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REPETITION, EMOTION, MEMORY

*Clifford van Ommen**
Department of Psychology
University of Fort Hare
P O Box 7426
East London 5200

*Desmond Painter***
Department of Psychology
Rhodes University
P O Box 94
Grahamstown 6140

*Correspondence should be addressed to Clifford van Ommen, Department of Psychology, Rhodes University, Box 94, Grahamstown 6140. c.vanommen@ru.ac.za

**Desmond Painter is now at the Department of Psychology, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch.

Abstract.
In this article we attempt to articulate a self that is marked by repetition, a notion that seeks to take seriously the lack of metaphysical foundations in social, psychological and ethical life; that seeks to counter those understandings that hope to escape the ravages of time and the unexpected movements of life. After presenting a poststructuralist reading of the Kierkegaardian notion of repetition in relation to the thorny problem of the self, we attempt, first, to substantiate this self through a reading of emotion and memory as deeply socially embedded and as not pre-social and natural, and secondly, to develop an understanding of repression as an essential feature of life that does not infer distortion or denial. At this point we will introduce the notion of replacements. Replacements, as a feature of this form of repression, are culturally valid narratives that respect the particularities of memory and draw the person in as an embodied thinker. We illustrate this understanding of the self by delineating a role for psychotherapy as a place where the sculpting of such replacements may take place, thus enabling persons to continue with the ethical task of achieving a self.

INTRODUCTION.

In this article we use the notion of repetition, drawn from a poststructuralist reading of Kierkegaard's nineteenth-century Christian existentialism, to articulate an understanding of the self that breaks with the metaphysical certainties (such as, truth, universalism, and

essentialism) of modernism. Nevertheless, in opposition to the radical anti-humanism of some forms of postmodernism, where the self plays no role, this account retains some currency for this notion in Psychology's understanding of, and dealings with, the meaningful and ethical life.

As will be further clarified in the next section, repetition is opposed to metaphysical recollection, and takes seriously the lack of ontological foundations for the self, history, and morality. Thus the hope of discovering an ahistorical, acontextual and universal grounding for these projects is abandoned. Any such system or preordained sets of principles is understood as an attempt at a backdoor escape from the ravages of time and the unexpected movements of life. What we will claim is that the notion of repetition provides a frame for understanding the self as radically located in history and time, always alterable and never finalised. While these ideas are articulated more than adequately by the American philosopher, John Caputo (1987), whose poststructuralist Kierkegaard we are employing here, we will attempt to further substantiate this self psychologically through a reading of two further dimensions, emotion and memory, as socially embedded, avoiding an understanding of either as pre-social and natural. Emotion is located as an irreducible complex emerging from the interplay of biology, social relations and discourse, whilst the components of memory, remembering and forgetting, are understood as learnt skills. Given the above, the self is further substantiated through the introduction of two additional concepts, repression and replacement. Repetition is used to develop an understanding of repression as an essential feature of life, and one that, importantly, does not necessarily infer distortion or denial. Replacements, a feature of this form of repression, are here presented as culturally valid narratives that respect the particularities of experience and draw on the person as an embodied thinker. An aspect of memory, replacement is construed as a skilled activity that enables repression.

Finally, the understanding of the self that emerges from the above is illustrated through a conception of psychotherapy as a place where the crafting of replacements may occur. These are seen as enabling persons to continue with the ethical task of achieving a self. In addition, the above argument is continuously clarified via reference to a vignette.

We start with a clarification of the notion of repetition.

REPETITION.

In the course of a project that seeks to bring deconstruction and hermeneutics together in the form of a radical hermeneutics, American philosopher John Caputo (1987) employs two concepts used by the nineteenth century philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, to articulate and critique metaphysics: repetition and recollection. It is these concepts that will be put to work in this article as well. Kierkegaard discussed repetition and recollection in a number of his works, but most importantly in the simultaneously published (under different pseudonyms in 1843) **Repetition** and **Fear and trembling** (Kierkegaard, 1992). In both instances he uses these concepts to accuse Greek metaphysics and nineteenth century German Idealism of shying away from a meaningful confrontation with the most important aspects of the human condition, such as temporality, absurdity, and the nature of ethical engagement; and in both instances he employs specifically repetition to forge a new way of talking about the self, ethics and faith. These Kierkegaardian themes have of course been picked up and elaborated by Heidegger and existentialist philosophy in the twentieth

century, even though, certainly in the case of the former, Kierkegaard is not always duly credited (Caputo, 1987).

Caputo takes a different route back to Kierkegaard. Rather than engaging existentialism as such, he reads Kierkegaard through Jacques Derrida – and, perhaps more startlingly, Derrida through Kierkegaard. Derrida has been singularly successful in showing up the foundationalist fantasies of Western reason (for example, Derrida, 1976, 1982). These include the illusion that he refers to as a metaphysics of presence: the belief that meaning can be traced by a knowing subject to a reality outside of language, or to a consciousness preceding language. In Derrida's work pure subjectivity and referential knowledge are dislodged by language itself. Social reality, subjectivity, and interpretation become textual products; they are produced and sustained by the repetitive play of signifiers, which is an endless process of referral rather than fixed reference. Using the Kierkegaardian concepts of recollection and repetition, one can say that meaning can never be *recollected* from a static source; meaning only exists in the movement of *repetition* – and therefore knowledge, interpretation or subjectivity are never fixed.

