PART 1

**LEARNING, EXPERIENCE, AND THE
UNCONSCIOUS: THE PSYCHOANALYTIC
INSPIRATION**

KIRSTEN WEBER

1. AMBIVALENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Un-Conscious Dimensions of Working Women's Social Learning

PRE-CONDITIONS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE COMMUNICATION AND SUBJECTIVE, GENDERED APPROPRIATION OF EVERY-DAY LIFE'S AMBIGUITIES¹

You may approach the unconscious dimensions of learning processes by observing the communication of everyday life. Among the less acknowledged truisms in the academic learning discourse is an assumed pragmatic precondition: that people individually perceive what they see and hear, and that they – belonging to a common culture – see or hear much the same thing. This pragmatic precondition of communication in every-day life is particularly important in formal learning situations, in teaching and education. Here inter-subjectivity and communication are (considered) the logical foundations of the effective communication of the subject matter (other people hear what you say), of the learning of the individual (they understand what is communicated), and not least that learning can be managed and controlled. Neither are, however, self-evident – nor is the accordance between the content of perception and the emotion that follows. You do not necessarily notice if your reaction is aggressive or negative. You just move on. You seek some meaning or structure, in the world as such as well as in yourself. Dealing with social reality in every-day life you adapt – and you adapt what you see and hear. Only when an individual psychological disposition leads to significant deviance in perception is it noticed, only then is it defined as such: deviant.

Thomas Leithäuser (1976) speaks of the “general vagueness of the communication of every-day life”. The vagueness concerns substance and social reference, and it is only recognized as such when an external view searches for a general cultural meaning – which in turn cannot be found. Communication takes place in a field defined around the “lowest common denominator” of observation, between the substance that the communication is explicitly about and the subjectivity and experience of the people involved. The same vagueness is also referred to as practical intuition or “tacit knowing” (Knapp, 1989; Polanyi, 1967). In many ways a pragmatic, a practical advantage (like not perceiving misspellings in effective reading) but downright destructive when it leads to a simplistic misperception of a complex reality.

The difficulty of perceiving otherness, the different or novel, and its specific qualities and ambience, arise when people within a shared – collective – situation react in individually different manners, while – for whatever reason – the discrepancy is not articulated. Instead, some emotional complementary compensation takes over, so that recognition or silencing and denial in various and changing combinations sustain one another.

Subjectively most of us know about this, e.g. from the experience of leaving a social context with a feeling of vague discomfort that you rid yourself of in order to “get on with it”, but it also figures as a collective mechanism defining collective issues of considerable importance. One example, mentioned by Regina Becker-Schmidt, is the political experience of Nazi Germany, hardly ever spoken of. Why should we? Indeed!

The vagueness in communication is on the one hand the glue which keeps everyday life together by hiding difference and enabling the process of “getting on”. On the other hand it is the medium in which sometimes the recognition of difference and ideas of a new practice may arise. On the one hand perceptions of details in everyday life are kept in place in a world view, on the other hand individual perceptions of difference can mature until they become conscious experience and even articulated.

Gender being an organizing component in a world view means that this space of implicit meaning is also the social space in which the development, establishing, and change of social gender roles emerge.

When a sufficient number of people begin attaching new perceptions and new phenomena to the meaning of gender, e.g. when the “special thing about women” no longer referring to the feminine mystique, but paradoxically to its counterpart: the double work of family and wage labour (not much mystique there!)

Such new cultural meanings are articulated only with some anxiety, for not only must you take possession of a whole new world, you must also rid yourself of a number of well socialized routines, including well-defined parts of established every-day life. But when silence is broken and the complementary balance between such emotional dispositions likewise, energy so far locked up may well emerge.

Gudrun-Axeli Knapp (1989) points out the unconscious dynamic of communication in a slightly different manner, by its effects on the social level. She directly addresses the somewhat mysterious and indefinable question: why women’s psychological resources can – for apparently any length of time – remain invested in sustaining a subjectively unbearable situation, and then at times to suddenly re-appear as potential for initiatives of change. Becker-Schmidt draws a parallel to victims of domestic violence: women who may suddenly, without warning, take initiatives of dramatic change – the “straw that broke the camel’s back-wise”. Knapp however, focuses on the gendered nature of the working *capacity*. It is, she argues, perceived and assessed as a neutrum, a non-gendered matter. While in reality it arises from, and is solidly integrated into the triad of historical femininity: it is *different* (from the cultural mainstream male work capacity), it is *particular* (in the sense that it possesses its very own cultural qualities) and it has culturally

and economically *lower value* (ibid., p. 300). The triangle of difference, specificity and lower value becomes obvious when women's manifold perceptions and broad experience meet with every-day cultural communication which comprise few of those – and addresses even fewer. Presumably most women recognize the experience of *having dealt* successfully with a problem, – the success however, appearing to be culturally invisible, simply because nobody else recognized the problem as such. Or the other way around: being the only one *to face* a problem, which nobody else wanted or dared to address. An example might be that of the woman arguing the subjective necessity of part-time work (a point of view never popular in the male dominated labour movement) while at the same time being under pressure to stay at the trade union meeting where she is formally “necessary”, despite her need to pick up her children from day care – i.e. “just because” of her children. Behind the apparent contradiction of being important and necessary and lack of self-confidence respectively lurks the defining T.U.-gender stereotype: the full time, skilled, white, male worker. Women's experience remains inarticulate in the vagueness of every-day life communication (Leithäuser) or as tacit knowing (Knapp and Polanyi).

The learning potential does however, arise from this very contradiction: women are practically systematically down-graded, assessed as the lesser – as well as being idealized, even idolized. This socially well-established ambivalence is perceived and embodied by the individual woman, and it is well integrated in the general social idea of what it is to be a woman. Knapp sees this as a surplus production of meaning, a benefit, which she discusses in Polanyi's terms of tacit knowing (implizites Wissen). She thus philosophically generalizes a (power-) critical point often voiced in the earlier stages of gender research (compare Baker Miller, 1976): that dominance produces an implicit and sometimes not conscious dependency for the dominant party, so that “no king is a master to his servant”. Consistently, Knapp points to the fact that women's tacit knowing is more accessible than men's, produced as it is by the current clashes between experience and the numerous social clichés that in every-day language define the idea of a woman. Women, so to speak, approach their real experience when they express their tacit knowing. Whereas men must let go of their experience for they have to recognize that their spontaneous activities are only possible because they hold special privilege. Knapp comments:

Women know (implicitly) that they are different –and better (!) – that they act differently and wiser, and they are well aware that they know more – more than either the ideological idea of female essence, the socially allotted space of action or the labour market imagination of their abilities. That knowledge itself may well form the core of the idea of autonomy in as much as it contains the structure of the elimination of the non-identity. (Knapp, 1989, pp. 301–302, author's translation)

Tacit knowing is equivocal because in communication it facilitates a more general definition of the ambivalence, and thereby becomes a foundation of action, a potential means of self-regulation. It does not simply *reflect* the objective historical situation,

in a double sense it *creates* it. Partly as a particular and individual subjective change, partly in collective forms, where symbols become collective and where subjectivity co-constitutes culture and society.

If you define tacit knowledge more precisely in terms of social psychology you will see that it is the very capacity to attach emotionally to objects (an object in the psychological sense comprising tools, humans or relations ... you name it) that enables the particular capacity of human communication. Making objects of elements in the outer world is the raw material of the special human capacity, formation of and communication by symbols. This capacity is in our language, in creativity as well as being made collective by habits, reproduced historically by culture (cf. Nielsen, 1993, pp. 103 ff). Symbols as such do not produce consensus. They function well in communication even if ridden by prejudice or articulated in clichés. Which is not least a relevant point in the context of women's learning: only shared cultural symbols – here defined as clichés – are at hand for women to organize self-images and experience. In a contradictory way women's learning processes – acquiring symbolic knowledge – also limits their experience of reality significantly.

So tacit knowing is a dimension of oppression. Partly because of its substance, "what it knows" – it defines reality for you whether you ask for it or not. Partly because being tacit is one way of not being social, of denying oneself. At the same time, however, cognitively it sees through oppression, and psychologically/emotionally it separates the *recognition of* oppression from oppression *itself*. Thus individuals may rid themselves of oppression, know themselves as different from it, not allowing themselves to be defined by it. At times tacit knowledge just confirms a status quo, but it may as well become a potential for the hesitation, the search and the eventual break-up. Knapp by the way, ventures to define the historical role of gender research as a doubling of this relation.

The concept of *consciousness of everyday* life was introduced by Thomas Leithäuser (1976). It comprises a mutual collective recognition of individual defence – "that's the way we do it around here". Its methodology is based upon a social psychology understanding of group-processes. Where Becker-Schmidt's concept of learning refers to the learning in everyday life interaction Leithäuser develops a historical or epochal concept of learning and blocking of experience. Since the 1970'ies it has formed the basis of an extensive qualitative research strategy that exposes and thematises the individual subjective blockages in the context they arise from (Leithäuser, Salje, Volmerg, Volmerg, & Wutka, 1977; Volmerg, Volmerg, & Leithäuser, 1983). Methodologically the focus is on development of the thematised group discussion, and later on establishing a study groups based learning activity in the every-day life of the enterprise, approaching good oldfashioned political enlightenment and general adult education (Senghaas-Knobloch & Volmerg, 1990; Volmerg, Senghaas-Knobloch, & Leithäuser, 1986). A similar theoretical framework is characteristic of the research on unemployment and trade-union consciousness by Christine Morgenroth (1989, 1990).

