

## Understanding Different Worlds: The Theory of Dimensional Accrual/ Dissociation

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### Abstract

*Theories of communication abound. Most attempt to explain communication as if it were a uniform behavior which can be understood by a universal set of axioms or a set of unilinear variables. However, research in multicultural, intercultural, and cross-cultural communication has generated data that defy a singular theory or set of universal laws. The values of parsimony and heuristic scope that most theoreticians hold dear have made it difficult for them to appreciate the complexity of communication as an environmental process that is neither unilinear nor unidimensional. The theory of dissociation and dimensional accrual explains the variety of communicative behaviors that have been widely observed and reported, by initiating the explanation at the fundamental levels of space and time.*

*The theory states that as one moves from the magic univalent, to the mythic bivalent and to the perspectival trivalent worlds, dimensional awareness accrues or increases. This does not, however mean that it becomes "better," for no transcendental criteria are assumed. Nor is accrual a form of "progress," because no final goal or telos is assumed. The magic human is evinced by the emergence (co-constitutional genesis) of self and Other(s). Magic is a clear expression of want and identity as difference. However, identity is still predominant. Incantation is identical with the thing "evoked." Magic communication is idolic in nature. Mythic humans exhibit more dissociation than magic humans. Mythic communication is characterized by polarities, such as yin and yang and figural and literal, whereby each polar quality contains aspects of the other. Myth is polarized and as such it is ambiguous. Mythic communication is symbolic in nature. The perspectival world is characterized by a complete dissociation and fragmentation of the world. Rather than polar complementarity, in the perspectival world opposition becomes the dominant mode. An example is dialectical dualistic thinking, which is manifested as a strong concern for egological issues in psychology, linguistics, politics, economics, science, law, epistemology, and so forth. Perspectival communication is signalic, absolutely arbitrary as evinced in codes.*

*However, accrual is not a simple linear process. Rather, as dimensions of awareness compound the total is different from the sum of parts. The whole exhibits synergy. As a person becomes aware of more and more dimensions, that person's identity shifts accordingly. One becomes more and more dissociated from other phenomena in the world. The world increasingly fragments, not only psychologically and interpersonally but also in terms of measurement and mechanism. For instance, the perspectival modern world is characterized by the*

*total separation and creation of the subject and the object. Ironically, strict objectivists invented the subject sui generis by logical implication.*

If I steal a magic amulet such as a "power crystal," have I literally stolen the power? Will the owner be angry? Indeed, in the magic world the object and its power are identical. There is no dissociation or abstract separation between a thing and its "function." In the magic world one must say the incantation perfectly, word-for-word, or wield the magic object otherwise nothing will happen. Whoever knows the magic words or possesses the magic object, has the power. The object, such as a scepter or wand, can be lost, stolen, broken, or dissipated.

In the magic world, communication is one-dimensional, univalent, idolic. I can literally steal a god from its temple. In India for instance, statues literally drink milk. The temple statue is not symbolic but idolic. In the magic world there is no distance, no separation between the literal and the figural. If after stealing god I am caught by its worshipers, I may very likely be killed. The semiotic division of the sign into a signifier and a signified is a Cartesian way of thinking that cannot understand magic communication. Magic messages have an uninterpretable unity.

But what if I steal a crucifix and throw it into the mud? Have I thrown god into the mud? Will the owner be extremely angry with me? To a modern Christian of course I have not thrown god into the mud. Yet, the owner is quite likely to be very disturbed about my show of disrespect. However, it is unlikely that I will be killed for such a stupid act, but I may well get punched in the nose for it. Mythological communication is two dimensional, am-bivalent, symbolic. The crucifix is not identical with god but symbolizes the deity and may even be the focus of prayer. In the mythological world, the ambiguity and ambivalence of metaphor dominates. An entire people can come to live their lives by a single religious text even speaking in the metaphorical style of its written prose. An example is the use of the Bible among pioneers in the early United States. Semantic polarity characterizes mythic symbolism. When I say that, "that old woman's hand is like a leaf of tobacco," I literally and not literally mean it at the same time. There is a qualitative figural equivalence but not a literal equivalence. Polarity is not the same as duality whereby the poles become totally dissociated/disconnected. In mythical communication a thing can have more than one meaning such as a literal one and a figural one at the same time.