While such ideas, under the broad rubric of post-structuralism, have been taken up in Psychology with great effect, they have also made problematic the categories of the self, human agency, experience and social action that seem to give Psychology its identity. It is not uncommon for postmodern or critical psychologists to embrace poststructuralist ideas for the fluidity, and even historical relativism, they provide in thinking about subjectivity and the self. Despite this, however, there are also fears that the post-structuralist orthodoxy, positing an almost totalitarian rule of language, simply relegates the subject to being a mere side effect of the law of the signifier. It is in this context that the renewed interest in substantive theories of the self (for example, Hermans & Kempern, 1993) and embodiment (for exaqmple, Burkitt, 1999) should be understood.

It is also here where Caputo's recruiting of Kierkegaard and the ethical existentialist tradition he represents is potentially important. Following Caputo, then, enables us to gain from the deconstructive work of Derrida while salvaging a hermeneutic, even existential concern for situated and embodied human experience. Kierkegaard, one might say, already adds a neglected psychological dimension to the philosophical debate by wanting to know, quite simply, how the individual should make his or her way through time and the flux – the uncharted, surprising movement of life. In this, as we will elaborate below, repetition came to play a crucial role. But repetition can also be used quite fruitfully to describe identity and ethical challenges of life beyond the reach of Kierkegaard's original intention. We are thinking here of the potential to use repetition to make sense of the embodied dimensions of emotion and memory. In pursuing this, and in linking these ideas to a consideration of the task of psychotherapy, we will move far beyond Kierkegaard's and even Caputo's own immediate concerns. However, since it is still the anti-metaphysical, future-oriented spirit of Kierkegaardian repetition that we wish to bring to bear on our ideas, we spend some time discussing it here.

Kierkegaard's important insight was that the dominant metaphysical discussions of his day, particularly Hegel's attempt at an all-encompassing philosophical system, were too abstract to really illuminate the important questions of everyday life. It was specifically matters like faith and ethics that, according to Kierkegaard, fell by the wayside of philosophical

discussion. In short, for Kierkegaard the abstract systems of metaphysics simply covered up a scandalous retreat out of the flux of life. It backed out of movement and set up camp on supposedly solid foundations. The reason for this, Kierkegaard believed, was that metaphysics had no sense of time or temporality – an insight that predates Heidegger, the great philosopher of time, by almost a century. Ever since the ancient Greek philosophers, metaphysics had tried to remove knowledge, being and the meaning of things from this world and to reduce the here and now to no more than faded semblances of metaphysical templates – Plato's theory of the ideal types of which the beings and objects of this world are mere *recollections*, is a good example. Recollection, then, stands for this attempt to do away with time, or to postulate an abstract space in which the world of everyday existence is overruled and given its metaphysical meaning.

To further understand the workings of recollection, consider Plato's understanding of the soul (Caputo, 1987:13): "The Being of the soul, Plato maintained, is to return whence it came. Its coming into the world in the first place was a fall, and so the essential thing is to undo the fall as quickly as possible, to address the wrong which has confined the soul to the realm of change. The essential destiny of the soul is to recover its origins in the sphere of primordial Being and pure presence". Plato adopts a similar account of knowledge (Caputo, 1987:13): "Knowledge, accordingly, is not a discovery, which forges ahead – for that would be real movement – but a recovery, a recollection, which recoups a lost cognition". Whatever is to be known, and whatever is to be, is already given – either in a transcendental metaphysical domain, as in Plato's, or in an all-encompassing system, such as Hegel's, which attempted to fix history's direction and goal in advance.

In opposition to this metaphysical gesture, Kierkegaard developed his particular brand of Christian existentialism. This might surprise some readers – is Christianity not the prime example of metaphysical escapism? Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity and faith was very different, though, and entertained no fantasies of either metaphysical or institutional certainty. Caputo (1987:2) sums it up as follows: "Christianity, on the other hand, summons up the nerve metaphysics has lost. Taking time and the flux as its element, it puts its hands to the plow (sic) of existence and pushes ahead – for eternity lies ahead, not behind – to create for itself such identity as life allows". In other words, Christianity embodies *repetition*. Repetition is the work of time on knowledge, the self and the things of this world. It means moving ahead slowly, accepting that knowledge and the self, the good and the just, never exist as fixed points of departure. They come into being as we move ahead, are radically located, and always alterable. Repetition is an open-ended ethical engagement with life that cannot proceed from a position of certainty; in fact, as Kierkegaard (1992) himself vividly demonstrated with the story of Abraham, who was ordered by God to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, it proceeds by faith and can only lead to fear and trembling.

