above, the dramaturgical approach of Erving Goffman, and deconstructionist arguments which repudiate the language and interests of those who speak of a psychological self or subject all seem to agree that the answer to this question is yes.

For example, Goffman closes his book *Frame Analysis* with a discussion of what he considers to be our false everyday presuppositions about self-expression – false because they are belied by our everyday behavior itself (Goffman, 1974). Our common sense, according to Goffman, would lead us to believe that in expressive behavior we find either a sampling of the underlying qualities of the personality or, in certain cases, symptoms of an underlying disorder of the self. "Moreover," he writes, "it is characteristic of everyday interactions that the immediate source of emanations from the self will continually shift: now the eyes, now the hand, now the voice, now the legs, now the upper trunk" (Goffman, 1974, p. 570). Several corollaries follow. It is commonly believed, for example, that even when a person is engaged in deceit, there remains an inner reality which can always be glimpsed in the involuntary movements of the body. That is, it is assumed that there are always subtle cues available which may disclose the affects and motives of someone's allegedly "real" self or "true" inner life. Goffman writes:

> The manner in which the role is performed will allow for some "expression" of personal identity, of matters that can be attributed to something that is more embracing and enduring than the current role performance and even the role itself, something, in short, that is characteristic not of the role of the person – his personality, his perduring moral character, his animal nature, and so forth. (Goffman, 1974, p. 373)

Social roles are thus mistakenly looked at as no more than temporary and interchangeable garments which cover the underlying personality.

Goffman repudiates these beliefs and replaces them with an analysis which relies on descriptions of changing social "frames" of behavior and of the way these frames provide meaningful cues and contexts for people's conduct and experience. Goffman also accounts for the "layering" of expressive movement discussed above. Expressive movement is seen by Goffman on an ever-changing social stage; social convention dictates personal experience, and social allowances are made for a greater or lesser degree of personal expression. That is, the informality of a social occasion may deliberately leave people room to set aside "masks," or, conversely, in certain situations deviant roles are made available. For example, if lying and false pretensions are frowned upon in the course of everyday interaction where one abides by the rules

regarding "normal honesty," one may still play poker with unabashed skill, bluffing with impunity, engaging in "faked" emotional displays, all the while keeping on one's "game face." The mime, and, of course, the actor, often raise the presentation of fictional personalities and characters to an art form. Still, Goffman does not completely deny that there is an incomplete fit between person and social role – that the "self" of the performer shows through – but he goes on to warn us that the self is "not an entity half-concealed behind events, but a changeable formula for managing oneself during them" (Goffman, 1974, p. 573). Therefore, for Goffman the self is at minimum the formal pattern of socially prescribed self-regulation and at most the residue of the repeated experiencing of disjunctions between varied and changing occasions of social regulation.

The deconstructionist argument also takes aim at the idea that in each person there can be found a unified center of experience constituting the agency, character, and selfhood of the psychological subject. The most celebrated of the deconstructionists are, of course, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, and indeed they especially target our common sense beliefs in the unitary, rational subject. However, their purpose is not to engage in sociological description. Nor do they attempt to describe what appears to consciousness, as does the phenomenologist. Rather, they attempt to historically trace the language or the forms of discourse which have made the idea of a psychological agent – an agent who is rationally operating behind appearances – a staple of western thought. From this perspective the idea of a self, personality, or character, like the idea of the psychological subject, is no more than a historical product which is part of "the dominant form of making sense of the world at any particular period in a culture" (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, and Walkerdine, 1984, p. 104). More precisely, for the deconstructionists the idea of a psychological subject, self, or personality belongs to the same network of historical discourse that produced the subject of possessive individualism, the bearer of individual rights and obligations, the holder of citizenship, and the victim of practices of normalization and punishment.