What if I steal a stop light? Have I stolen the very concept of stop? Does anyone care? In the modern perspectival world, incantation and oath-taking have little relevance. Languages are said to be totally arbitrary. What characterizes modernity is perspectival dualities such as the subject/object dichotomy. Everything is random occurrence. The

perspectival world is three-dimensional, trivalent. The individual has a critical distance which enables doubt, irreverence, disinterest. This is the world of discrete duality. The perspectival world is one of fragmented phenomena such as the subject and the object, and the on and off of a stop light. The perspectival world is spatial and as such is linear so that a thing can have only one meaning at a time. There is only one correct solution to every mathematical problem. Although the perspectival world does not recognize ambivalence as real (knowledge), the color red means stop only as a convention. Stealing a stop light may inconvenience people or anger those who have to pay for it, but in and of itself, it is not something to get "worked up about." Perspectival communication is signalic and it stimulates little emotion. Modern codes, like the 1 and 0 of computer language, are examples. In magic and mythic cultures however, even numbers take on inherent significance such as the calculations of astrologers, and "666" in Christianity.

As one moves from (accrues) one-dimensional idolic, to two-dimensional symbolic, to three-dimensional signalic ways of being and communicating, one becomes more and more dissociated from the rest of the world. Language becomes increasingly an arbitrary system of labels. For example, in most traditional cultures a person's name has a meaning which identifies a quality of the person. The person's name may be the same as their trade or the same as a saint, or that of other phenomena one is associated with like stars, the wind, water, power, strength, tiger, dragon, and so forth. But for many perspectival dissociated moderns, one's name means nothing.

Another example of complete dissociation is modern art "for its own sake." Modern art claims for itself a radical independence from the rest of the world and even aesthetic valuation, which is very different from ritual artifacts and religious iconography. The dualistic problem of physical referentiality ("realism"), for instance, is a modern perspectival dilemma that cannot exist in the magic world.

As dimensional awareness accrues, dissociation increases with countless consequences such as an increasing sense of isolation, a metaphysical denial of meaning, an increasing manipulation of a fragmented world which enables technical acuity, and a hyper-valuation of disinterest. In the modern world everything is in need of "improvement" and "development" in accord with linear progressivism. And the best way to solve problems is to first fragment them into smaller parts. Hence, the essence of reductionism and perspective. The modern sees the world and life as a problem to be "resolved" (the optical metaphor is telling as perspectivism is a visual phenomenon characteristic of "enlightenment" thinking).

Our interest in this article is an original synthesis and development of two different neo-Kantian scholars' ideas. The idea of transparency of

civilizational expression as applied to the fact that consciousness/cultures come in many different forms or manifolds. This sense of transparency is borrowed from the German thinker Jean Gebser who did the bulk of his writing in the 1930's and 1940's. The other neo-Kantian idea is that of dissociation or abstraction, borrowed from Lewis Mumford who did the bulk of his writing during a long and productive career in the United States that began in the 1920's and stretched through the 1960's.

This paper combines these two ideas into a theory which has synergy. In combining these ideas, a wholly new approach to explaining culturally diverse patterns of consciousness and communicator styles emerges.

### **Gebser and Civilizational Expression**

The theory presented here is an adaptation and expansion of the theory of civilizational expression developed by Gebser (1949/1984) and the concept of dissociation presented by Mumford (1934). These two processes are intimately related. The more dissociated a culture becomes, the more dimensions they are able to "reflect" on, to be aware of as such. Reflective consciousness presupposes dissociative distance, a separation from the process reflected upon, like a fish discovering water only when it is removed from it.

Gebser did deem it necessary to expand the Kantian notion of synthetic world constitution in order to explain the observed differences among cultures. Different cultural worlds constitute different synthetic *a priori* manifolds which manifest as different kinds of space and time, and behaviors. This requires not a simplistic social constructivist notion of reality, but rather an understanding of the ecology of the mind, the integration of the brain and environment. Cultural differences explain the variety of spatial and temporal behaviors experienced around the world and across historical change. This approach has also helped to explain the variety of perceptions described by psychologists as "developmental" differences (Jean Piaget for instance).

Furthermore, Gebser explored the relationship between culture, communication, and synthetic constitutionality on a level never before (or since) achieved. While one can find many who have pondered the relationship between thought, communication and reality or world, none has surpassed Gebser's painstaking analysis of the nexus where iteration (including language), thought, and reality combine in the formation of what he called "civilizational expression."