Repetition, for our purposes, thus means taking time and movement seriously. Just as eternity is not a lost actuality as it is in Plato's theory of the ideal forms, but something to attain and bring into being by moving forward, so knowledge and the self are formed in the process of moving ahead, through repetition. Repetition, quite literally, means going on in life, it means living and doing and the necessity for ethical commitment – without leaving the metaphysical backdoor open. Think of love as an example (a topic Kierkegaard himself spent a fair amount of time thinking about). Love as recollection would perhaps entail ideas of the ideal partner that has to be found or recovered in some way. Or, perhaps, it would

see love as a feeling that can be either present or absent. Love as repetition, on the other hand, sees it as hard work and commitment to another. This commitment is first and foremost to a future together, not to an idealised notion of the past or to some abstract idea of love itself. Love as repetition will also allow the other to remain fluid, to develop in surprising ways, to remain a work of time and not just a faded recollection of a former self. In other words, repetition acknowledges that even in our most intimate relationships, and perhaps exactly there, our identities lie in the future, never to be finalised. Caputo (1987:13) can justifiably conclude that "Kierkegaardian repetition is the first 'post-modern' attempt to come to grips with the flux, the first try not at denying it or 'reconciling' it, in the manner of metaphysics, but of staying with it, of having the 'courage' for the flux ... ".

Under this banner of repetition life becomes radical engagement. The primary form of this engagement is the human relationship. It is only in the ongoing relationships we have with others that interpretation can occur and knowledge emerge; and from where we can formulate new ways of moving on in life. The repetition involved in relationships – the work of love, trust, friendship, and so forth – is always productive of new possibilities; and while these possibilities have no metaphysical foundation, they are grounded in the very relationships they emerge from. This means that the traditional distinction between the epistemological and the ethical breaks down. If it no longer makes sense to speak of language, knowledge and meaning outside the ongoing flow of social life and multiple relationships, then the quality of what we know and understand cannot be distinguished from the quality of our relationships with others. This is a great challenge to how we approach Psychology, as we shall discuss later in relation to psychotherapy. Some of these ideas, centred on the primacy of relationship in psychological reality, have already been picked up, in other ways, by theorists like Shotter (1993) and Gergen (1994).

With regard to personal being and the self, a radical hermeneutics thoroughly erodes the vestiges of a transcendental human subjectivity, and with it any trace of a pure, pre-social and self-enclosed consciousness. Yet, at the same time it gives weight to the situated, historical aspects of living a life. Developing (or changing) a self or identity is likewise the product of repetition and relational work. Consider the following statement by Caputo (1987:29), where he addresses Kierkegaard's understanding of the self: "The self is defined by choice, as something to be 'won'. This is an ethical, not a metaphysical, account of the self, which treats the self not as a substance, a permanent presence which endures beneath the changing fortunes of age and bodily change, but as a task to be achieved – not as presence but as possibility".

This reading points beyond the traditional, existentialist reading of Kierkegaard. While a radical hermeneutics also sees the self as a task, this task is not a solitary, individual one. Rather, it accentuates the ethical nature of the selfing process, which immediately puts the relationship at the centre of things. In other words, just as knowledge is relational, so the self is a product of relationships. We come to be selves and have identities in and through relationships with others, and therefore the other is ontologically prior in any account of personal being. As we will argue in the following sections of this article, this task involves a number of things Kierkegaard did not write about. We are here particularly thinking of the embodied dimensions of emotion and memory. Repetition is both enabled and curtailed through these psychological processes, and it is important that our understanding of the repetitive, Kierkegaardian self is deepened in this way. But then, Kierkegaardian repetition

also unsettles theories of emotion and memory that rely too heavily on recollection, and subsequently say little about what Kierkegaard rightfully worried most about: how to live.

These challenges are addressed in greater depth through the analysis of the following vignette.

VIGNETTE.
Consider the following set of events:

> X, let us say he is an adult male, is involved in an encounter with another person, also male and somewhat older. It is unpleasant; the person damages his property, threatens those he loves. He confronts this character, indicating that no such actions will be tolerated in future. In response he is personally threatened. This leaves X shocked since his actions seemed justified and should have left the other apologetic or, at least, silent. His aggressor does not stick to the rules as X conceives them. Immediately afterwards and for a long time following, a feeling engulfs our protagonist. It is one that he has felt before. It lies heavy on him; it is awful and without suggestion for where to go from here. Memories of similar events flow back and preoccupy X as he tries to continue with his life. He had hoped to never experience this feeling again, but here it is once more and in its wake clamber the host of other memories - of times when he was younger, where the same irrationality and injustice was inflicted - where he was also left feeling traumatised and unable to go on.

The above vignette can be understood in two ways: as recollection or as repetition. As recollection, X's reminiscences are evidence of an essence: the cumulative memories of repeated experiences seem to point beyond the flux to a static mirror of X's self. "Here you have what you are. You simply do not have the temperament to deal with such events". Repeated experience provides evidence and confirms the true nature of all things, including the self. The task, the route to relief and healing, then becomes to have the courage to accept the self as it is revealed and to find ways to cope with life as such a being.