The common denominator for these references is the psychoanalytic dimension in the understanding of subjective learning. Faced with contradictions people will invariably relate to external stimuli as well as their respective internal resources. The interplay exposes individual lines of memory – and different degrees of pleasure or displeasure. Every perception, the key to the outside world, is subjectively defined, i.e. it is (also) emotional – co-defined by images, imaginations, sensations. Subjectivity regulates itself, defense is at constant work. It is possible to develop an awareness of them and a certain degree of management as well. Social learning is among other things, defined by the capacity to distinguish and manage these dynamics, as well as by defining your own role.

So managing emotions requires analytical thinking! *Affect* and *emotion* must collaborate with *attention* for only then do we “think” – as Becker-Schmidt has it. In that sense “thinking” is inter-woven with emotions, consciousness is multidimensional. In the subjective world of the individual all objects in the physical world possess a certain, particular value, it comprises specific psychic energies that altogether influence our perception of the immediate every-day world. That is why we can be annoyed or content – instead of simply registering the world as a matter of fact. Objects, persons, situations are not just facts or structures, they trigger off emotion as well. To understand the outside world you must learn to distinguish movement in your own inner drives or wishes – such as anxiety of being ignored or let down, aggression, desire – from the objects they attach to, and whose perception they define.

Becker-Schmidt refers to the well known child in the Danish tale of the emperor’s new clothes, the child (most often referred to as a boy?) who cries out that “he’s got nothing on, has he!” Subjectively learning is slightly more complex than the child’s exposition of the collective taboo, the emperor’s nakedness. Not least in a learning perspective, per se a perspective of progression, the question of the genesis of psychological defence of individuals arises as a theoretical agenda in its own right. The dynamic of learning is self-regulatory, so you can never know when an individual/a woman choses to do something about her situation. The process of separation from the positive dimensions of ambivalence take on different forms.

THE UN-CONSCIOUS RESOURCES OF LEARNING: DYNAMICS OF DRIVES, LIFE HISTORY OR EVERY-DAY LIFE? THE IMPLICATIONS OF BASIC CONCEPTS FOR (THE UNDERSTANDING OF) LEARNING AND BLOCKING OF LEARNING

So far I have implicitly assumed that the un-conscious plays an important role for the formation of adult experience. However, the application of psychoanalytic insights always raise questions and disagreements about the relation between adult everyday life and childhood experiences/life-history. Which dimensions are decisive, which are at all important? This question must be faced before addressing how (much) learning blockages actually mean in the formation of experience.

By focusing on the concept of ambivalence Becker-Schmidt sets off from classical psychoanalysis. She picks up the concept from Joseph Breuer, who writes about conflicting emotions in terms of ambivalence, and about conflicts of will *against* an impulse *to* take action in terms of ambi-tendency (Becker-Schmidt, 1982, 1993). She adds the concept of inconsistency referring to conflicts that are handled cognitively. According to her Freud simply takes over Breuer's concept and defines it in terms of "an economy of the drives", which implies that Freud sees ambivalence as co-defined by developmental stages. It is founded in specific stages as a dimension of the appropriation of reality. On the other hand, however, it is "just another example" of the latent conflict between libido and thanatos. Becker-Schmidt, however, explicitly denounces this (drive-)reductionist understanding – she is concerned with the relation of ambivalence to external problems: what happens when subjectivity meets with reality and with contradictions which are also life conditions. For that reason she refers to Sandor Ferenczi. He held a somewhat higher interest in the social context and in the ego, than in the economy of drives "as such", let alone the sexual drives. He spells it out directly saying that you can process contradictory emotions in the interaction with reality. When ambivalences founded in life history are activated, they lend energy to the present ones, and are processed in the interaction with present realities.

Morgenroth (1990, p. 49ff) states something similar: She uses the classical concepts of transference and counter-transference, which – she pragmatically remarks – constitute most human communication. The nature of human relations is generally a systematic, trans-individual pattern of countertransference. Social patterns of communication are at the same *time produced by* the manifold of human communications – as *regulating* them. Some things are articulated, some are not, but yet another category is what *cannot* be articulated. It just happens. This explicitly goes for every-day-life communication, not addressing clinical circumstances. Again we notice a re-interpretation of psychoanalytic thinking into social psychology. The patterns of transference are solidly founded in affective psychic dynamics which co-define action as well as the expression of emotion, also to be noticed in language. On the social surface you register only some inhibition in individuals' self-regulated articulation of needs and wishes – hesitation, silence, interruptions, or the socially more visible, break up of habits and cultural conventions.

This is not solely a theoretical assumption – it is notably empirical. Figures of consciousness, modes of opinion, etc. can all be understood *in the context of the text*, produced for the purpose. Both Leithäuser et al. and Morgenroth based their theorizing on interpretations of interview texts. The concept of language game forms the framework for understanding, inspired by Lorenzer (1970). Becker-Schmidt makes current use of quotations to illustrate her point (Becker-Schmidt & Knapp, 1985, 1987b; Becker-Schmidt, 1982b; Becker-Schmidt, Knapp, & Schmidt, 1984). Her reference is a quite general psychoanalytic one – which, incidentally, annoys Alheit and Dausien (1985, p. 33) as they consider it a most basic limitation in the theoretical basis. Terminology-wise Becker-Schmidt's differentiation between

inconsistency, ambi-tendency and ambivalence approaches a more traditional disciplinary view of the psyche as composed by cognition, personality and emotion – it does, however well reflect the scope of action available to the individual in a society defined by division of labour, thus representing some subjective reality. The differentiation is a culturally functional fact, which is why it is theorized as a critical point: The concept of ambivalence must be seen as conceptualizing an actively appropriated and subjective dynamic structure, produced in inter-action with reality – and its contradictions, e.g. those between work-life and family-life as well as contradictions within each (Becker-Schmidt, 1982a). The theoretical distinction between cognitive and motivational structures also reflects the working women's situation, divided as it stands – be it more or less action-oriented, more or less reflected. This is well documented in her work over the years (Becker-Schmidt et al., 1984). Her concept of social learning and her later revision of it into more of a social-psychological manner, re-introducing Freud's concept of "Nachträglichkeit" (deferred action) to understand life history and biographies underlines that she employs these inspirations to develop a *social psychology* (Becker-Schmidt, 1991, 1993a, 1994).

In spite of similarities in the interpretational approach between Becker-Schmidt, Leithäuser and Morgenroth their ideas of the nature of the "damages" of the capacity to experience, not least how serious they should be considered, or how "deep" they are, differ. Leithäuser et al. (1977) tend to assume that inter-action in the social situation in itself produces the "un-conscious scenes" – the psychological impact that may or may not be relevant to the specific social reality it is embedded in, or which it is "just about"! They hereby assume that present day interaction may activate as well as complement defences. The very situation activates *common* psychological conflicts which is subjectively supporting, and may help "thematising" – i.e. recognizing the conflict and building a relevant experience of it. The potential experience – making a theme of it: "thematising" – arises not alone from the "out of the blue" un-conscious of the individual. It arises gradually in the very process of social experience.

Up against this Morgenroth denounces any text-analysis not founded in a broad understanding of individual life experience, which according to her is what actually lends its energies to any social inter-action. Even in groups – and maybe not least in groups – individuals can only contribute bits and pieces from what they have learned, from what they know. Experience may well be, and it most often is, inarticulate (language-wise) – but it still rules. Accepting the importance of a life history dimension in the formation of experience does not permit or imply any sort of "surplus" production of meaning – group dynamics or otherwise. In the last analysis common psychological figures like "regression" would never have become within any reach of understanding if the group or the situation per se, set the frame of understanding. Which, as she sees it, is the case with Leithäuser et al. Applying Wilfred Bion's (1961) concepts enables an understanding of how the communication in "basic assumption groups" is structured by unconscious dynamics more or less independent of the explicit agenda of the group or its rational background. Following

Bion the justification for using the group as a therapeutic space in point that a transaction between unconscious psychodynamic agendas and the rational reality may take place. The characteristics of groups in this analysis emerges from the interplay between individual dispositions brought in from elsewhere, and the group process enables changes in this interplay (Bion, 1961; Morgenroth, 1990, p. 42). Similarly with Becker-Schmidt, Bion sees the influence of unconscious dynamics as inhibitions for learning and experience building, but the cultural content of the social interaction in which these dynamics are activated are having much less attention.

The point from classical psychoanalysis is that group processes cannot be understood as merely everyday life practices. They are decisively drawing on infantile psychic fixations which are then mirrored into the group. Morgenroth's analyses of the life world of unemployed people are e.g. not illuminating the substance matter that group discussions deal with, but how the group members deal with them, how they see themselves in relation to the group, and which consequences it has for their selfunderstanding. In Leithäuser et al.'s analyses everyday life factory work reproduces itself in an specific level of collective psychic defence in groups at each level of the workplace hierarchy. This reveals defences, but at the same time they are analyzed as specific defences in relation to specific work conditions (Volmerg et al., 1986).