For Gebser, every behavior, every ritual, every gesture, every artifact, every structure (including technological apparatuses like the television and the rocket), every word, in short every act that is human is a manifest

expression of intellect, will, capability, and desire. Every artifact reveals the manifold of its maker, and so different styles of painting, different modes of behaving, different political and organizational ideologies, different religious and mythological expressions, different ways of structuring social interaction, different ways of living and dying, which enable us to identify one culture from another, are manifestations of the synthetic manifold of those who continually make the culture (speak it into being) every minute of their lives.

Avoiding a specific metaphysical faith which dominates one particular culture, modern western culture with its dualistic thinking, Gebser carefully avoids the mistakes later writers would fall into. He does not say that people "extend" or "exteriorize" the manifold as a psychologist would say, nor does he argue that civilizational expressions are socially constructed as sociologists would argue. Nor does he discuss language in dualistic terms such as "speech" (*parole*) and transcendental "language system" (*la langue*) as *lingualism* maintains. By avoiding dualism he also avoids the dialectics of the Hegelians. Instead he simply observes how artifactual phenomena, including the concept of "nature," are manifested. He does not presume that culture or psychology or sociology is somewhere else, causally prior to, or "behind" civilizational expressions. Instead, he argues that the manifold is given directly in the form of the artifact. For instance, the modern western notion of time is manifested "directly" in the structure of the mechanical clock (Mumford, 1934; Kramer & Ikeda, in press). If one understands the clock, and the daily behavior patterns known as schedules, traffic jams, et cetera, then one understands modern western time.

Not all worlds appear to be the same. As many cultural researchers have observed, different worlds present different sorts of space and time, different passive syntheses, or manifolds. Some are more nonverbal ("high-context") while others are more linear and verbal ("low-context"). Perhaps the greatest researcher of these differences is Gebser. At least 30 years before Edward T. Hall or Clifford Geertz, Gebser had recorded a vast array of spatio-temporal manifolds evident as different kinds of cultural patterning, artifacts, literatures, religions, ritual behavior, linguistics, and so forth.

During the decades of the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's Gebser used a neo-Kantian approach to organize a huge set of observations. It remains the most ambitious effort at cross-cultural theorizing to date, dwarfing in both scope and rigor anything the Toronto School did, or modern cultural anthropologists have thus far achieved. However, the very scope of his study precluded it from being translated from German so that a larger audience might study it, that is until just one volume of his huge corpus, a book over 600 pages finally appeared in English in 1985 (*The Ever-Present Origin* which appeared in German in 1949).

Gebser's cross-cultural research led him to recognize certain patterns that seemed to originate at the synthetic level of space and time. Simply put, different cultures are identifiable as different not merely because they may present different languages or religions but they are recognizably different because they present different spatio-temporal manifolds. They present subtle and not so subtle differences which are evinced through daily comportment and styles of living, and it must be noted dying. Differences at this level are evident in virtually every aspect of a culture from language to arts, religions, games, economic behavior, rituals, and so forth.

### **Dissociation**

The term dissociation is used in an effort to describe a state of affairs whereby a phenomenon observed and the subjective observer become increasingly and mutually "objectified," separated, fragmentary. According to the theory of co-constitutional genesis (Kramer, 1993), the subject and the object are codependent phenomena. You cannot have one without the other. They form a tandem of opposing concepts which is penultimately modern. For something to become an object of critical scrutiny by a subject, dissociation must first occur. Let us take the phenomenon of time as an example.

In so-called primitive, or less objective societies, time is not reckoned or fragmented into discrete units like minutes and hours but instead is experienced as a constantly varying flux. Each day is directly experienced as having a different length of light and dark than ever other day. For instance, as one approaches the winter solstice each day has less and less light as the nights lengthen. In societies where people are associated with the larger natural environment, they are said to be "in harmony" with the continually shifting temporal dimension of the world. Such people tend to go to bed when it is dark and arise with the sun. Hence, their work day is longest in the summer and they sleep more in the winter.

But as dissociation occurs, a people may separate themselves more and more from the larger environmental and spiritual forces that are readily observed. Instead of attuning themselves with the empirically given flux of daily variety they seek to generate abstract models that tame the natural world, creating a second-order world, a simulacrum, that serves the purpose of power and predictability.