Read as repetition, the above is not a mere recycling, a clue to the lost soul, for repetition is never merely more of the same; it always transcends the previous cycle, becoming different from what it was previously. Kierkegaard clarifies this for us: "(T)hat which is repeated has been – otherwise it could not be repeated – but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new" (as cited by Caputo, 1987:17). The previous experience of this feeling has been altered – it has come again but through its coming has changed. It is now a little heavier, a little more bitter, and much more distressing.

Experience thus has a history which, if read through metaphysics, provides an invitation into recollection, a search into the foundations of the self, of having to face up to the real you. The richness of lived experience and remembering is passed through a sieve which seeks to extract the essence lying beyond, the true kernel of the self. Thus it is not surprising that against such a interpretative background the return of an experience would be more distressing since it acts as a confirmation that the self we fear is really the self we are.

In the sections that follow we attempt to substantiate the alternative: a self marked by repetition. We try to mark out a framework through which we can both take history seriously and engage in the development of understandings of self that allows for successful repetitions.

EMOTION (AS COMPLEX).

As a point of departure let us focus on the feeling that engulfs X. How do we theoretically conceptualise this feeling? Traditional western notions of this phenomenon locate emotion firmly within the individual. Emotions are "construed as independent of cognition and irrational, spontaneous, natural, physical, irrepressible, and vital to express" (Ratner, 2000:14). They are traditionally regarded as one of the basic constituents of mental life, often being juggled with cognition as a prime determinant of human behaviour. For researchers, however, it is often a troublesome concept, difficult to operationalise since it is so deeply entangled with the rest of our lived experience. Given this, it has made sense for others (for example, Gergen, 1994) to resist and critique the urge to distil emotion from its mental neighbours, but rather to conceptualise it more holistically, as emerging from entanglement.

One might argue that emotion is a complex and that it "cannot be reduced to (either) biology, relations or discourses alone" (Burkitt, 1999:115). These various aspects, instead, make up an *emotion complex*, where emotion is a constellational phenomenon emerging through interplay of "all these dimensions as they are constituted in ongoing relational practices" (ibid:115). It can thus only occur within relationship, even if this interaction only occurs in the imagination of a person. Such an understanding of emotion resonates with radical hermeneutics in that it conceptualises this phenomenon as grounded in the very relationships from which it emerges.

Furthermore, Burkitt (1999) locates these relations that constitute a person's world as deeply cultural. They reflect various contingent (historically, geographically and temporally located) practices, here conceived as regular, habitual and typical forms of engagement with others and the environment. Certain ways of talking and writing (referred to here as discourses) make up some of these practices. Given the constructionist notion of language – that it is constitutive and not merely representational (Burr, 1995) – these discursive practices are an inextricable part of the emotion complex. For example, Miller and Sperry (1987) studied the expression of, and talk about, anger and aggression between 2 to 3 year-old white working-class children and their mothers in South Baltimore. They argued that the way these mothers accounted for their own emotional expressions in the presence of their children, and the way they verbally intervened in their children's activities, were significant not only in how these children learned to display feelings but also in how they actually experienced such emotions. What this means, in other words, is that both the expression and experience of emotions are culturally embedded and shaped through the discourses used to account for and discuss these feelings.

It then follows that the culture within which the self emerges provides it with limited ways of acting or talking in particular contexts that would be considered legitimate, acceptable, valid or even possible within each context. For example, as indicated previously, a contemporary dominant form of western discourse locates emotion as separate from

reason. Thus, it is then possible, say during a meeting at his place of work, for X to speak of his emotional experience from a position that locates him as outside of it. He, as a rational agent, can report on his emotions much like a CNN journalist would describe a battle in a foreign country. Such a detached position is available to him within that culture and particular context.

THE EMBODIED ASPECT OF EMOTION.

Besides the relational and discursive, the emotion complex also involves the body. This notion of *embodiment* is not reducible to physiological processes, but refers to disposition, which in turn involves culture. In order to elaborate this, Burkitt (1999:85) invokes the notion of *habitus,* developed by French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu: "(T)he habitus is the system of structured, structuring dispositions that are historically constituted in social relations and practices, and which tend to reproduce themselves when the body is called into action in various social contexts".

To unpack this somewhat, one can say that these dispositions are *structured* in that they reflect the social conditions in which they emerge, and are *structuring* in that they result in practices attuned to specific circumstances (Johnson, 1993). They are thus both emblems of the culture in which they emerge and adjusted to the particularity of the current situation. As with the previous discussion about discourses, we have here, again, the theme of limitation, that is, that what is available to us within a cultural and historical context are a finite range of actions, practices and discourses. This is also countered somewhat by a theme of specificity, that is, that these limited actions, practices and discourses do find innovative application in specific contexts. In addition, these dispositions "tend to reproduce themselves" since they are evoked by context and are thus marked by repetition. In this process a particular cultural action pattern can be both enacted and sustained.