The different theoretical weighting of life history vs. situational influences in the experience building which is a recurrent theme in theorizing consciousness, including education discussions, are depending on different psychoanalytic inspirations. Leithäuser et al. are closer to Lorenzer, emphasizing the group and the social interaction. Morgenroth and Becker-Schmidt are closer to Freud and emphasize the individual: But Becker-Schmidt rather than a clinical interest applies a direct political perspective on her material, investigating why and how people (here: women) act or do not act. In Becker-Schmidt's perspective: learn and act on their contradictory life conditions.

In my own work the everyday life and social psychology approaches of Leithäuser et al has proven to be most useful. On the one hand I find the psychoanalytical foundation unique and necessary, but in the field of investigation, learning processes, and more generally growth of human autonomy, is always mediated by a social environment and a relation to culturally defined contents. In education and teaching is may be intentionally constructed environment but the point also holds for learning in other social situations in which agency is necessary, and in which experience depends on the interplay between individual psychodynamics and a social and culturally determined context. Becker-Schmidt's explicit positioning of the concept of ambivalence in a social psychology context enables a theoretically sophisticated analysis which comprises individual psychodynamic structures, the interplay of these dynamics in groups, and the social practice in its necessary relation to social reality.

These theoretical considerations have been developed in conjunction with empirical analysis of a number of trade union and work related issues, focused on

education and learning. Although we have in these analyses we have in some cases worked with in-depth hermeneutic interpretations drawing on an understanding of drives as well as referring to the impact of childhood experience, they have not been prevailing, and I follow Becker-Schmidt in her idea of “liberating” psychological analysis from a “drive-oriented” approach. Such an approach is valid, but not the only central dimension of experience, and may sometimes shadow over other dimensions. Besides, my focus on education and the according nature of the texts produced determines that they cannot always be fully opened in all dimensions – and certainly not by me.

However: When the psychoanalytic concepts are liberated from their drive-oriented tradition, the concept of psychological ambivalence is opened to understanding the relation to contradictions in the social world. So the concept of “*Nachträglichkeit*” (deferred action) (Ferenczi, 1972b) can be seen as the psychological operation that rearticulates experience, impressions and remembrance – at a later stage in life and on the basis of new experience. In the re-interpretation “ancient experience” gains a new significance, indeed they are simply activated: they re-appear at a conscious level enabled by new related experience. Becker-Schmidt stresses that the “liberation” from the dynamics of the drives does not imply any kind of secondary rationalization let alone harmonizing of life historical ambivalences. On the contrary: individual – adult or elderly – experience is a pre-condition for successful integration of previous experiences (Becker-Schmidt, 1991, p. 167). If people get stuck with fixations from precious life it may rather be because their life courses in all their complexity have prevented a conscious approach to retrospective subjective understanding of “your own life”. This is particularly true for women because the gendered experience, especially when un-pleasant or even nasty, are culturally depicted as any other sort of difficulty: a woman may think that it’s all about her class, or her race, or her generation. Even with successful women at university such assumptions prevail! It is difficult – even for privileged groups, and maybe in a specific, complex manner – to acknowledge the “triadic traces of the very definition of (gender) identity”: difference, specificity and low self-esteem – because gender is a central dimension of identity and social roles difficult to get at reading distance. It is possible to see oneself as a historical “product” in almost any other dimension than that of gender – the (non-)problem is generally seen as an individual one.

THE RHYTHM OF EXPERIENCE: REALITY, EXPERIMENTS AND SEPARATION

Theorizing social learning within a theoretical discourse of experience we emphasize the embedding in social practice – and hence relation to historical and currently changing social reality (Salling Olesen, 1989, p. 8ff). Change, however, requires subjective engagement, so the mediating concept could well be the psychoanalytic concepts of testing reality, “*Realitätsprobe*”. It refers to the fact that in order to deal effectively with reality, reality must be subjectively differentiated and appropriated. Thus social learning can be defined as an ever expanding capacity to test and deal

with reality, as an understanding of your own inner life world in an interplay with external conditions. You must learn to distinguish between your own experience of reality and outer world reality and to never under-estimate the mutual tension.

So social learning comprises two dimensions (Becker-Schmidt, 1987a): The ego must recognize *its inner reality* as levels of phantasies, imaginations, tensions of drives, and defence mechanisms, all potentially relevant for agency. Some are not conscious and many remain unconscious. At the same time the ego must grasp *outer reality* as objective and goes beyond individual control – and is not fully transparent. Inner and outer dimensions interact, and the process is a confrontation of power and conflicts, also when not registered consciously. Conflicts are mostly not enacted but are kept socially invisible, i.e. in culturally tacit knowledge. The social and material world seem to obey a causal logic and to adapt to rational human action, be it pragmatic, striving for survival ... it seems to be under the control of the rational subject. However, the subjective perception of reality is permeated by emotion and phantasy, and the psychological process that precedes agency is much more complex. Thematizing the complexity and contradictions of emotional and cognitive truths is a precondition for social learning, a dynamic process driven by emotion and cognition, reference to and appropriation of reality. You learn when consciousness is activated, becomes aware of its perceptions and subsequently deals with their direction and interest. In that sense thinking is developed when you reflect how you “feel about it”.

In further detail Becker-Schmidt describes thinking and learning as chains of tentative imaginative agency – indeed you could say *that experience is built up by series of such tentative imaginations* – striving to determine whether you prefer the well-known to the un-known. Strategies for the future are developed on the basis of experience. The point is similar to the “theme/horizon”-figure in Leithäuser’s theory of the consciousness of everyday life, in which horizon defines the scope of potential experience and theme is directing attention within it. Reality is widely perceived in terms of more or less adequate transference, and in Leithäuser’s critical presentation the psyche/consciousness of every-day life is relentlessly and systematically seen as comfortable, lazy or at best: pragmatic. “Reduction” is indeed a central sub-category of an “ontological syndrome”: the consciousness of every-day life with its lack of capacity to recognize the genesis of things perceived, let alone their potential for change. The point is that the practical, reality-oriented functions of cognitive reduction (such as managing complexity, doing one thing at a time, etc.) is corrupted by defence mechanisms that permeates perception itself – in all dimensions. It infiltrates the experience of time, the perception of space, the cognitive organization. According to Leithäuser et al. the fundamental historical reason for the loss of memory and the lack of future orientation lies in outer reality, in the development physical and psychological condensation of time of everyday life in confrontation with various standing offers from culture and media as far as defining your life history is concerned. Such a condensation lies behind the “normal pathology”, while the narrowing of physical and psychological space in every-day

life is more important for the development of patterns that are directly pathological: individual break-down and collective neuroses. Both are confronted with subjective and objective shifts of horizon that cause either the common – reductive – pragmatic orientation or, indeed, the other way around: learning, experience. The latter demands that some energy has been set free ...

It is actually a point with Becker-Schmidt that the psyche does not want to be exhausted. She refers to Bernfeld's term of its "conservatism". Curiosity is a challenge to this specific characteristic of the psyche: It takes energy to approach something that you do not know of. Consequently over-coming this must be gradual, taking subjectively suitably measured steps when appropriating new land, indeed a "tentative imaginative action". You try out yourself against this un-known reality and carefully you assess its nature. It is structurally like a research-process – and the very idea that research as such is inter-woven with and doubles common strategies of thinking is in accordance with Freud – and by the way generally acknowledged in developmental psychology in all schools of the discipline – e.g. Bruner, e.g. Piaget. Thinking cannot be understood out of context, without considering what it is *about*. Thinking develops/expands when the psyche carefully and gradually activates the senses and the general attention, approaches and then again withdraws from the new reality. What in education we address as "thinking" is thus in itself a dynamic inter-play of affective reactions, handling the irritation of the yet un-known, and renewed reflection – enabling a gradual accept of a new (aspect of) reality. Ziehe and Stubenrauch (1982, p. 101) refer to such a progression – and, respectively, regression – as a rhythm of learning to the infant's fear of dedication and separation respectively – each navigating principles of security versus risk. Thus experience and learning presuppose framework where progression and regression may alternate in a self-regulated way:

What we emphasize is the capacity to live through both poles of extremes: the utter dedication and the utter alienation. It is about a decisive shift of balance towards one of the poles, a temporary excess without losing neither the connection back nor the possibility of returning to the other pole. (1982, p. 104, author's translation)

If successful, the ego will accept unpleasantness, and not need to suppress it. Reality is accepted as you distinguish yourself from the process – and the various elements in it – for finally re-possessing the world. Comparing your inner images with the images of the outside world, you accept that they differ. The comparison and the recognition of the discrepancy is painful because it comprises a confrontation between wishes and reality. On the other hand, however, ridding yourself of illusions is liberating. Emotions tied to the illusion can be dealt with, trigger off new emotional energy, that is not just re-distributed – finding new objects – but actually transformed, change qualitatively. The world is perceived anew, and as we are talking about subjective reality we may sum up: The world IS new, it is re-born.