The issues raised by these perspectives challenge certain key assumptions of a descriptive psychology of expression, e.g., the belief in the centrality of a subject or self managing his or her own psychological experience; the assumption that vital impulses and affects within the "boundaries" of the body spill out at least partially upon its surfaces to throw some light on this self; and the belief that one may legitimately refer to such global entities as "personality" or "character." These issues will be discussed further below. For now it may simply be said that the dramaturgy of Goffman, the social constructionism of Harré, and the arguments of the deconstructionists do not take fully into account the experienced world of the individual and this world's personalized texture: the constant transformation of tension and affect, the varying

degrees of volitional effort, the personal rhythms of bodily expression, the self-conscious production of novelty, one's ambiguous awareness of a perduring identity through time, and the vital thrust of one's self-projection into the future.

For the deconstructionist, the social constructivist, and the social dramaturgist, the self-regulative practices of social life are given priority as constitutive of the psychological. The expressions of the subject, whether in thought, word, deed, or bodily movement are located in historical and cultural discursive practices which are essentially reflective of a social rather than of a psychological reality. However, the *psychological* experiences just mentioned, which are also the subject of manifold phenomenological descriptions, are a part of the subject matter of a legitimate empirical psychology which is descriptive in nature. These experiences cannot be attributed only to the social world of discourse, convention, and regulation – though they will influence and be influenced by that world. They are highlighted, however, in a descriptive psychology of human physiognomies and expressive forms.

Recognition of Self-Expression: an Empirical Study

In the work of Ernst Kretschmer and Eugen Kahn summarized above, human physiognomies and expressive styles are categorized according to the various types of psychological temperaments, characters, and personalities they represent or signify. Psychological descriptions are pitched toward the general rather than the specific, toward structure rather than process. To be effective, however, a descriptive psychology of expression needs to go beyond theoretical exercises and schemes of classification. It needs to provide distinctive methods of study and to generate empirical evidence. One little-known empirical study of human expression suggests the possible shape of such a descriptive psychology.

In his book *The Expression of Personality*, Werner Wolff (1943) presented his subjects with various forms of their own and others' bodily expressions and asked them to characterize the personality of the bearer of each expression. These forms included reproductions of the face, hands, gait, voice, profiles, handwriting, and the manner of association and retelling narratives. The following, for example, are representative of the characterizations made by Wolff's subjects while viewing motion pictures of people walking across a room:

> The subject is a person who carries out her tasks as she is commanded. She is impersonal, dull, unwinged; she has almost a "stupid" gait. Unformed; neither suffering from her own heaviness nor from the incapability of personality relations. Slovenly, careless, insecure; somewhat cool, good comrade, without passions.
>
> A complete stranger to me, but a person full of humor. Clumsy. I should have thought it was a 16-year-old ship's boy who intentionally shows himself to be clumsy and is then disappointed in finding that others do not laugh at this joke. – Now I see that this is I.

> A person who knows what she wants; energetic decided. This personality expression does not seem to be the result of courage, it rather derives from resignation. Awkward, but she tries to succeed.
>
> This might be I. It is I. I recognize myself by the typical gait. The expression of the gait has doubtless only one meaning: short and pithy. I suddenly feel dissatisfied with myself on account of the compromises I make. (Wolff, 1943, p. 43)

Wolff utilized a variety of media techniques, including film, photographs, sound tape recordings, outlined profiles, and mirror reversals of handwriting. His final data included not only the characterizations he gathered from his subjects, but also additional autobiographical information, interviews with friends of his subjects, and Wolff's own judgments about the subjects' attitudes and personalities.

One central question that he posed was whether persons could recognize themselves in their own expressive forms upon seeing them from an "external" perspective as others do, and if not, then what would be the judgment about or characterization of the *unknown* individuals bearing the expressions they were seeing? Facing one's own forms of expressions provided an unusual occasion in which the individual was unknowingly mirrored back to him or herself – though perhaps it was only at the moment of conscious self-recognition that the ambiguity of living the expressions from within while witnessing them from without was experienced. Still, Wolff found that whether self-conscious recognition took place or not, the self-estimation or characterization of one's own forms often deviated widely from the opinion of others about these same expressions.