These dispositions are not biologically determined or pre-social, but are habits crafted through the body, within the various social relations and practices typical of the time and place. "The habitus is the product of a long period of inculcation, beginning in early childhood, which becomes a 'second sense' or a second nature" (Johnson, 1993:5). Actions (including motions, postures, facial expressions, and physiological alterations) that occur in a particular context embody particular sets of relations and practices and are thus historically and culturally contingent. To return to our initial discussion of radical hermeneutics, here we do not have a self that is pure, pre-social and self-enclosed; here is a situated being living a life and forging an identity. This "second sense" is reflective of the person's historical situation; it is not marked by recollection, some way of going on outside the confines of context to a set of statements about who we really are, separate from time and place. The repetition of embodiment ensures a sense of consistency, an illusion of permanence and predictability, but these "inculcations" only *begin* in childhood, they are not static but radically located and always alterable.

To return to the vignette, the encounter between X and his adversary is thus marked not only by a set of relations (say, X as a young adult middle-class English-speaking European African male versus a middle-aged working-class English-speaking European African male) and particular speech acts (a number of discursive acts that position and construe each other in a number of ways) but also by a variety of postures, motions, facial

expressions, speech prosodies, gestures and interpersonal space variations. The entire encounter is thus substantiated (or filled out) by contingent relations, discourses and dispositions.

Through this entanglement emotion emerges. No action, thought, speech act, or relationship is without emotion, since their co-occurrence establishes the emotion complex and thus evokes the very presence of emotion. For, as Burkitt (1999:127) puts it: "Emotions exist only in the context of relations ... irreducible to social structures, discourses or the body. All these elements are constitutive of emotions, which are felt only by active, embodied beings who are locked into networks of interdependence". Social life constitutes emotion.

Following on from the earlier positioning of the self as the product of relationships, we have the same argument here for emotion as an important component of the self.
To reiterate the above through another return to the vignette: X's experience during and consequent to the abusive encounter cannot be accounted for as simply a correlation between emotion, behaviour and cognition. Instead, it is a historically and culturally contingent, embodied experience. It, and the actions related to it, may be considered particular at a number of levels. First, to the period and culture in which they occur, secondly, to the idiosyncratic learning history of X himself and, third, to the specific situation in which he found himself and in which he was called into action.
Questions may be raised here regarding determinism and agency. It might seem as if the old behaviourist notion of self is being resurrected. In other words, the environment provides the stimulus and the organism responds by behaving in accordance with its learning history. Seen in this way, X would thus be doomed to re-enact and re-experience this scenario, to repeat and, through repeating, experience ever greater distress and despair. X would be reduced to a passive onlooker to the tragedy of his embodiment. In this version X becomes a mechanical reproducer of culture and the various, often oppressive, practices that form part of it.

However, here we are talking of *disposition*, an inclination, a tendency or propensity, which is durable and transferable. This is not a determined action but rather of *a sense of how to go on* in a particular situation. This could be explained more fully by placing the above in the different frame of memory research (Kolb & Whishaw, 1996; Billig, 1999). Dispositions here might be regarded as a display of implicit (skill or procedural) memory rather than declarative (factual) memory. It is embodied, that is, it is displayed *through* the body. This means that it is not necessarily explicit, even though it is accepted that reflection can render these processes more conscious and articulated.

The evocation here of implicit (skill) memory should not be construed as a form of neurological reductionism, or a form of disguised essentialism. That is, it is not a strategy whereby we give a nod to social embeddedness only to subsequently return to the autonomous (or automated) individual. It is important to here again emphasise that the relation between the nervous system, body, environment and society is a highly integrated and irreducible one. Consequently, a change in one of these aspects (for example, physical damage such as to the amygdala of the brain) will have very real effects for the person, those that engage with her or him, and the environments s/he habitually occupies. To use a principle from Von Bertalanffy's General Systems Theory: a change to one part of

the system has consequences for the whole (Vorster & Beyers, 1991). The nervous system, through creating implicit memories (action patterns), forms one of the sites that allows for the establishment of durability. It is a site where dispositions find physical form, the material establishment of "senses of how to go on" in a world marked by time, movement and the particular.

A return here to Caputo (1987) allows us to articulate the notion of propensity more fully. The world is in flux; it constantly shifts and produces the unexpected. A person thus often has to act through their dispositions in novel circumstances, producing actions (ways of going on) that are innovative and surprising. The possibility for the new and different is thus constantly present, with each repetition there is the promise of salvation or tragedy, a previously unimagined way of going on. While a world marked by recollection leaves room for the illusionary ideal of mastery, and the person thus strives to attain control over the flux, repetition renders such a form of mastery unthinkable. Rather, repetition would be concerned with attaining humility towards, hope in, and wonder at the movement of life.

Having now addressed emotion as a complex by, amongst others, invoking the body as habitus or as a "living memory pad" (Burkitt, 1999:87), we can proceed with the next step of our seemingly contradictory project of substantiating the repetitive self. Here we move from a discussion of procedural memory to one of explicit memory. What will become apparent is that in tackling the latter we again land up in the world of skill, of past learning repeated in the contingency of this place and time.