Alfred Lorenzer, in his theory of socialization, also thematizes the process, e.g. using the critical concepts of cliché and formation of symbols, which are particularly relevant for interpretation methodology (Olesen & Weber, 2012; Salling Olesen, 2012). However, addressing “learning” Lorenzer applies the Winnicott concept “transitional object” (Davis & Wallbridge, 1981; Winnicott, 1958) to throw light on the adult learner. Transitional objects may be an artefact, a situation, sensory-symbolic inter-action forms. On the surface you deal with them un-problematically but at the same time, all along the pragmatic communication of every-day life, they establish connections to un-conscious, suppressed meaning. This meaning is dealt with automatically, the sub-conscious and un-manageable finds a format that can be integrated into everyday life communication, creating the material basis for its becoming conscious and integrated, object of psychodynamic regulation. The-classical psychoanalytical references are of course dreaming and playing. It is implied in Lorenzers thinking that current social conventions in a similar manner can work organizing on the entire psychological household, individually as well as collectively. This is how he founds his “psychoanalytic social psychology”. At the same time cultural expressions define, regulate and manipulate psychological dispositions – as do the physical spaces of every-day life, as does the media, art and culture in the broadest sense. It is all about transitional objects when every-day life runs smoothly – but there is something dangerous inside it ... This version of a fundamental psychoanalytic inspiration which also allows Becker-Schmidt to go beyond the perspective of the clinic – is basically enabled by Lorenzer’s theoretical development of a psychoanalytic analysis of culture, what he called in-depth hermeneutics (Lorenzer, 1970; Lorenzer & König, 1986; Olesen & Weber, 2012).

Lorenzer’s concepts – of the linguistic articulation of sensory experience and of destruction of symbols into signs or clichés – are integrated in the concept of consciousness of everyday life. In terms of the latter the psychological process we here refer to as social learning is the step from dependency, from defensive mechanisms of transference within individual schemata of theme and horizon – to thematization (Leithäuser, 1976, pp. 112–119). You can look at individual learning as well as group communication in this manner, and the mode of analysis grasps well the role of the unconscious in the life of organizations (Lyth, 1988). The overcoming of dependency, the separation, is described by a somewhat macabre image, *sequestration*, a self-mutilation like an animal gnawing itself out of a trap by splitting off a wounded limb. It is the recognition of the necessity of sequestration, the recognition of ambivalence, through a detour around the double negation (It is not true that it does not hurt) that enables the appropriation of reality.

The hypothesis, or maybe rather the hope, might be that the recognition of ambivalence develops the capacity to deal with conflict and that it will furthermore be a spark to ignite the will to re-orientate. The spark may enlighten something different, trigger off a positive anticipation, imagining something better. How does this motivation for change at all arise?

It is a complex process. Becker-Schmidt refers to a classic case in developmental psychology, whose structure she ventures to generalize (Becker-Schmidt, 1987, p. 62). It is about R. Spitz' experiment with children's experience (of toys): When a child loses a toy he/she is paralysed and momentarily not able to act. Sometime however, the love for the lost object returns and gradually it expands, gets larger than the bother of the trouble it will take to recover it. This, we may assume, is when the child stops crying and begins to look around. The inner image of the toy is not sufficient stimulation for action, it is pre-conscious and can only become exposed if it is emotionally occupied. The child must anticipate a connection between the image and reality. It compares well with an electrical impulse made useful in interaction with a slice of reality needing energy. The libidinous drive (needing to be near, approaching an object) is de-sexualized, the aggressive attachment (the impulse to grasp, to destroy, to liquidate) neutralized, and the emotional energies are transformed into construction, creativity. Spitz claims that drives are so undifferentiated in the infant that it does not master any proper libidinous material. It does not suffice that the child has learned to combine the image of the object with the object itself – i.e. that it perceives the relation between language and reality correctly. For cognitive and affective processes respectively obey different orders of development and they must be synchronized before the child can develop a sense of reality. A certain amount of tolerance of letting go and lose is required as well as some capacity for imagination and future orientation.

With this in mind the classical experiment, also discussed by Freud and Piaget, about hiding a toy under a pillow deals with the need for the child to distinguish between the image of the object and the object itself – as well as distributing positive and negative impulses adequately, and endure the absence of the toy while aware of the future gratification. Such capacity to uphold different and contradictory engagements to the same image (in Becker-Schmidt's terminology: tolerance of ambiguity) is the precondition of the child being able to solve the complex task. The point of the experiment in a Piaget'ian sense is a matter of object permanence, but in this context the point is that the child may also recognize that the world is not just good or bad, white or black, but comprises many shades. A central point in developmental psychology, here used to expose similar structures and dimensions in experience building processes in adult life. Complexity itself certainly calls for humility. But it also offers a possibility of grasping the variety and the manifold differences that constitute learning blockages and resistance in adults.

So I have defined levels of psychodynamic pre-conditions and reasons in that particular field of formation of experience that has to do with the capacity for subjective change and future-orientation – for hope. The correspondence between thinking and emotional separation is no absolute thing, above history let alone a general human condition. It is enabled by – and indeed becomes necessary – while inner conflicts and societal antagonism interact in ambiguous constellations. For instance this is what happens when at times the individual (woman) find it hard to believe in the legitimacy of her wishes: Does she perform a legitimate protest

against an un-willing resignation – or is she simply not able to face that illusions are illusions? This question is answered time and time again by any number of conscious minds – minds in constant development.

AMBIVALENCE AND DOUBLE DENIAL

Departing from women's every-day lives, in social reality, the outer contradictions, the changes of time, space and function that constitute the reality scene that give rise to ambivalence, are easily identifiable. It is simply a woman's modern every-day life, double work and double attachments of domestic work and wage labour. On a general, abstract level you may see it as a confrontation between societal and nature-given, historical dependencies in various complex combinations – specifically and individually about motherhood and wage labour. Not just a "choice" but a social destiny with a double bind as a psychological effect. Social contradictions hit women's psychological resources in a cruelly direct manner: On the one hand "women" appear to secure a minimum of existential human communication. On the other hand through experience of separation, doubled over and over in life history, women are systematically socialized into abstaining. To pin point it: In our culture women are socialized as different, particular, and of a lower value – which is why women must time and time again give up themselves to enter into passable social roles. Reality itself produces ambivalence. This is why Ferenczi's concept of affirmation of unpleasure ("Unlustbejahung") is particularly relevant – comprising the drives, but more oriented towards social reality. On the other hand adult women's experience can hardly be grasped without accepting that social contradictions are mediated in infantile or childhood experience. The fundamental structure of the drives is still co-determining the process (cf. above).

Women's "double societalization" is real. Contradictions in female every-day life and life-history, the complexity and special "nature" are rooted here. Today women's every-day lives comprise private as well as professional contexts (Becker-Schmidt, 1982b; Becker-Schmidt & Knapp, 1987a; Knapp, 1990).

"So they must not only answer to contradictory demands of the spheres of family and work life. There are more potential conflicts. For both central fields of women's lives are in themselves contradictory" (Becker-Schmidt, 1993b, p. 80, author's translation).

Accordingly the experience of reality is packed up and stored behind complex patterns of psychological reaction – in psychoanalysis known as neurotic ones. If, however, you focus on the learning potential, you may observe that the sensory experience of reality – the very substance of political experience – is a precondition for learning and must be un-packed in the process. One level is to simply state, to name the contradictions, the next is to trace them emotionally. As pointed out these two dimensions presuppose each other.

In a comment to a Danish translation of Freud's *Das Unheimliche*, Visholm (1998) refers the point of retrieving the earlier well-known, but now repressed, directly to

Freud. He moans that it never occurred to Father Freud him-self to establish a societal perspective on the set of problems. Visholm discusses the psychological category of the uncomfortable (*das Unheimliche*, literally un-homely). He further claims that sociological and historical analyses of home – and homeliness – establishes a solid material basis for understanding what makes something un-homely, creepy – the development of neurosis – and the other way around, its eventual dissolution.

Just as you can dissolve a paradox that ascribes contradictory qualities to the same object by dissolving it in time, you can dissolve it by separating it in terms of space or persons. (*Ibid.*, author's translation)

So where Becker-Schmidt uses of the concept of deferred action to transgress and expand her analysis of women's everyday lives, Visholm as a psychologist must – like Leithäuser and Morgenroth – put his attention to Freud's ideas of continuity in psychological reactions throughout the life history, that may also be applied on a horizontal cross section of everyday life.

Freud's point is that faced with meaningless ideas and futile activities you must trace the – long gone? – situation where the ideas were well motivated and the activities had a purpose. I.e. liberate a historical insight from its current re-interpretations and “take it back where it belonged”. As for women's experience the process is obviously doubled along with critical events in the life course: Motherhood and wage-labour each in their own way sustain women's capacity to endure and integrate – both spaces provide pleasure and dis-pleasure – in the general social spheres of work and family-life/motherhood respectively. Both spheres offer pleasure and displeasure. Within the culturally prevalent images of femininity as well as in the individual woman's self-identity the dimension of pleasure is prevalent: “We want it all!” – or an existential and political choice is imminent (as in recent debate of potential autonomous motherhood vs. dependency on a husband).

