CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

TOWARDS A TAXONOMY OF ACTIVITY

In this collaborative context, cultural-historical theory was born. And the scholars who rediscovered the Vygotskian school, and are expanding it today, also work collaboratively.

(John-Steiner 2000)

Up to now we have taken for granted the normative meaning of collaboration, and limited our description of collaboration to the contrast between the limiting cases: hierarchical command, division of labor (either by exchange or voluntary cooperation) and collaboration as such.

The types of activity already developed by Activity Theory, according to Davydov (1999: 44), “the activity types which were developed in the course of human history”, are: 1. Work, 2. Artistic Activity, 3. Activity in the field of morals, of law, of religion, 4. Sport, and 5. Scientific activity, and “the activity types that emerge in the ontogenetic process”: 6. Object manipulatory activity, 7. Play activity, and 8. Learning.

Below are other approaches to the taxonomy of collaboration.

_Vera John-Steiner’s “Creative Collaboration”_

Vera John-Steiner made an extensive study of well-known artistic and scientific collaborations. This is the only deep study of collaboration from the point of view of Cultural Psychology. John-Steiner has proposed a 4-way typology of collaborations as follows (John-Steiner 2000: 196–204):

1. _Distributed collaboration_, which “takes place in casual settings and also in more organized contexts. These include conversations at conferences, in electronic discourse communities, and among artists who share a studio space. In these groups, participants exchange information and explore thoughts and opinions. Their roles are informal and voluntary.”
2. *Complementarity collaboration*: which is “characterized by a division of labor based on complementary expertise, disciplinary knowledge, roles, and temperament. Participants negotiate their goals and strive for a common vision.”

3. *Family collaboration*: “a mode of interaction in which roles are flexible or may change over time.” The long period of time over which these collaborations extend often brings about transformative changes in the participants and their roles.

4. *Integrative collaboration*: which “require a prolonged period of committed activity. They thrive on dialogue, risk taking, and a shared vision. In some cases, the participants construct a common set of beliefs, or ideology, which sustains them in periods of opposition or insecurity. Integrative partnerships are motivated by the desire to transform existing knowledge, thought styles, or artistic approaches into new visions.”

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**Virginia Fraser’s Archetypes from Popular Culture**

Fraser’s study of collaboration, particularly in the arts, drew upon representations of collaborative projects in popular culture to identify a rich series of archetypes of collaboration. Most of the collaborations examined included an element of secrecy about the authorship of works. Fraser’s study (Fraser 2002) revolved around issues of attribution, initiative and deception, and particularly around discrepancies between authorship and attribution. Using feature films as source material she identified the following models:

***The Accidental Hero***: One person produces a work, but another opportunistically and successfully takes the credit, being more acceptable in and better able to perform the stereotyped role of hero/author than the actual hero/author.

***I’ve Heard the Mermaids Singing***: One person privately produces the work, while another is mistaken for and ultimately comes to be known in public as the producer. In this voluntary division of labor, one person produces the work while the other publicly performs the stereotyped role necessary to market it.

***High Art***: Authorship and attribution are inseparable and this is signified by the use of the artist’s personal life as the subject matter of the work. However, the production of the work is part of a larger