(EXPLICIT) MEMORY.

As with emotion, various assumptions are commonly made regarding the nature of declarative or, specific to our vignette, autobiographical memory (1). Remembering is typically based on an idea of "fishing out a stored memory-trace from the mind, and then playing it back in consciousness" (Billig, 1999:154). The person seems, in this model, to be likened to some sort of "dictaphone spool", which when remembering *reproduces* what it recorded (Schulte, 1993). This (videotape-like) recollection is then represented to others through language. Billig (1999) counters such a construction on two levels: first, by challenging the notion of memory as an accurate depiction of past events; and, secondly, by locating both remembering and forgetting as learnt, rather than pre-social or natural, skills.

As argued within the broad constructionist, discursive paradigm, remembering is located (Billig, 1999), that is, no recollection is considered acontextual. Like emotion, remembering cannot occur outside of context, outside of the web of relations. What we recall and how we constitute that memory is heavily dependent on what is currently happening, where we are, who is present, what we are trying to achieve, and, once again, on the discourses available to us in that context. Since language plays, in this paradigm, a constitutive role in the social world, memory cannot be separated from language. As Thompson, Skrowronski, Larsen and Betz (1996) argue, the retention of memories is made possible through the

1 Explicit or declarative memory refers to memories that one can consciously recall such as, for example, who won the of the 2002 World Cup, whilst autobiographical memory is a more specific form of this type of memory, referring to memories of distinctly personal information, such as one's name, address and date of birth.

formulation of narratives. In the absence of such social or textual scaffolds, all that would remain are fragmented images, moments, feelings, and utterances. Thus, drawing the above two points together, memory emerges through occasioned narration. Consequently, remembering cannot be construed in terms of accurate reproduction, or as Billig (1999:155-156) puts it, in discussing the recollection of a dream, one does "not re-dream the dream" when engaged in such a task; rather, one is "talking about the dream, constructing a coherent narrative, locating the events in a story about past time".

Thus we have here the construal of memory as *occasioned* (memories being evoked and constituted to serve certain purposes in the here-and-now) and of memory as *durable* (fundamental details being retained over a long period of time to later be recalled as a variety of relatively stable narratives). We tell (not necessarily consciously) a particular story in a particular way in a particular context in order to evoke a particular effect, for example, pity, sympathy, empathy, or remorse. However, such narratives should not be construed as acts of fiction or lies (though people often do use stories for simple pragmatic effect) nor are they ahistorical; rather, they are based on real past events which are contained in a variety of narrative forms which constrain the flexibility with which they can be used on later occasions.

Given that remembering is enabled by narration, it follows that remembering is a skilled linguistic activity and that, in order to remember, one has had to acquire the necessary narrative skills to render recollected fragments into a coherent whole. We thus learn to remember. Echoing the emotion work of Miller and Sperry (1987), Edwards and Middleton (1988) demonstrate that it is not only the narrative form that is learned but also that which counts as legitimate content; we are taught "what features are appropriate to recall" (Billig, 1999:157). Caretakers demonstrate to their children through their public recollections, and their guiding questions as their children themselves recount a past event, what details count as important enough to be narrated and thus remembered.

To return to the vignette: X may provide various accounts of his traumatic encounter to a variety of people in a variety of contexts (including himself in the privacy of his own thoughts), engaging in, what Billig (1999:159) calls, "memory work". X draws this event together, he selects and re-selects details as he narrates the tale, each telling shifting in terms of details and emphases according to the context of the telling. He positions himself and his antagonist in the tale, casting the action of each character in a particular light, responding to the real and imagined responses of the listener, responding to the values of his culture. He comments on the actions of each character, justifying, blaming, and excusing, amongst others, the various actions. These accounts will be marked both by variability (in them being located) and by stability (certain points are raised consistently across all these accounts). One such consistency may be that each account positions X as having failed, of having been ineffective in dealing with his aggressor. Each narration successfully undermines his sense of being an efficacious self. They may construe the world as filled with injustice, irrationality, and personal powerlessness and inadequacy. In this way, the narrative forms seem static. They have a fixed quality, an inevitable-ness, a singularity that communicates a sense that this is the way the world is. They suggest this as a fact of the self, an accurate *recollection* of one's true nature, a confirmation that the self previously narrated across the lifespan is factual and correct, rather than something that is alterable or whose status as fact may be questioned. This latter understanding

would open the door for re-negotiation, such as in the context of psychotherapy, which may then succeed in transcending the crippling ideologies and positionings reflected in these initial narratives.

However, in X's moment of crisis no alternative constructions appear possible. This is as good as it gets. Yet somehow he must move on, follow the cultural injunction of putting this behind him. But how can he move on? How can he forget? This requires us to ask how the existential reality of repetition can be acknowledged.