Women of the mid-age generation, and maybe also the younger ones, “put up with quite a lot” (cf. Nielsen & Rudberg, 1994; Prokop, 1981). There are generational variations of women's subjectivity, caused by different conditions of socialization. However, the conflict between needing autonomy and identity respectively, appears constant. The capacity to endure this is founded in the separation of actual experience including the according reaction from – stirring of – the silent knowledge and phantasies. Learning needs to build on an un-raveling of this process. Again Becker-Schmidt takes up a concept from Ferenczi, namely the “acceptance of un-lust/displeasure”. It is about experiencing displeasure, denying it, and integrating it – in order to later re-trace displeasure through denial of the denial, i.e. to locate experience and sensation in their own time and space, in every-day life as well as in life history – whereby their subjective meaning is made relative, and energy is set free. It is by meeting up with the objective, societal framework around the psychological ambivalence, that the so-called tolerance of ambivalence is established and a realistic orientation towards the future becomes possible.

Affirming the un-pleasure (*die Unlustbejahung*) is, according to Ferenczi, a specific human perception of social circumstances in a diff way from psych— a capacity of distinguishing between social and psychological circumstance. If drives, e.g. sexual drives, are not met people will normally suppress the wish that provokes the frustration, i.e. suppress the un-pleasant situation it-self. However, what takes place here is an active acceptance of un-pleasure – the problem(a phenomenon) that has been stated in different ways by Becker-Schmidt and by Negt and Kluge (1972) as well as by the women we interviewed in our empirical research in Danish trade unions.

Freud (1943) defined denial as a transitional phase from ignoring and recognizing reality. His classical example is that of sibling rivalry: from “I am not jealous” to “it is not true that I am not jealous”. The example demonstrates that recognition of displeasure must go through two denials in order to become subjectively true. Firstly un-pleasure must be faced, and then suppression (or the attempt at suppression) must be suspended. Denial must be denied – or negation negated.

Adult people master that, particularly so in the therapeutic space. Ferenczi points to the double negation taking place in those phases of analysis where transference is predominant: That is when ambivalence is recognized because transference yields “comfort” or release. The clinical point being that only if the principle of reality is stabilized in subjective experience – taking over the function of “comfort” – will the analysis succeed. If you stay in the identification with the analyst, in the transference, you will regress into denial, i.e. denial of the denial = repression. If the analysis is successful the reward is liberation from guilt and repetitions. The positive outcome, the recognition of the reality of un-pleasure can only be achieved through the double negation.

According to Ferenczi reality is at first denied because it is un-pleasant. It is attributed a negative pre-fix! That this is possible is in itself based on an important step in the development of the child – when play and its symbolic dealing with reality and un-pleasure was no longer sufficient. Denial does not imply that you make something non-existent. Un-pleasure – and what’s causing it – is the substance of denial, its *raison d’être*. All present consideration of experience, drawing on psychoanalysis, builds on what Ferenczi explicates: Pursuing experience leads to reality. If you face un-pleasure it becomes the motor behind “experience” being a political and critical category – cf. the general perspective of critical theory, that critique is a mode of thinking, a mode of existence.

In the first place the sense of reality is provoked by the real world not simply yielding to individual will. It requires facing infantile sensation of omnipotence. This comes in different forms – symbolic, gestic, physical – in the infantile imagination, and facing it yields varying degrees of frustration or satisfaction. Typically you adapt to the circumstances where satisfaction is met. The real actors stand out from the context, e.g. “mother” changes from a psychic image associated with satisfaction of needs and drives, to a real existing person also negatively connotated – e.g. reacting to other phenomena in the world than the child him/herself (Lorenzer, 1970). The

child has to look for a de-tour to its fulfilment of wishes, because the direct route is infected with un-pleasure. However, exactly as the direct, un-pleasurable route the de-tour goes through anger, rage, aggression and fear – as well as through love for the caring adult. Different emotions are experienced in relation to different aspects of the situation, at different times and also under different circumstances. All this experience – out of its original time and place as it is – must be co-ordinated. Abstaining from and thriving on the world are two aspects of the person – who, at the same time, remains him/herself. That is not so easy.

Also in adult learning you can trace how conflict-ridden and dramatic it is to cope with contradictory emotions. They may be sexually, erotically tinted because of their relation to early objects of desire. Often emotions turn into their opposites, causing confusion and guilt. Destructive emotions may turn autonomous and direct themselves against the very person originally meant to receive the positive emotions. When a target of desire is at the same time desired and feared most likely one of these emotional poles will be repressed. In any case the object must be protected from the destructive impulses. These in turn can only be integrated if the autonomy of the individual is respected, and if the positive gains prohibit their growing autonomous (the destructive impulses).

So where individuals gain status of object, ambivalence signifies the current presence of contradictory efforts and emotions – e.g. love and hatred. As the drives are developed through their various stages, the contradictory emotions can be distinguished – but then blur under new conditions. This may be the explanation of women's statistical over-representation in the diagnoses of severe psychic diseases. In this context, however, the ordinary learning processes of ordinary women are in focus – and so the development of the drives as such gets less attention than their social circumstances.

As an outset Ferenczi focuses on emotional conflict founded in the early mother-child relation. What is of interest here is especially the learning processes that serve self-preservation (ego-drives), rather than psychosexual development as such. This is why his concepts of accepting un-pleasure fall within the discourse on women's experience in the complex outer world of every-day life. While the principle of desire operates at an un-conscious level and seeks immediate reduction of tension and wish-fulfilment, the principle of reality will detect the situations in the immediate outer world that does actually satisfy these. Like Freud, Ferenczi assumes that the sexual drives are more subject to the principle of desire than they are to the ego-drives/self-preservation. The latter is easier "educated" as it allows itself to be governed by the principle of reality. The ego is closer to reality, it is more dependent on it than have either the ego-managed or the un-conscious sexuality. In the psycho-analytic frame of understanding – which is in itself not a subject for discussion here – this has a double cause: One is that sexuality is less dependent on reality (it can be satisfied auto-erotically), another is that it lies suppressed during the entire period of latency – and so it simply does not enter into contact with reality. It is thus a central point, borrowed from Ferenczi, that a sense of reality arises from seeking

pleasure and avoidance of un-pleasure respectively – a point that strongly supports the social dimension of the concept.

As discussed above, though on a broader scale, the preconditions of experience are present in situations where firstly you are not powerless, and so potentially disposed for identification with an aggressor, secondly you are challenged in a combination of sensation/analysis, facts/intellect, comfort and safety/emotionality. Ferenczi's concepts grasp exactly the psychodynamic dimension of the basic precondition of experience. The concept of experience is defined as an analogy of the test of reality – survival. The basic example is hunger – hunger being the most fundamental expression of self-preservation. It cannot be satisfied by imagination. Ferenczi simply has it that for instance “enjoying your food” would be impossible if food were always and unlimitedly available. Desire is a product of experiencing needs, of lacking and missing something. The positive experience of social, material reality must be appropriated through negation: “A reality that does not conflict with human wishes or needs cannot become experience” (Ferenczi, 1972a, p. 204).

The “obstinate reality” is the occasion for experience. It causes the immediate will of your own (“Eigensinn”) as Negt and Kluge articulates it in their book title (Negt & Kluge, 1981, 2014). Immediate sources of satisfaction are invisible – quasi-natural, not to be recognized. The significantly hostile or non-pleasant we repress. What is accessible on condition – those we appreciate. Distance and ambivalence are simply the necessary pre-conditions for object cathexis, for a sense of reality (Becker-Schmidt, 1993a, p. 84; Ferenczi, 1972a). Actually Becker-Schmidt comes close to reducing the adult to the abstract “developing child” in psychoanalysis. For she concords with Ferenczi in this: Those or that which satisfies us, we love, but they/it do(es) not belong to us, and so we also hate them/it. For the child such things achieve status of an objective world, and only solely because it sets the outside world. For adult women this emotional ambiguity has become “natural”: It constitutes subjectivity as well as do family and wage labour. When psychic energy is stuck in ambivalence it remains suppressed, and women's lives are – in Lorenz's terms defined by clichés. In such cases women navigate in “social topoi” (Negt, 1964) like e.g. “oh, well, can't win them all ... that's life ...”.

As mentioned above in her later writings (1993, 1994) Becker-Schmidt supplements the concept of ambivalence with the psychoanalytic concept “Nachträglichkeit” (deferred action). It sums up the fact that through present experience the subject may subjectively change the nature of earlier experience. It comprises all the points of attempting to define a social psychology of psychoanalysis and for an accordant theory of learning. Firstly that identity is no given or absolute thing locked by early experience, that it is not located in one specific area, and secondly that “the active structures in the sub-conscious ... are results of the confrontation between former and present experience” (ibid.). The interplay between experience from different stages of life – from themes of life-history – cannot be isolated from neither the basic dualism of drives nor from the psychosexual stages. The prime example is the interplay between the oedipal phase and puberty, the process where the transcription

of earlier experience – now deposited in memory and as phantasies – is concordant with the individual meeting with a new psychosexual stage. This concept of “life history synthesizing” (Becker-Schmidt, 1994) is further applied to the experience of various social situations, stages of life and forms of oppression. This perspective may develop our understanding of subjective concepts of social time – in the sense of its becoming collective.