### **Theoretical Presentation**

In an attempt to understand the various types of communicative behavior that one encounters in daily life everywhere on earth, it is best

to begin with an appreciation of the spatio-temporal valences that constitute a person's world.

We may begin with a series of questions. Why is it for instance, that different people react so differently to a phenomenon like a hurricane or a religious artifact? How is it that a volcano, for instance, can be a deity to one person and a geological occurrence to another? How is it that a crucifix can be a sacred object to one and a bit of costume jewelry to another? In order to understand their very different behaviors regarding the volcano or the crucifix, the very different ways in which people react, communicate significance, and speak of and act toward these things, a student of their lives must take into account their differing spatio-temporal (life-world) orientations.

Three different world-orientations are proposed in an attempt to explain the variety of human behaviors people exhibit. The three orientations are called magic, mythic, and perspectival. These designations are borrowed from Gebser. But moving beyond Gebser, it is demonstrable that these three kinds of communication/comportment correlate with a continuum of dissociation. Magic communication is one-dimensional idolic, mythic is two-dimensional symbolic, and the perspectival world is three-dimensional signalic.

The thesis presented here is that *as one moves from the magic, to the mythic and to the perspectival worlds, dimensional awareness accrues or adds up. But it is not a simple linear process. Rather, as dimensions of awareness increase the total is different from the sum of parts. The whole exhibits synergy. The whole is more than the sum of parts. As a person becomes aware of more and more dimensions, that person becomes more and more dissociated from other phenomena in the world. The world increasingly fragments, not only psychologically and interpersonally but also in terms of measurement and mechanism.* Hence the name of the theory being introduced in this paper: Dimensional Accrual/Dissociation.

So-called "previous" orientations, like the magic and the mythic, are not "displaced" or "surpassed" (these being perspectival spatial concepts). No linear progressivism (positivism) is presupposed. Rather, all "previous" orientations are present in more complex ones. Also, history demonstrates that none are inherently superior to any of the others. Such a valuation is dependent upon the criteria used for comparison and there are no known "transcendental" criteria outside of each world orientation that could be applied to each one independently. Nor do we suggest that humanity "progresses" in only one direction. Neither is being more "complex," which means here being aware of more dimensions, necessarily "better" than being more "simple." What we are observing and trying to explain is merely difference.

### ***Magic One-Dimensionality***

Magic is the first manifestation of human will to self-awareness (and by implication Other(s) awareness). The magic human is evinced by the emergence of self and Other(s) awareness. With the dim (fuzzy) awareness of a difference between the self and the world around the self, comes the need to control that slowly emergent (dissociating) realm "out there." Magic manifests initial dissociation, a sense of being separate from the world of things. Magic is manifested as the first efforts of humans to confront and manipulate forces that impose upon the self.

Magic is a clear expression of want and identity as difference. Magicians want to make a difference in the way things naturally are. The words "magic," "make," "might," "machine," "mechanism," all share the same root word *mag(h)*, which is an ancient Persian word later introduced into ancient Greek. Magic is making. Unlike the archaic human, the magic human produces many artifactual phenomena including complex systems of behavior, rituals, objects, and structures which are available for scrutiny. And awareness of language and communication as incantation becomes vitally important to the magic human.

But identity is still predominant. The incantation is the thing "evoked." They are not yet rendered totally separate from each other and arbitrary. The incantation and the thing evoked are practically identical. In the magic world names are carefully guarded because to possess a name is to possess that person or thing. The gap of referentiality so problematic in the modern world does not exist. The magic human does not re-present anything but rather presents it. The ambiguity of metaphor does not exist. During magic ritual like Christian communion for instance, the wine and bread are not analogues for blood and flesh, they literally are flesh and blood. In Biblical terms, first there was the word and then the evocation of light and all else. Churches that claim the wine and blood to be merely symbols manifest a later version of Christianity, the mythological version. In the magic world of the prehistoric caves in Southwestern Europe, ancient Egypt, and pre-Columbian Americas, a painting and the thing painted are one. The painter is literally making the animal in the process of creating its form. For this reason, ancient Egyptian artisans were careful to not paint dangerous animals like poisonous vipers, "correctly" lest they crawl off the surface and bite someone. Similarly, it is a crime in the world of Islam to graphically represent the divine.