Before tackling this question in the next section, a comment on the evocation of similar memories: In this process of constructing the memory, the presence of similar past events are recalled, those that share features with this narrative. It is important to place these similar events in perspective. The question may be raised as to why this particular incident counts as *an event* for X? One can imagine people for whom this altercation is negligible, a transitory event not held onto, pondered or narrated. In order to make this intelligible we propose that X's incident becomes *an event* due to the effects of these past events. These past events play a role in the establishment of the habitus and the body becomes inculcated or predisposed to being called into action in a particular way by such sets of events. We argue that the habitus sets in place the framework through which this incident is experienced as something with a lingering significance.

REPLACEMENT.

Billig (1999:164) argues that "remembering and forgetting are tightly bound together as social practices". Forgetting is made possible through the process of *replacement*. A particular memory is edited from consciousness by being replaced in its moment of possible evocation by another conversation piece. Forgetting is thus defined as the avoidance of the evocation of a memory. Reworking Freud's central notion of repression as a discursive process, Billig (1999:168) argues that "repression demands replacement, as a dangerous topic is replaced by another" less toxic one. Just as much as we learn the various skills involved in remembering, so we learn the closely associated linguistic and rhetorical skills involved in successful forgetting. In both conversation and thought, gaps or opportunities open for the recollection of various events, and once again implicit memory provides a way to go on, the skills to keep a disturbing memory forgotten.

According to this, then, X is plagued by painful recollection because he either lacks the skills to replace them before they occur or, and this is our speculation, because the alternatives that appear available do not qualify as an adequate replacement. Of course X must have forgotten these events successfully before, since he senses that he has not thought of these occasions for a long time and that the feelings they evoke have returned and were thus previously absent. But "repression is not a once-and-for-all process: it needs to be constantly practised, in order to prevent the repressed thoughts from re-surfacing in conscious awareness" (Billig, 1999:170). Again and again the skills have to be brought to bear to keep the past forgotten.

Again this may be understood either through recollection or repetition. As recollection, repression may be understood as an avoidance of factuality, a sidestepping of the terrible truth of who we are in essence, dodging the self that disturbing events from our past reveal to us. Granted that such a mechanism may be practical, in that it enables the continuance

of daily life, but it is also the mechanism of cowardice since it lacks the courage to "recover its origins in the sphere of primordial Being and pure presence" (Caputo 1987:13). As the narrator's wife in Don DeLillo's novel **White noise** (1984:296) exclaims: "I thought repression was outdated. They've been telling us for years not to repress our fears and desires. Repression causes tension, anxiety, unhappiness, a hundred diseases and conditions. I thought the last thing we were supposed to do was repress something. They've been telling us to talk about our fears, get in touch with our feelings ... But repression is totally false and mechanical. Everybody knows that. *We're not supposed to deny our natures*" (emphases added).

Unlike recollection, repetition's courage is far more humble and future oriented. As much as the habitus provides a flexible sense of how to proceed, it also reflects the past and will thus mark certain incidents as events, to which the skill of replacement must be bought to bear. However, a shocking event, such as the encounter with X's aggressor, is enough to overwhelm these skills and enable distressing memories to flood past all attempts at replacement. In the wake of this failure, X finds himself engaging in the reconstitution of particular memories. The skills that allow for the (situated) formulation of past events are brought to bear. But these do not transcend the trauma in that the narrative that emerges does not locate X in an emancipated elsewhere. The self that emerges from these recollections is not a positive identity. Again he is constituted as the helpless, messed up person from an earlier time. The narrative that emerges endures in its locating of his identity.

It is here, at this point of failed replacement, that psychotherapy may enter the stage. But, given the above conceptualisation, what should such a therapy look like? Billig's (1999) conceptualisation of remembering and forgetting threatens to reduce these processes to discursive skills. Thus psychotherapy could be conceptualised as a set of linguistic skill seminars for the alleviation of memory deficits. For us, such a reading would underplay the role of the body, as developed in this article. Remembering should be located within the emotional complex, as an embodied activity. This point is taken up again in the next section but, first, another issue.

Some questions appear to be left unanswered: How exactly do we know that a distressing recollection is imminent? How do we know that replacement work is being called for before it is too late? How are we, in other words, conscious before consciousness? We argue for two notions here. First, through using Burkitt's (1999) notion of persons as embodied thinkers, as bodies marked by the habitus. A significant part of the emotional complex is the physiological. Included in this would be the musculature. It seems reasonable to say that we experience the bodily resonance of the memory long before the contents emerge into consciousness. As the context changes we become disposed to certain actions, we may already start moving towards the relevant related postures. We may have some perception of this, experiencing this as bodily tension. These subtle responses may be the first warning signs that replacement work may soon be called for.