The approach is quite an optimistic one. Defining the potentials of a future orientation of the life perspective she sees any positive attachment as a potential for the future, and in any anticipation the remembrance of a life once successful. To emerge the traces of remembrance must be activated by the positive energies embedded in the ambivalence. The capacity of patience, to allow imagination the time needed to visualize the desirable life – interpreting it in terms of the delay of deferred action (Nachträglichkeit) – is the tolerance of ambivalence. It is an important point in Becker-Schmidt’s theory of gender relations that ambivalence is not an outcome of the contradictions in women’s lives, it is also enriching women with this autonomous capacity, which is a historical characteristic of femininity. The tolerance of ambivalence implies that even after long periods of crisis such a potential may break through its (historically allotted) structure and change into its opposite, into experience and action.

Active and passive extremes may threaten your life – as mania or a depression. The utterly good and the utterly evil cannot produce experience. A “healthy mix” of frustration and gratification is the pre-condition for development (Freud), learning (Ferenczi), social learning (Becker-Schmidt) or formation of experience (Negt).

EXEMPLARY LEARNING AS CULTURAL CHANGE

The paradox behind part of the discussion so far – the discussion of the subjective conditions for social learning and experience – is the historical fact that the more pronounced the societal organization of every-day life gets – the more ontological and a-historic, without any past every-day life will appear to the individual.

The importance of individualization – or the thesis of individualization – is theorized in various manners in current theories (e.g. Beck, 1983; Giddens, 1991; Ziehe & Stubenrauch, 1982). However different categories of analysis and however different they prioritize various dimensions – all refer to changing preconditions of every-day life. The theory of everyday life from Lefebvre to Leithäuser also shares this observation. But instead of seeing the process as a reduction of social determination of the individual it is rather seen as an increase. The deeper human lives, sense and emotion are societally defined, the more individualized will the individual *appear*. Societal development actually liberates or detaches the individual from his or her self, in the form of the pragmatism of the consciousness of every-day life.

This process of individualization is of course a core issue for education in the trade union movement, we have been researching. Its educational ambition is to

stimulate social learning of workers and their representatives on the basis of their own experiences and interests. Trade union education should be the educational framework which enables social learning. This implies a view of Trade Union education as historical processes in their own right, not just secondary supplement to general or professional education. The crisis of legitimacy in the labor movement was perceived as a problem of mediation between participants' individualized everyday life and their basic (collective) attitudes. So when every life experiences are articulated and confronted with attitudes the fundamental ideas of the labour movement will become active in the experience of everyday life. The labour organization and education respectively was perceived as the culturally explicit framework that at the same time produces a collective tacit knowledge about societal and social conditions and a setting for its potential articulation in policies of the union. It lifts the search for the potential of historical experience to a collective level, where the search itself is a part of a cultural and political movement. The formation of experience becomes more than a degree of individual enlightenment. However, in this process the organization as such would also be exposed anew, it would become an object of experience, it might change – provoking a psychological defence.

So social learning points beyond itself. Individuals and social context change. Organizations, including educational institutions, may be influenced. In the Danish discourse learning mediating individual, cultural and societal dimensions has been conceptualized in terms of “exemplary learning”, and with Negt's development of Wright Mills' concept of “sociological imagination” (Becker-Schmidt, 1987; Leithäuser et al., 1977; Leithäuser & Volmerg, 1988; Salling Olesen, 1989). It has been integrated with a substantial understanding of (learning by) experience – in contrast to other popular, less political, but also dialogically oriented didactical concepts. Becker-Schmidt seems to be in accordance with Negt. Only she reaches the position by other – psychodynamic and historical (women's history) – routes than do the gentlemen themselves.

However neither Becker-Schmidt nor Negt appear to have found a comprehensive psychological principle of construction that enables and supports experience processes, they have mapped out some necessary dimensions. The connection between the specific experience and the wider societal reality as such, between current observation and wider reflection is established by raising questions about sensory experience versus conceptualization, by changing perspective and by establishing new relations. Maybe we should simply accept Becker-Schmidt's agreeing with Walter Benjamin in reserving the concept of imagination for that specific capacity.

On a more general level, placing the discourse as a contribution to the theory of knowledge, we find the concept of experience paralleled by the concept of abduction. Scientific knowledge – at least in the social and human sciences, is produced in processes which generate knowledge by interpreting specific experiences in a process that Peirce gave the logical label abduction – transgressing the dichotomy between deduction and induction – but which remains an issue for discussion among philosophers (Douven, 2011). Abduction presupposes that (the process) of

experience enriches an observation by an addition of meaning or by the expression of a silent, implicit or contingent knowledge. Meaning explicitly comprises the view of the interpreting subject. Research experience must therefore reflect the time and place of the researcher, his/her individual perspective, at the same time placing it precisely in time and space. Social space comprises the traditional discourses of the scientific community as well as the present social and political world (Becker-Schmidt, 1987; Leithäuser et al., 1977; Leithäuser & Volmerg, 1988). I shall now summarize – as a sort of utopian horizon for political learning.

Exemplary learning requires confrontation with individual and culturally collective defence mechanisms. “Hesitating” in the space left between one’s own mixed emotions and reality itself asks for attention to both. It does not go without saying that attention is to what is actually going on, let alone how one feels about it. Even the basic level of “what do I see” – “what’s my experience” can be difficult to approach, let alone answer for. That can be argued theoretically, but it is also a commonplace in everyday life in adult education. Most people are dependent on their own experience – (we) need to interpret the world as such in terms of what we know of. If so the world as such, the empirically accessible facts, are reduced in terms of individual schemata of theme and horizon. In a life history perspective this of course has to do with each individual childhood history – integrated however with the general patterns of socialization and culture of up-bringing of the historical period of our respective childhoods. If as a child – when encountering the world – you were forever met with a warning of something forbidden or dangerous it is no wonder that later in life you – un- or sub-consciously – choose to stick to strict definitions of the world, to set horizons – and to identify the un-known in terms of the well-known. Clinically or educationally this may be professionally reduced to a personal quality or resistance – but it should rightly be understood in conjunction with earlier experience – such as losing something dear (remember “sequestration”). Children may well unlearn curiosity – substituting it with routines. And while this concept can well be discussed theoretically at length Becker-Schmidt simply states: “routine – that’s having ended up in a trace without curiosity” (Becker-Schmidt, 1987). A person who is an expert in terms of his/her own personal life may well be unable to learn, let alone grasp other peoples’ perspective.

The robust nature of adult attitudes may well be rooted in dependency on personal experience, the experience having fortified itself against challenge. Personal experience may actually turn authoritarian, it may establish it-self as a common reference, a criterion of truth or correctness – systematically avoiding criticism, developing absolutism and rigidity. This is the very psychological state that Becker-Schmidt discusses as an inter-play between women’s socialization through life history and complex everyday lives, and that Leithäuser discusses as a collective historical (epochal) form of consciousness – the consciousness of everyday life. Such a mental fortification will, however, always turn out to be just one pole in a contradictory consciousness – it presupposes that something is perceived – accordingly being potential experience, for the time being embedded in tacit knowledge.

So in a theoretical discourse experience does not just spring from people articulating their immediate emotions or sensations. Experience presupposes that you have access to what happens and what you feel about it, that no defences are at work. So it is not possible to assess potential for adult experience from appearances alone – although this is actually often needed in everyday life in adult education. Adults often appear quite robust – but the present discussion may add something to the understanding of resistance against progression in educational enterprise, be it about organization or substance. Hesitation can be a prerequisite for and an integrated dimension of experience, not least when tacit knowledge is problematized by a teacher, a school, or by an educational system.

Exemplary learning requires recognition of the social and societal – determining – framework. The comfort of dwelling in your own experience, in the immediate pleasure may actually be counter-productive to learning, not only for psychological reasons but for practical ones as well. Experiences must be digested. The substance of what they actually recall as well as their subjective importance. The societal impact must be critically analyzed. Experience with further ambition than what merely happened must transgress its empirical limits. Any section of realities of times, places and functions in every-day life houses a determining connection to a social and societal logic. Thus experience of a generally accepted reality will always point to a wider context, to social reality as such. This is what Negt's concept of exemplary learning is about (1964) as well as Negt and Kluge's idea that self-regulation produces coherence, consistence – continuity based on recognized discontinuity (Negt & Kluge, 1981, 2014). When conscience is conscious of itself, reflects upon itself. What Hegel labels as the dialectic movement of consciousness relating to itself, when subjectivity deals with itself and its relation to the outer world. When left alone experience withers. It must move between the two poles: the object in question and its being reflected, between self-awareness and the reality it copes with. The subjectively remarkable individual case and the social and societal context it needs to be recognized in to gather meaning at all. Consciousness changes in movement between subjectivity and the objective. Not only does the perception of reality change, consciousness it-self is transformed, it is kept floating – as is its very object.