When Wolff began his study, he had thought that because a person regularly has the chance to see one's own face, hands, profile, and handwriting and to hear one's own voice, one would, when confronted with these forms, recognize them as one's own.[2] But Wolff learned that such a recognition was the exception. This suggested to him that perhaps one actually has a lack of familiarity with one's own forms. Perhaps we are not used to objectively observing our own voice or handwriting, or are too caught up in gesturing or with activities using our hands, or only infrequently glimpse our profiles, so that identifying them in isolated appearances as our own is not to be expected.

But then perhaps there is more to it than that. John Brophy has commented, for example, on the unique nature of experiencing one's own expressions in a mirror. Usually we look at ourselves in the mirror to admire or deplore the aesthetic effect, to prepare ourselves for the sight of others, or to see if we look as bad or as good as we feel. But, as Brophy writes,

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[2]Wolff (1943) did recognize that the sound of one's voice was somewhat obscured by bone resonance, and he noted that the handwriting samples were presented to each subject in a mirror image.

> to stare at the image of one's face, and realize the experience imaginatively, is to suspend consciousness like a tightrope between inward and outward reality, and to walk to and fro, precariously balanced, over an abyss. The physical and the psychical instruments of observation are turned simultaneously upon themselves. In practice, self-scrutiny cannot be kept up for long: the mind revolts against the strain, irrelevant thoughts enter, the eyes turn away or cease to see clearly the pictured face before them. (Brophy, 1962, p. 182)

In this regard Wolff speaks of a psychological reaction that inhibits self-recognition. He writes that perhaps there is

> a basic defense against self-confrontation. . . . Horror of the shadow, of the mirror image, is a well-known reaction of the unconscious: it expresses the fear of a force which, not governed by the personality, threatens it. It may be the fear of an alter ego, of a split personality, which inhibits the identification and arouses emotion. (Wolff, 1943, p. 150)

That is, though one ordinarily feels oneself to be unity of experience, action, and expression – even if at times suspecting the disunity of others – a confrontation with one's own forms of expression may shake this belief violently. Indeed, Wolff believed that the presentation of the subjects' own forms of expression to themselves evoked – consciously or not – a dynamic psychological reaction. Thus, even the witnessing of self-expressions which were unrecognized as one's own was often accompanied by a marked increase in descriptive detail and ascribed emotion. Wolff felt that his subjects had been placed in a dissociated condition. That is, rather than living through their experience and expressions, they watched their own expressive forms and attended to their own psychological experience at a tension-filled distance. At times struggling through their emotions, Wolff's subjects often learned to attribute mixed temperaments and complex character traits to the bearer of the forms they suddenly, gradually, or unsuccessfully came to recognize as their own.

Wolff also found some interesting patterns in his data. For example, one common response to feelings and thoughts arising from the onset of such a dissociated condition was either an exaggerated favorable or an extremely unfavorable self-judgment. There were in fact two basic types of deviations in the way that the characterizations made by Wolff's subjects of their *own* forms varied from those of others. Some persons tended to idealize themselves; others tended to despise themselves.

Wolff also noted that the one form of expression that was recognized by *all* of the subjects was their own gait – even though the subjects were baggily clothed to obscure their identity and even though not one had probably ever seen themselves before in such a way. When Wolff presented his subjects with a brief motion picture of someone moving across a room, he had expected that these judges would differ completely from one another in

describing the individual's gait which they were observing, or that they would just offer general and external descriptions like "walks slowly" or "goes quickly." However, he found not only a uniformity in judgment but also highly nuanced characterizations which usually referred to the affective attitude of the observed individual.[3] In this sense Wolff believed that the body in movement was just as expressive as the face. A sauntering gait was interpreted as nonchalance, a laissez-faire attitude; optimism was seen in the brisk lifting of the feet, pessimism in a shuffling gait. But these judgments also reflected the complexity of the witnessed personality. For example, one individual was described as "inert, inwardly insecure, tries to appear secure to others" and as "hasty, inwardly, unimaginative, not interested in his body, not vain."