In addition to this we propose a second notion, a more cognitive compatriot of bodily tension. Here we suggest that we also experience in consciousness a *gestalt* (a vague sense) of where this conversation or thought is going. A gestalt that is more than a sense of bodily tension but a broad linguistic sense of what lies ahead in this line of conversation

should we not act and avoid. Shotter (1993:180) touches on a similar notion when referring to "vague, unformulated 'intralinguistic tendencies'" which are always first *felt* or *sensed* in conversation and which are thus open to response (development or specification) by the speaker. One form of development could be the avoidance of further elaboration through replacement. Thus the tension is dissipated, the toxic topic forgotten, and the conversation allowed to go on.

In the next section we would illustrate the framework developed in this article through considering the practice of psychotherapy, specifically using Narrative Therapy (White & Epston, 1990) as an example. In using this approach we are not offering it as *the* form of psychotherapy that best reflects what we have spoken about. In fact, our framework provides a reading of its practices which contrasts with its own theoretical accounts (for comparison see White & Epston, 1990; and White, 1995). Nor are we thus indicating that all other forms of therapy are caught in the webs of recollection. Such an appraisal is beyond the scope of this article. The use here of Narrative Therapy is the result of its familiarity to the authors and it containing the seeds for an approach founded on repetition.

PSYCHOTHERAPY.

Over the last two decades we have seen the emergence of Narrative Therapy, a form of therapeutic practice and theorising built strongly on constructionist and discursive foundations. The core exemplars of this approach are the writings of Michael White and David Epston (1990, 1995). A central notion is the idea of *re-authoring* (White, 1995), which takes seriously the idea that identity and experience are powerfully influenced by the way we are narrated by ourselves and others, given the discourses available to us. These narrations furthermore reflect the power relations within society. Narrative Therapy consequently chooses to adopt a strong ethical and social justice stance in its practice and understandings of problems. It posits that peoples' identities can be re-authored (reconstituted through narratives) in ways that are less self-destructive, belittling, self-denigrating, oppressive and disempowering. Gergen (1994) expands this notion by emphasising the need for the creation of *narrative multiplicity* in this therapeutic process. The emphasis is then on broadening the narrative resources available to the person for making sense of the shifting tides of relationships and events. This is thus not a process of recollection as defined by Caputo (1987), that is, an attempt to re-establish or return to some ideal cultural narrative but, instead, the creation of an innovative, transcending narrative diversity that enables the continuance of the task of achieving a self.

It is possible to link the creation of alternative narratives (and consequently alternative versions of self) and Billig's (1999) emphasis on the process of replacement in dealing with the challenges of life. A diversity of narratives can be created for the person to draw from in the process of replacement. Naturally, these replacements need to be credible, which demands several broad considerations:

- A replacement needs to be culturally and ethically valid, that is, it must be in line with what is culturally and ethically salient for the person. To draw from the point made by Andersen (1992), that which is too alien, too different, will not be accepted or even worked with by the client. For example, an alternative narrative may need to be sensitive to the senses of masculinity that traffic in X's society and which he prescribes to. A narrative that thus locates him as having failed to maintain some

duty of masculinity may leave him still feeling inadequate and powerless. Rather a somewhat conservative alternative, in that it doesn't challenge the gender binary, may be to locate the actions of the other as a failure of masculinity, in that his actions were immature, a failure of composure and tact, thus positioning X as "the better man" for maintaining a rational standpoint in the face of such immaturity.

- Drawing from the work of White (1998) the above point may be repeated, this time on a more idiosyncratic level. In order to become possible replacements the alternative narratives must stay close to the particularities of the lived experience of the client. The aim is not to distort the facts of the event but to fully acknowledge the experience of event. Thus the aim is not to convince X that he wasn't anxious, scared, angry, confused or overwhelmed. The aim is not to avoid engagement with the event but rather to locate alternatives, re-interpretations that do not position these experiences as profound failures of self or as pathology.

- Finally, the alternatives must evoke the emotional complex; they must involve the person as an embodied thinker. This does not imply that each therapeutic encounter should be cathartic but, to repeat the above two points, that an alternative narrative needs to fully engage with the factuality of Xs context and experience. Given that emotion is a complex, such an engagement can but only be emotionally evocative.

Given the latter, it is thus not surprising that therapies generally require the detailing of an event, which must then re-evoke, to some level, the feelings, postures and other embodiments associated with the recollection. In the (therapeutic) space of this evocation, the alternatives, the replacements, can be crafted. Thus, through this process, a credible alternative replacement may become available to X the next time the flux tosses an aggressor into his life. This could be a replacement that construes him differently: as less powerless, less self-denigrating, and more able to act in ways that he deems useful. The successful repetitions of such replacements will counter and transcend the unproductive forms of recollection that have, until then, haunted his life.

CLOSING.

In the above article we have integrated several ideas. Where possible we have tried to address various tensions and contradictions, though we admit that complete success is unlikely. What we do hope for is that the above discussion adds to an understanding of the self as deeply social and ethical, and that it also provides a useful addition to discussions amongst contemporary theories and psychotherapies that endeavour to take context and ideology seriously. Finally, we hope that this substantiation of a self marked by repetition (rather than recollection), acknowledges our deep embeddedness in history and context and that, in us accepting life as untameable flux, there is also always hope for transcendence.

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