Exemplary learning is not often educational or pedagogically initiated. It rather contributes to a development of a theory of consciousness and subjectivity in its own right. The concept does, however, imply important insights into the pre-conditions of education and learning. Furthermore the subjective perspective provokes a number of critical points regarding the field. On a general political level, as well as on a level of gender politics, the analysis demonstrates that perception and experience of conflict is a central prerequisite for learning – a central point in Negt's (version of the) concept of exemplary learning. It moderates the common-place that any experience may be developed exemplarily – on the other hand pointing to the inevitability of experience. It cannot be skipped. For it renders it realistic to carry the

concrete appearances of reality through individual and collective/institutionalized defence – towards verbalization and potential awareness.

In educational theory as well as teaching practice it is hard to maintain the dimension of “openness”, the floating nature of consciousness. Not only so because of the material determinations of education – qualification, discipline, etc. – is it hard for professional minds to contain these concepts. Maybe the “floating” dimension is simply perceived of as a negative one, too informal, an absence of structure, whereby it loses meaning. The present discussion, on the other hand, attempts to demonstrate that a floating condition is loaded with content, with the energy of recognizing ambivalence as well as a contradictory reality.

The process of learning comprises both the direct, immediate experience, self-reflection, both the emerging into detail and the analysis of wider connections, abstraction and concretization, sensory experience and theory. None of these sources of experience can be dispensed with, and none can stand alone. Education may interfere, favour or prevent development. But the process as such is too large for the pedagogical space to direct (or so I hope).

Reversing a quote from Oskar Negt who is talking about the labour-movement: The women’s movement possesses neither an immanent scientific nor an immediate pragmatic framework of ideas for its emancipatory goals. The same goes for theorizing learning (as opposed to teaching or education). In this sense formation of theory is in itself a learning process, where experiences are associated and combined in manners that provoke the social preconditions to be reflected.

By necessity exemplary learning is – by object and by content – a collective process. This is evident in Negt’s earlier more explicitly societal concept of experience. Experience is the very mode of production where reality is dealt with, as well as the active reaction to reality (Becker-Schmidt & Knapp, 1987b, p. 68; Negt, 2001; Negt & Kluge, 1981, p. 25; Salling Olesen, 1989, p. 8). Experience must be individual, pass through minds and bodies – nevertheless it is digested and communicated by language and concepts, and so it is also cultural and collective. Exemplary learning will rarely be individual, concerning only one woman or man. If no sooner this becomes clear when you work for your own interest – for that is when you will unavoidably interfere with the needs and interests of others – in all the social spaces and spheres you move in. Self-reflection and political after-thought is the very medium where individual self-interest is transformed into solidarity.

Immediate experience does not, however, always expose the structure behind events of social crisis. We all go through a lot without recognizing the historical preconditions, etc. – but then again even the most peculiar events may “touch the edge of a relevant conflict” (Becker-Schmidt, 1987) – and when that happens we name the event “exemplary”. The quality of exemplarity presupposes some subjective meaning as a necessary foundation for future perspectives and according action. Exemplary experience is striking – affectively and emotionally. It may trigger off dedication but it may as well result in paralysis of action, anxiety and depression. Objective conflict is only subjectively motivating when individual interests are at

stake. Otherwise the conflict is of no avail. So ego interest and the underlying drives are necessary preconditions for social learning. Furthermore meaning is always *meaning to somebody*, to a specific subjectivity.

It is indeed possible to recognize one's own motives in a manner where they constitute social contexts, reach beyond themselves, and relate to other people's motives. Not least so if the tacit knowledge is articulated publicly. Even more so in a labour movement context where classical values such as collectivity and solidarity have often degenerated into clichés. Especially here the option of criticism is essential. It does put the (eternal) public communication of equality and gender privileges into perspective.

As a consequence exemplary learning turns out to be imminently critical of existing power relations. All social contexts that house social learning will be exposed anew and – more or less discreetly – pressured to change. Organizations too must appropriate new analyses of society – and thereby experience subjective loss, processes of separation. Organizations too must rid themselves of “parts of themselves”. Not least so in highly hierarchic organisations like the trade union movement.

Collective experience does actually turn into cultural change as e.g. we witness in the recent debate of letting gender privileges go. Not that privileges should go as any abstract matter of principle – but they should be in accordance with change of social reality and in recognition of their potential. As a gendered political point this may be noted when private enterprise fails to recognize the potentials of women's experience in management and co-operation within enterprises. They tend to perceive only that they have to let go of well-known routines. Likewise most women find it hard to dispense with the emotional and social privileges of breeding children. Both issues are, however, doubled in our use of language as well as reflected in everyday culture. Our more or less automatic ascribing of qualities to gender is out of touch with reality. The culturally accepted and ascribed qualities fit into and inter-act with hierarchies of power and social status. “Gender” is not only a classification of characteristics – but a fundamental category that structure and reconfirm everyday expectations. “Asking why” immediately exposes that gender characteristics cannot be understood out of their historical context – and attempting an answer simply produces social learning. That's the curriculum!

Morgenroth (1989) illustrates this in her investigation of the German trade unions meeting with women's initiatives – establishing child care so that they can get to work – and the format of the initiatives: meeting and talking, including talking to people outside the movement, but to people who would actually further the women's cause. Besides actually establishing the kinder-garden they needed, Morgenroth's women colleagues also learned something about their Trade Union. They were allowed to express their competences, but they were invariably up against a masculinist organization which fundamentally co-defined both form and content of the work. So the women's qualification and the men's organization that cannot contain them lock up each other in antagonism. Until the women may, as it matters,

re- or de-organize! In another context Morgenroth stated that “the future belongs to the women – also in trade unions” (Morgenroth, Negt, Hollman, & Niemeyer, 1992), and in her production continues discussing the “precarious relation between the genders in the organizations” (Morgenroth, Hollman, & Niemeyer, 1994).

This type of conflict, the “double ambivalence”(!) is a cultural process that strikes most women as a prerogative as well as an opportunity. It may be pin-pointed: Stay in the movement despite its negligence – or spite the movement and stand despised or even excluded. The situation may in itself appear promising in that collective and gendered needs can influence organizations and de-build hierarchies, but this organizational potential is too small. There are other possibilities, building on specific needs and demands in larger groups – e.g. with generational groups, professional groups, etc.

Changing historically produced patterns of gender is no simple enterprise. Essential dimensions of adult subjectivity are founded early in life, in primary socialization. It can be retrospectively activated, become subject to “*Nachträglichkeit*”, retrospective activation or deferred action, but they are still rooted early, pre-oedipally, that they are most likely to remain un-conscious.

This level is conceptualized by Nielsen and Rudberg (1994) as gendered subjectivity. As stated by Freud gender identity is potentially open and prone to further experience, however still inter-woven with its immanent and fundamental genesis. Both levels are integrated in psychological gender, constituting the level that may change through experience of ambivalence. This is why possible shifts in what we know as social gender roles are unlikely if not impossible without foundation in a formation of collective experience on the level of psychological gender or gender identity.

Nielsen and Rudberg (1989) pick up some related concepts directly from object relations theory. They define the experiential potential in women and men in the double definition of need for/anxiety at, respectively – autonomy and intimacy, both potential outlets for further experience. They label the male path “the ambivalent way” (Nielsen & Rudberg, 1988, p. 40) signifying a hesitant appropriation of intimacy which is rendered possible by recognition of autonomy and visible results of effort – thereby not having their fundamentally masculine identity questioned. The women’s path they name “the paradoxical way” (*ibid.*) because women, as in their gendered identification process in the oedipal phase must pass through intimacy to autonomy – and vice versa. In short: Male version – recognize me and I’ll love you. Female version – love me or I cannot recognize you. Both versions demonstrate that ambivalence is rooted in life history, its re-birth or re-construction in the confrontation with the social world and its decisive influence on the formation of experience.

Furthermore the authors stress that identity can be subject to historical change as a dimension of the transformation of living conditions as such (Nielsen & Rudberg, 1994). Current women-hood or femininity is a product of modernity and it is assessed that the generational transformation will – with a bit of luck – provoke

a relational competence. This competence will draw on, but not change, the fundamental capacity for intimacy immanent in female gendered subjectivity. They also produce an impressive comparative study of generations and they hope – like Becker-Schmidt – that the transformations will provide better opportunities for the younger generations to fully realize the disposition for intimacy. Because of the transformations of gender identities and thereby the transformation of psychological gender as such. As well as found more general changes in cultural and social gender.

NOTE

- ¹ Translation of chapter from Kirsten Weber's doctoral work from 1995: *Ambivalens og Erfaring. Mod et kønsdifferentieret læringsbegreb* [Ambivalence and experience. Towards a gendered concept of learning] (chapter 3.3, pp. 71–99). The translation with minor adaptations was made by Kirsten Weber in 2015, and technically finished by Henning Salling Olesen after her death November 8, 2015.

The topic of the dissertation was women's learning in the context of Danish trade unions. Empirically the study was based in a major study of the education program established by LO, the Danish confederation of trade unions, which was carried out by a research group also including Anders Siig Andersen, Finn Sommer, and Henning Salling Olesen.