In the magic world, forces like spirit, *chi*, and *manna* flow through everything including the emergent self. In other words, the "out there" is not yet distinctly Other or even "out there." There is no dead "empty space" *sui generis* between the self and the world, a space which is a hallmark of the perspectival world. Instead the magic world is "full" and

"alive." Everything touches everything else. The magic human can never be "utterly alone." Suicide out of the despair of existential crisis does not exist in the magic world. For the same reason, predominantly magical societies do not pursue massive technological projects because to cut down one tree requires an elaborate ritual. It would be inconceivable to dam an entire river or move a mountain. In the magic world, spirit beings such as demons can possess a human (which is also a spirit being). The perspectival differentiation between dream reality and awakened reality is not clear. Because the universe is a totality of living things like river, sky, mountain, eagle, bear, wind, and so forth, which ambiguously blend into one another, everything is sacred and potentially dangerous. Hence magic humans do not separate the spiritual from the practical in their daily lives. They are in constant communion. They appear to the modern perspectival human to be obsessively concerned, to be superstitiously reluctant to act. Supplication is a constant mode of comportment. They are respectful, if not fearful.

Magic consciousness is evinced in the intensely emotional identification people have with group membership such as races, ethnic groups, teams, nation-states and other referents of identity. In the one-dimensional magic world everything is interchangeable with everything else . . . identical, irregardless of space or time because magical space/time is point-like. For instance, for the believer a curse, charm, or "spell" (the word "spelling" being a residual derivation that yet incorporates communication) can have *immediate* effect miles away. For believers, a curse can effect future generations or long dead ancestors. A pin stuck into a voodoo effigy has immediate consequences on its victim no matter where or when they are. The doll is identical with the person. The magic world/consciousness is a single dimensional reality. There are no spatial or temporal "gaps."

Magic consciousness is manifested in the intense identification of the self with a geographical location, or blood kinship. Magic one-dimensionality does not perceive anything as arbitrary or dissociated. Magic identity is fundamentally absolute and unchangeable. I am a Japanese. I am "of this land" and "of this people" and I can never change my race or ancestors. Magical identity is not amenable to choice. It is not contingent.

Magic communication is idolic. If you steal the statue of my god from the temple you have literally stolen god, not just a symbol or sign of a god, but the god itself. Idolic communication expresses little dissociation between the mode of communication or form, and the signified or content. Such dualistic thinking does not exist in the magic world.

***Mythic Two-Dimensionality***

The mythic world is two-dimensional. It has a vertical and horizontal valence. Hence mythic communication is characterized by narrative story-telling. Drama emerges with mythic humans. Drama yet contains the characteristic of magical identification and emotionalism, but it is also recognized as a fiction and a re-presentation that is distinctly different from that which is referred to. In this way, mythic humans exhibit more dissociation than magic humans. Theatrical distance is an example. By adding the horizontal or paradigmatic dimension to expression, mythic communication extends magical incantation into story and metaphor. It is characterized by polarities such as *yin* and *yang* which contain elements of each other. The mythic world evinces a stronger sense of dissociative self-identity than exhibited in the magic world. Heroes emerge as distinct characters. The gods too become more anthropomorphic with clearer personalities.

The mythic world presents polarities (not yet dissociated dualities) such as manifested in moral thinking. The tragic character in religious and mythological writing is an ambiguous person who is both good and bad at once. Myth appears "fuzzy," fraught with ambiguity and multiple interpretations when compared with the clarity of sharp distinction characteristic of the drive for "enlightened" perspectival rational binary thinking. While the magic world is "dark" and the mythic world is "dim," the perspectival world, with its sense of "clear" empty space, designates itself "enlightened." Definition and knowledge are equated in the modern perspectival world. By comparison, in the magic world there is no good or bad just do or do not. "White" and "black" magic are actually mythological designations.

The mythic world is populated by semi-autonomous egos, characters such as "heros" (not the equivalent of modern "good guys") and law-givers about whom stories are told. Their deeds are both noble and horrible. Mythic communication is "unclear." Mythological texts present multiple meanings which disturb modern perspectival readers who equate knowledge with simple unambiguous definitive statements. For the modern person, propositions that are falsifiable by means of methodical observation (operational definitions) constitute knowledge. But for the mythological human, truth is never so clear, and sacred texts which provoke multiple interpretations constitute knowledge.