Indeed, different people noted different aspects of the personality in making their characterizations about any particular individual's expressions. Wolff attempted to account for this variety by appealing to the divisions, conflicts, and inconsistencies of any personality. He believed that it was precisely these rifts in the personality which were especially noted by the bearers of the expressions themselves, though often unwittingly and, as mentioned above, with a great deal of resistance and emotional strain.

Individuals, Wolff concluded, express both surface characteristics and the depth of their personalities. That is, individuals manifest aspects of both who they think they are at the present time and of who they want or plan to be, all the while feeling a tension between how they believe they now look to others and how they would like to be perceived. According to Wolff, there always remains a tension between surface and depth or between present realities and future possibilities, and consequently an observer may describe one or another aspect of this internal relation of the personality. It is our contention, of course, that this tension is also a derivative of one's dual nature. One both *lives in* and *knows about* one's expressive life, the latter serving both as a boundary between inner and outer and as a marker for past, present, and future experience. Finally, Wolff also notes that the internal tension expressed by the personality "may consist of an intentional disguising of more basic characteristics, in which case the surface is called a 'mask' " (Wolff, 1943, p. 69).

This kind of language about "surface" and "depth" or about what is more psychologically "basic" can easily become the target of the criticisms made by the social constructionist and the deconstructionist camps. But using such language here is, I believe, less a case of unwitting reification than an attempt to outline a psychological field delineated by the experience and expression of different individuals. It is especially a matter of describing the ambiguities inherent in each person's relation to a vital body, a felt inner life, and a com-

[3]For example, see the descriptions by Wolff's subjects I presented above.

municative life with others. Wolff himself is clearly trying to assemble aspects of this intrinsically ambiguous psychological field into a collection of empirical "parts." This is the way that one should understand Wolff's discussion about different "spheres of personality" and his description of the manner in which the sphere of the will can be seen most easily in the person's profile, the sphere of the temperament in the expression of the hands, the sphere of the intellect in the style of retelling narratives, and the sphere of one's general attitude toward life in the voice. It is also the way to understand Wolff's comments about the "mark of personality":

> How is the mark of personality produced? We see, for instance, a face with a drawn-down mouth and dull eyes. Suppose we match to this face a handwriting with thin letters and oblique lines. We may explain this matching by saying that there the common denominator is a lack of tension. If the facial tension is low, the muscle tension is low, the hand is too weak to keep an even direction in writing. (Wolff, 1943, p. 32)

Wolff's study is especially unusual in its attempt to combine the self-observations and psychological attributions of his subjects with personality theory and physiognomic classification, all within an empirical investigation of bodily expression. Neither psychiatric case study nor aesthetic judgment, Wolff's work combined elements of both these perspectives and pointed the way toward a descriptive psychology of expression.

Personality, Affective Qualities, and "Shadow Movements"

Wolff designed one experiment that is particularly illustrative of a descriptive psychology of expression. He provided a task in which a subject's movements could be observed in "transition." Each subject was instructed to approach a chair upon which several rings had been placed, to pick up a single ring, and to throw it over a post at a certain distance. The following is a summary of the way Wolff categorized five phases of movement required by the task; included in this summary are descriptions generated in the course of observing one subject:

1. How the person attacks the task; this first phase indicates the degree of the subject's activity, temperament, and interest. *The subject's arms and legs move in a rounded rhythm, but her movement is not free. She is stooping and does not come out of herself; everything in her seems to be compressed.*

2. The way of approaching the goal; this second phase shows the degree of tension caused by concentration on the task. *The subject's body moves slowly and unsurely. Her gait is measured, heavy, somewhat hampered. She carries the ring conscientiously in front of her.*

3. How the movement is carried out; this third phase demonstrates the subject's energy of action, the manner of participation, and the way the subject masters a task. *The subject's movement draws the body with it. She throws the ring without much force, and her body imitates its fall.*

4. The third phase shows her attitude after the action is completed. *The subject's body collapses like an empty sack when the ring falls. She sinks completely into herself, her whole body showing the same droop.*

5. The subject's return after the action, giving an impression of how strong a hold the fulfilled action has upon her prior to a new phase. *Movements are undisturbed and uniform, though rather heavy. The subject is completely sunk into herself and leaves the field in a daze.*

Wolff adds that the opinion of friends about this person was that she was a serious, reserved woman, not very active, eager to help, intelligent, conscientious, and neurotic.