REFERENCES

- Alheit, P., & Dausien, B. (1985). *Arbeitsleben. Eine qualitative Untersuchung von Arbeiterlebensgeschichten*. Frankfurt: Campus.
- Baker Miller, J. (1976). *Toward a new psychology of women*. New York, NY: Beacon Press.
- Beck, U. (1983). *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Becker-Schmidt, R. (1982a). Modsætningsfyldt realitet og ambivalens: kvinders arbejdserfaringer i fabrik og familie. *Udkast, (n/a)*, 164–198.
- Becker-Schmidt, R. (1982b). *Nicht wir haben die Minuten, die Minuten haben uns: Zeitprobleme und Zeiterfahrungen von Arbeitermüttern in Fabrik und Familie: Studie zum Projekt "Probleme lohnabhängig arbeitender Mütter."* Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft.
- Becker-Schmidt, R. (1987). Dynamiken Sozialen Lernens. In R. Becker-Schmidt & G.-A. Knapp (Eds.), *Geschlechtertrennung – Geschlechterdifferenz*. Bonn: Dietz.
- Becker-Schmidt, R. (1991). Continuity and discontinuity in women's life courses. In W. R. Heinz (Ed.), *Theoretical advances in life course research. Status passages and the life course*. Weinheim: Deutsche Studien Verlag.
- Becker-Schmidt, R. (1993a). Ambivalenz und Nachträglichkeit: Perspektiven einer feministischen Biographieforschung. In *Was heisst hier eigentlich feministisch? Zur theoretischen Diskussion in der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen*. Bremen: Donat Verlag.
- Becker-Schmidt, R. (1993b). Ambivalenz und Nachträglichkeit. Perspektiven einer feministischen Biographieforschung. In M. Krüger (Ed.), *Was heisst hier eigentlich feministisch? Zur theoretischen Diskussion in der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen*. Bremen: Donat Verlag.
- Becker-Schmidt, R. (1994). Diskontinuität und Nachträglichkeit. Theoretische und methodische Überlegungen zur Erforschung weiblicher Lebensläufe. In *Erfahrung mit Methode. Wege sozialwissenschaftlicher Frauenforschung*. Freiburg: Kore.
- Becker-Schmidt, R., & Knapp, G.-A. (1985). *Arbeiterkinder gestern – Arbeiterkinder heute*. Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft.
- Becker-Schmidt, R., & Knapp, G.-A. (1987a). Die doppelte Vergesellschaftung – die doppelte Unterdrückung: Besonderheiten der Frauenforschung in den Sozialwissenschaften. In L. Unterkirchner & I. Wagner (Eds.), *Die andere Hälfte der Gesellschaft*. Wien: Verlag des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes.

- Becker-Schmidt, R., & Knapp, G.-A. (1987b). *Geschlechtertrennung – Geschlechterdifferenz. Suchbewegungen sozialen Lernens*. Bonn: Dietz.
- Becker-Schmidt, R., Knapp, G.-A., & Schmidt, B. (1984). *Eines ist zu wenig – beides ist zuviel. Erfahrungen von Arbeiterfrauen zwischen Famrik und Familie*. Bonn: Neue Gesellschaft.
- Bion, W. R. (1961). *Experiences in groups and other papers*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Davis, M., & Wallbridge, D. (1981). *Boundary and space*. Henning, this reference isn't complete!
- Douven, I. (2011). Abduction. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Spring 2011 ed.). Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/abduction/>
- Ferenczi, S. (1972a). Das Problem der Unlustbejahung. In *Schriften zur Psychoanalyse bd II*. Frankfurt: Fischer.
- Ferenczi, S. (1972b). *Schriften zur Psychoanalyse, bd II*. Frankfurt: Fischer.
- Freud, S. (1943). *Die Verneinung. Gesammelte Werke Band XIV*. London: Imago.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Knapp, G. A. (1989). Arbeitsteilung und Sozialisation: Konstellationen von Arbeitsvermögen und Arbeitskraft im Lebenszusammenhang von Frauen. In U. Beer (Ed.), *Klasse und Geschlecht. Feministische Gesellschaftsanalyse und Wissenschaftskritik*. Bielefeld: AJZ-Verlag.
- Knapp, G.-A. (1990). Zur widersprüchlichen Vergesellschaftung von Frauen. In *Die doppelte Sozialisation Erwachsener. Zum Verhältnis von beruflichem und privatem Lebenstrang*. München: Deutsches Jugendinstitut.
- Leithäuser, T. (1976). *Formen des Alltagsbewusstseins*. Frankfurt & New York, NY: Campus-Verlag.
- Leithäuser, T., Salje, G., Volmerg, B., Volmerg, U., & Wutka, B. (1977). *Entwurf zu einer Empirie des Alltagsbewusstseins*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Leithäuser, T., & Volmerg, B. (1988). *Psychoanalyse in der Sozialforschung: Eine Einführung am Beispiel einer Sozialpsychologie der Arbeit*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Lorenzer, A. (1970). *Spracherstörung und Rekonstruktion: Vorarbeiten zu e. Metatheorie d. Psychoanalyse*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Lorenzer, A., & König, H.-D. (1986). Tiefenhermeneutische Kulturanalyse. In *Kultur-analysen* (Vol. 7334, pp. 11–98). Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Lyth, I. M. (1988). *Containing anxiety in institutions: Selected essays* (Vol. 1). Oxford: Free Association Books.
- Morgenroth, C. (1989). Frauen sind keine Randgruppe – komplexes weibliches Arbeitsvermögen und das Recht des Besonderen. In O. Negt, C. Morgenroth, H. Geiling, & E. Niemeyer (Eds.), *Emanzipationsinteressen und Organisationsphantasie*. Köln: Bund Verlag.
- Morgenroth, C. (1990). *Sprachloser Widerstand. Fischer Taschenbuch*. Retrieved from <http://rub.ruc.dk/soeg/kviksoeg/?query=3596102405>
- Morgenroth, C., Hollman, R., & Niemeyer, E. (1994). *Realistische Utopien – Beteiligungsgewerkschaften als Zukunftsperspektive*. Frankfurt: Fischer.
- Morgenroth, C., Negt, O., Hollman, R., & Niemeyer, E. (1992). *Individuum, Geschlecht, Solidarität*. Hannover: University Manuscript.
- Negt, O. (1964). *Soziologische Phantasie und exemplarisches Lernen*. Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Negt, O. (2001). Adorno's Begriff der Erfahrung. Das Argument. In A. Kluge & O. Negt (Eds.), *Der unterschätzte Mensch: Gemeinsame Philosophie in zwei Bänden*. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins.
- Negt, O., & Kluge, A. (1972). *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*. Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.
- Negt, O., & Kluge, A. (1981). *Geschichte und Eigensinn. Zweitausendeins*. Retrieved from <http://rub.ruc.dk/soeg/kviksoeg/?query=x100076725>
- Negt, O., & Kluge, A. (2014). *History and obstinacy*. New York, NY: Zone Books.
- Nielsen, H. B., & Rudberg, M. (1988). Hur flickor blir flickor och pojkar blir pojkar. *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*, (1).
- Nielsen, H. B., & Rudberg, M. (1989). *Historien om jenter og gutter. Kjønnssocialisering i et utviklingspsykologisk perspektiv*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Nielsen, H. B., & Rudberg, M. (1994). *Psychological gender and modernity*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

- Nielsen, H. K. (1993). *Kultur og Modernitet*. Århus: Århus Universitetsforlag.
- Olesen, H. S., & Weber, K. (2012). Socialization, language, and scenic understanding. Alfred Lorenzer's contribution to a psycho-societal methodology 1. The landscape before and around Lorenzer Forum. *Qualitative Social Research/Sozialforschung*, 13(3), Article 22.
- Polanyi, M. (1967). *The tacit dimension*. London: Routledge.
- Prokop, U. (1981). Sehnsucht nach der Volkseinheit. Zum Konservatismus der bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung vor 1933. In G. Dietze (Ed.), *Die Überwindung der Sparchlosigkeit. Texte aus der neuen Frauenbewegung* (pp. 176–202). Darmstadt.
- Salling Olesen, H. (1989). *Adult education and everyday life*. Roskilde: Adult Education Research Group, Roskilde University.
- Salling Olesen, H. (2012). The societal nature of subjectivity: An interdisciplinary methodological challenge. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 13(3).
- Senghaas-Knobloch, E., & Volmerg, B. (1990). *Technische Fortschritt und Verantwortungsbewusstsein. Die gesellschaftliche Verantwortung von Ingenieuren*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Visholm, S. (1998). Overflade og dybde. Om projektiv identifikation og det moderne sociologi. In *Det uhyggelige*. Viborg: Politisk Revys forlag.
- Volmerg, B., Senghaas-Knobloch, E., & Leithäuser, T. (1986). *Betriebliche Lebenswelt. Eine sozialpsychologie industrieller Arbeitsverhältnisse*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Volmerg, B., Volmerg, U., & Leithäuser, T. (1983). *Kriegsängste und Sicherheitsbedürfnis. Zur Sozialpsychologi des Ost-West-Konflikts*. Frankfurt: Fischer.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1958). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In *collected papers: Through paediatrics to psycho-analysis*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Ziehe, T., & Stubenrauch, H. (1982). *Plädoyer für ungewöhnliches Lernen. Ideen zur Jugendsituation*. Reibek: Rowohlt.