***Perspectival Three Dimensionality***

The concern about "One's perspective" is a hallmark of ancient Periclean Athens and Republican Rome. The perspectival world, with its strong valuation of logic, emerged with the pre-Socratics and was manifested as philosophical (systematic) dialectics. This mode of thinking continued until the death of Quintillian at which time the mythological

consciousness structure became predominant once again. It was the rebirth of the pagan attitude known as the "Renaissance" which marks the manifestation of the modern world. Dialectical, dualistic thinking once again took precedence over emotional harmony.

The perspectival world is characterized by a strong concern for egological issues in philosophy, politics, economics, science, and so forth. Truth is not rendered via meditative introspection of the conscience (the heart) or reading "the signs" such as entrails, stars, crystal balls, et cetera. Rather, in the perspectival world, truth is rendered through pitting perspectives against each other in argumentation (a battle of minds). This shift from compassion to dualism is evident in all modes of life including religion. Both mythological prayer and magical ritual are communal activities involving the full participation of everyone in the group. For instance, the Western teleological notion of judgement day initially meant a time when all the dead would be judged together at the end of time. But with the emergence of perspectivity, religion, like all other civilizational expressions, mutated so that the individual deathbed judgement and private confession emerged. As Max Weber (1904-05/1958) noted, modern Christianity even embraced private property economics in symbiotic fashion. A measure of piety is personal wealth. God blesses individuals with worldly positions.

In politics the perspectival is manifested as the principle of individual civil liberties and the political behavior of "one man, one vote." Economically, perspectivism appears as intense privatization. Modern philosophies are obsessed with the individual, with existential crisis, identity crisis, and the Other.

In perspectival painting, artists like Leonardo Da Vinci struggled to generate rational rules of geometric perfection in order to represent depth space and spatial relationships, not spiritual relationships as stressed by mythological artists. When the individual stands before a Renaissance painting the lines of perspective situate the observer in relation to the observed as an object among objects. When one stands before a medieval tapestry or fresco, objects are not geometrically deployed in space with proper ratio. Instead, what is represented are spiritual/emotional relationships. Perspectivism is manifested as a mental-rational mode of being, not an emotional one. For the perspectival human, the world is seen as a mass of problems in wait for rational solutions.

While modern science sees the heart as merely a muscular pump, mythological and magical humans see it as the seat of passion and the soul. Icons of gods including The Madonna and Christ often exhibit the chest cavity with a human heart graphically detailed, not an exaggeration of the brain. The perspectival world emphasizes the brain and cold calculation while the mythological and magical worlds emphasize

morality and spiritual powers. Science is a formal inquisition of nature, a process of thesis/antithesis. Nature is seen as an object for the subject. By comparison, objectivism is impossible in the magic and mythic worlds. They have no dissociated subject which can objectify the Other.

### **When Worlds Collide**

A recent case of complex multidimensional communication is the varied reactions to the untimely death of the Princess of Wales, Diana Simpson. Millions reacted in what Gebser would call a purely magical way expressing instantaneous identification and emotion (indeed pain or anguish) that indicates a one-to-one unidimensional identification with the deceased. According to many, "she was England." It is not surprising that the English had the most profoundly emotional reaction to her death. Others eulogized her in mythological terms, telling endless stories of her romantically tragic life. And yet others reacted in a more dispassionate, one might say objective or rational way, noting coldly the facts that she had never attended university and spent lavishly on her wardrobe. Of course, such different attitudes (valences) toward Princess Diana do not get along well together.

Much frustration and even conflict is the result of one person's inability or unwillingness to appreciate another person's world-view. For instance, the scientifically biased observer of a religious ceremony may conclude that it is merely an expression of superstitious nonsense. The utterances made during such rituals do not lend themselves to the principle of falsifiability and are therefore, by positivistic standards, meaningless noise. And yet, such rituals appear to have more staying power and to be held more dearly than almost any other kind of utterance. The pious individual who worships with great emotional commitment appears utterly irrational to the scientifically minded observer. On the other hand the religious person may react with strong emotional force when the scientist takes it upon him or herself to test and explain a religious principle or phenomenon (such as the Shroud of Turin) in scientific, qua reductionistic terms.