The descriptions provided by Wolff and his subjects consistently noted the formal qualities of human expression and were especially attuned to the particular affective qualities of expressive movements. People responded to the flux and stillness, to the held position and the gesture which precedes or follows it, to the interplay of dynamic stress and varying time intervals, and to the sharpness or smoothness, the roundedness or angularity, the delicacy or forcefulness of expressive movements. But it was because these formal qualities were reflective of an intra-individual tension and of the individual's affective style that their bearers were subject to particular psychological attributions. That is, these formal qualities were reflective of an internal psychological distance, a person's inner sense of time, and a distinctive self-awareness, all still embedded in the ambiguities of an expressive life.

One may also put the matter in the following way. Sundry qualities of character and temperament are experienced by an individual as well as by others when the individual's internal tension and experience of time take shape as expressive form in a commonly shared, interpersonal space of appearances. This is not to say that one's own or others' attributions are necessarily accurate. On the contrary, one can be a better or worse judge of one's own character, temperament, and affects – as can others. There is, however, the possibility of delineating an ever-more precise outline of someone's personality and of resolving some of the ambiguities of his or her life. This may occur when there is additional information received about the personality, from memories, or from the testimony of others.

One may thus draw at least two conclusions from Wolff's study: (1) that although an individual has to a large extent the benefit of privileged access to inner experience, including felt tensions and a distinct temporal awareness of one's life, one still has, like others, incomplete *knowledge* about the expressions that one *lives*; and (2) that the interpersonal or social space of appearances in which human expressions are witnessed can have an important role in the refinement of someone's self-mastery of these expressions and in the expansion of self-knowledge.

To further explore these issues, I will consider briefly a number of relevant

ideas about expressive movement found in H.B. Redfern's *Concepts in Modern Educational Dance* (1973) and in Marion North's *Personality Assessment Through Movement* (1975). Both of these authors were very much influenced by the work of Rudolf von Laban, a twentieth-century dance master and theoretician who was one of the foremost creators of modern dance. If Werner Wolff's subjects drew only upon the resources of their everyday experience in making their psychological assessments about someone's expressive forms, Laban possessed a specially trained eye for the self-controlled movements of the body. The following discussion is thus suggestive of the direction that a descriptive psychology of human self-expression could possibly take.

Laban believed that all activity involves a mental effort and is bound up with (1) intentions; (2) strivings to overcome difficulties or obstacles; and (3) one's moment-to-moment decisions. Even the smallest movements, which often go unnoted and which have no value apart from the expressive movement itself – especially tiny movements of the muscles of the face and hands – involve the same kind of active mental effort.[4] These small movements, which consist of rhythmic and spatial patterns fundamentally similar to expressions of a larger and more deliberate kind, are called "shadow movements" by Laban. Thus, even where someone's movements may seem suspended, for example, in the case of someone in deep thought, the individual's bodily attitudes will include intermittent shadow movements or body adjustments which let others know about the presence of an active inner life of intentions and effort.

The difference between humans and animals, Laban felt, is that the qualities which can be attributed to human efforts are more variable and that the human being *is the only form of life which is aware of and responsible for its efforts*. The human individual has the capacity, therefore, to understand the nature of his or her movement qualities and to recognize the rhythms and structures of their sequences. For Laban, the discipline required in dance allows the individual to order and arrange those qualities of movement which reflect the individual's inner life and to become conscious of those states of mind of which one is otherwise not aware. In this way the dancer can become oriented to his or her inner rhythms and to a continuous, maze-like flow of intentions, mental efforts, and actions. Sometimes the person will see that the muscular tensions and the rhythms of his or her body follow the experience of inner activity; at other times the stirring of his or her inner states and affects follow the body's movements. Finally, there are times when both mental effort and bodily expression seem to be simultaneously experienced.

Furthermore, the individual may use a wide range of movement patterns to balance constitutional dispositions or emergent attitudes. North writes:

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[4]For example, the pursing or broadening of the lips, the opening, closing, or half-opening of the eyes, or the cupping or extension of the fingers.

> Movement occurs in phrases, that is, in sequence of elements, inner attitudes, and drives. The changing order of appearances of these movements and happenings reveals a person's characteristic routes of mental and emotional activities, or the individual's "coping style.". . . The variety of routes give an indication of the richness of personal response and action, the more limited the range – the more routine and predictable, the greater the range – the richer is the potential field of response. (North, 1975, p. 39)

The movements of the mature adult are thus composed of sundry kinds and combinations of phrases, including phrases of different lengths and rhythms. Personal preferences become apparent the longer the person is observed, while verbal self-disclosures – talking about oneself – help to color this expressive picture. However, even prior to the acquisition of language, infants reveal their individuality in the way they respond to situations. To a parent, the pitch and rhythm of a baby's cries reveal a developing individual whose distinctive personality is easily recognized. Gross motor activity and undifferentiated movement still predominate, but the child's rhythms and quality of movement can be seen as distinctly its own. One child is more energetic and restless, another more withdrawing and tentative.

Gradually the intensities and variations of these movements become moderated and subject to a greater degree of self-conscious control. But no matter how artificial or situationally-bound one's expressions become, the patterns traced out by the spatial movement of one's body or parts of one's body, what may be called one's "space rhythms," remain unique to the individual – a distinctive "mark of the personality," as Wolff would say. Indeed, the primary effort of the developing person remains directed toward the mastery of an internal life dominated by involuntary impulses and the natural biological rhythms of the body, a mastery only made possible through the effective self-direction of expressive movement – especially of those transitional movements, expressive contrasts, and shades of expression which are required by the ever-changing situations of life.

When assessing another's personality, claims North, one should be especially alerted to the mental and emotional disturbances which are partly revealed in a frequent and concentrated use of one or another phrase, or in a violent swinging from one phrase to another. Transitional efforts and movements are a particular source of difficulty for both the growing child and the troubled adult, both of whom are struggling to master self-consciousness, to express themselves adequately, and to act effectively. Moreover, since a human life is naturally composed of different situations and qualities, transitions will be marked by varying intensities and correspondingly appropriate or inappropriate phrasings. Strong movements will become even firmer, or a lightly bound flow of movement will become a sudden flow, or free flexibility will become rigidly prescribed routine.

According to North, most normal activities have the simplified pattern of preparation, action, and recovery. Since the elements used in a good prepara-

tion or recovery are often the opposite of or in sharp contrast to those of the major action, the self-mastery of one's expressive patterns will be especially reflected in the smooth rhythmic pattern or flow that is achieved in a specific situation. However, human life is composed of ever-changing situations, and one's self-mastery and self-direction can be gauged by the continuity and rhythm established across different situations as well.

This is why bodily movements and postures are among the most obvious ways in which psychiatric disorders are manifested. In those experiencing difficulties in their psychological and interpersonal lives, one may see a habitual exaggeration of certain "effort elements." For example, there may be excessive tension to the point of cramp or a limpness and heaviness in their actions. Or someone may become unable to use and coordinate opposite qualities (e.g., movements of increasing and decreasing strength) and exhibit a general lack of fluency in relating one combination of phrases to the next. Movement is often uncoordinated and marked by abrupt transitions, and the flow of movement may become so restricted that the individual may even become immobile. Transitions from one movement to the next appear without appropriate recovery or preparation factors and may appear jerky or disconnected. Or perhaps the preparation or recovery factors may overlap into the active phrase itself, clouding the clarity and effectiveness of the movement and resulting in a general vagueness, inhibition, or agitation in one's expressive life. In such instances, there has been a loss of the capacity to balance or effect a dynamic interchange among different efforts across the boundaries of different situations, i.e., a loss of a well-proportioned or rhythmically timed alternation in one's expressions and a severely felt disjunction in the trajectory of one's life.