In an effort to explain what can be very divergent reactions to the same object or behavior the theoretician must first bracket his or her own prejudice and attempt to understand the social agent's attitude. In this sense, intercultural communication takes place within cultures, even within individuals. For instance, a university educated scientist may have a clash of cultural perspectives with his or her own countrymen who have not been socialized into the modern culture which recognizes only linear rational and empirically testable propositions to be real. Culture, is no longer geographically or even linguistically bounded. Many countries and so-called uniformal cultures such as those found in

India and China are today fraught with just such a continual struggle of polyversal multiculturalism. Sometimes this struggle between "traditional beliefs" and "modern beliefs" exists within a single individual. Social scientific literatures today are crowded with studies and essays about the "problem of identity" including issues of cognitive complexity, cognitive dissonance, and diasporic confusion.

In the quickly changing world of today, revolutions of thought and attitude are occurring within individuals who sometimes seem lost between generations and world-views. The generation gap can be a gap, or crisis of identity and confidence in the individual who finds him or herself to be the nexus of nothing less than a revolution in world views. Their everyday lives are torn between traditional modes of comportment and modern ways which are characterized by what Gebser called "temporal anxiety," or a constant sense of urgency. In the modern world, with its spatial rather than spiritual emphasis, life is an endless series of conquests and projects. The spatial notions of measurement, expansion, and growth undergird the modern value of efficiency. Linear accumulation drives the modern individual who is highly mobile in all ways; physically, socially, economically, even culturally. The space/time manifold is quite different in the modern perspectival world as compared with mythic or magic dominated worlds.

Over the past decades many scholars have attempted to explain communication as a unilinear process that presupposes a variable analytic model that has structured our very way of thinking about communication. This model originated with the first true modernist, Aristotle, who formulated the image of a discrete source sending a discrete packet of information, the message, to another discrete phenomenon, the receiver across empty space. This linear metaphysic is also assumed by the modern social scientific notion of variable analytics. For instance, Hofstede (1991) continues to propagate a universal explanation of cultural difference that is described as a single dimension with two mutually excluding and opposing values at either end of a line of variance. In this way of thinking, all cultures, indeed all people can presumably be positioned on a single line with "collectivism" being at one end and "individualism" being at the other end (Triandis, 1988). Other prominent examples of this mode of thinking include: high versus low context cultures and polychronic versus monochronic cultures (Hall, 1966, 1983), direct versus indirect communicator styles (Okabe, 1983), high versus low power distance cultures (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Hofstede, 1991), feminine versus masculine cultures (Hofstede, 1980), trusting versus distrusting cultures (Fukuyama, 1995), past versus future oriented cultures (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961); ascription versus achievement oriented cultures (Parsons, 1951); expressive versus instrumental interaction (Parsons, 1951) doing versus being (Heidegger,

Ger. 1926/Eng. 1962; Maslow, 1973). The list of defining dualism is endless.

All of these approaches assume a western, more specifically Aristotelian, version of explanation. According to the linear logic of this variable analytic metaphor, as one moves toward one end of the line (the collectivistic end for instance), one *must* move away from the other end (individualism) with equal and opposite measure. The line is a ratio. Modern perspectival variable analytics posits as knowledge only a dialectic of mutually excluding oppositions. The assumption being presupposed is that an individual could not be both at once or neither. Observation however proves that depending on the people one is interacting with it is possible to be collectivistic one moment and then individualistic another. In fact a person can be both at once when he or she is in mixed company of say a group which includes family members and/or close friends, and strangers and/or enemies. While collectivism is characterized by trust, individualism is characterized by suspicion. A person can exhibit both trust and suspicion at once in a mixed group or even with an individual towards whom one is ambivalent.

### Conclusion

The theory of dissociation and dimensional accrual offers an explanation of the variance exhibited by social agents when they interact with others and objects in the world. But, to borrow a phrase from Friedrich Nietzsche we have attempted to be "wide awake" about our own cultural predispositions in the process of theorizing. The theory of dissociation and dimensional accrual attempts to avoid the kinds of metaphysical assumptions other theorists blindly presuppose while at the same time explaining how they actually express and promote a particular world-view as singularly correct and universally valid. In short, we recognize ahead of time that magic and mythic persons very likely do not write theories of intercultural communication like this, and might find this effort quite inconceivable. Relativism of this ilk is a hallmark of Nietzschean postmodern thinking which is quite rare.

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