The Interpretation of Expression

In a synchronic sense, the expression of a work of art can be compared to the expression of an individual's personality – to the complexities, the surface and depth, the concealed and disclosed aspects, and the ebb and flow of the formulated whole of his or her life. From a diachronic perspective, the affects which are expressed in this whole may be thought of as forming a spectrum which ranges from general, undifferentiated emotions such as anger and sadness at one extreme to highly complex, dynamic, and particularized feelings at the other. There is a real difference between the vibrating, jumping, stamping, banging movements of the emotional child, the increasingly complicated delineations of adult expression, and the finely articulated and formulated expressions of a work of art. It is therefore not enough, as David Best has noted, to characterize the action of a drama, mime, or dance in such general interpretations as "there is joy," "he is angry," or "she feels confused"

(Best, 1974, p. 131).[5] With regard to more involved forms of expression, even slight differences in the movement pattern may allow the viewer to distinguish among the feelings being conveyed on different, yet overlapping, communicative levels. A whole complex of previous actions may be brought under a new description, giving to each singular action a new and changed significance. It is no coincidence that – like Wolff's subjects – both psychiatrist and art critic engage in "interpretation." Not only are the obvious feelings and intentions of the life, work, or performance discussed. In each case an effort is also made to disclose complex patterns of action, including (1) intentions and emotions which had gone previously unnoted by the performer him or herself and (2) the meanings of experiences which had previously been misinterpreted.

Words themselves, as the most common form of expressive exchange, become easily suspect at such moments, and various kinds of shadow movements may be witnessed which either belie the explicitly presented meaning or which lend themselves to further elaboration. Indeed, the expressive presentations of human beings never lose the intra-individual tension between surface and depth on the one hand and between past and present on the other. Consequently, human expressions, in contrast to the openly manifest forms of animal expression, always have an occulting edge which profiles particular elements and orientations of the personality. Thus, while animal expression is vibrantly and in its own way gloriously transparant, a human being engages both in the mundane inability to "say what one means" and in poignant endeavors to turn in upon oneself and to reveal the entirety of one's depths.

It is thus the special task of what I have called descriptive psychology to examine this range of human efforts, their corresponding expressive forms, and the interpersonal or social space of appearances in which they take place. In so doing descriptive psychology puts in the foreground the distinctive nature of human life as sometimes self-occulting and sometimes self-gathering – but as always dynamically self-constructing and socially interpreted. That is, the space and time that is opened up by one's intra-individual tension and one's life projects can be witnessed in any given gesture and at any given moment only from the partial perspective *of either oneself or others*. The meaning and character of an individual's life thus remains subject to the attributions and interpretations that are continuously generated in the human space of appearances. In exploring the general outlines of this phenomenological and ex-

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[5]In the art form of mime and drama something is minimized which is accentuated in dance: the rhythmic elements of movement, especially the increasing and decreasing intensity within a phrase, the development which reaches a climax, and the pauses or silences which precede or follow the re-emergence of movement, or flow. All of these are somewhat lost in drama and mime where the representational character often leads the viewer away from the formal qualities. In the dance, the structure of the rhythmic and spatial pattern of movement is a veritable self-contained creation of meaning.

pressive space, descriptive psychology straddles the boundaries between the remedial efforts of the social worker, the therapeutic efforts of the clinician, the elucidations of the phenomenologist, and the guidance of the pastoral counselor. The task of the descriptive psychologist thus falls somewhere in between the empirical charting of conditions, responses, and consequences undertaken by the behaviorist or experimentalist and the speculative cogitations of the ontologist and the theologian. It is a task which assuredly deserves more attention than it has garnered up to now, and one which I hope my own fledgling effort has made feasible, if not imperative.

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