The (In-) Ability of the Humanities to Work in an Empirical, Interaction-Theoretical, and Interdisciplinary Framework

xxx Introduction

The previous sections of this paper are set off by the hypothesis that the relationship between the humanities on the one hand and clinical psychology on the other, which has always been a difficult one, has by today become almost entirely dysfunctional. There are, at any rate, various indications, that the cooperation between psychology and culture studies is by far not as productive as it could and indeed should be, given the basic fact that human beings, while they are, of course, culturally embedded – which calls upon the humanities –, also are always at the same time and above all essentially psychical beings and have a mental life, which calls upon psychology.

All the more unfortunate it is that the mainstream of the humanities and in particular of the German speaking humanities seems to have largely returned to doing "pure" literary scholarship over the last two decades, thus undergoing a sort of epistemological back-lash which some have tentatively called the 'Re-Philologization of the Humanities' meaning to turn away from more elaborate theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches (xx Erhart) – and which, in the 1990s, remarkably coincides with political conservatism in many European countries. Clinical psychology and psychoanalysis on the other hand have made quite some progress during this time period – introducing empirical psychotherapy-research, clinical psycho-trauma studies, qualitative developmental psychology, attachment theory, relational approaches to name but a few. These fields have successfully pursued new strains of research about the human condition and its mental workings, research which the humanities could and should pick up on – but oddly aren't.

In section one through three of this essay I have focused on one of the more peculiar side-effects of this epistemological back-lash: the fact that in spite of the anti-psychologism which is inherent in the German speaking humanities and to a lesser degree also in international humanities, some isolated concepts of psychology are used – and indeed abused – in an almost fetish-like manner by a small and heterogeneous group of culture and literary

studies' representatives most of whom lean towards poststructuralist thought. In so doing, these scholars basically take care that the psychological concepts are used in a way which does not infringe on the humanities' epistemological traditions and at the same time serve as an institutional fig leaf signalling the humanities' openness towards interdisciplinary cooperation with clinical studies and empirical psychology. In particular, the concept of 'trauma' has thus turned into a sort of humanities' buzzword. Therefore I have looked at 'trauma' as a prime example for this curious process of misappropriating in which a term from clinical psychology is sometimes, in fact, inverted for the very purpose of supporting long standing 'interpretative habits' and/or cultural prejudices of the humanities instead of assisting to dissolve and differentiate them by engaging in serious forms of interdisciplinary cooperation.

These observations then lead to the hypothesis that an interdisciplinary exchange between humanities and clinical psychology -- or else any empirical humanistic sciences research -- is not only strangely underdeveloped but seems almost unwelcome, as if such exchange was perceived as an unwarranted provocation and as threat to the humanities internal proceedings, methodological conventions and institutional power structures. Moreover, I have attempted to show that humanities' concepts of 'trauma' are so diffuse and ambiguous that even under circumstances of utmost mutual goodwill, any serious interdisciplinary communication between psychology and literary studies is bound to fail – or fall short of the minimal standards of serious scientific exchange. In order to substantiate these – maybe daring and certainly controversial – tenets I decided to invent a fictional character, the young clinician Dr Goodheart, who enthusiastically attempts and yet dramatically fails in what increasingly becomes evident to be largely impossible: to understand what these literary scholarship representatives actually mean by 'trauma' and to reconcile this with what clinical psycho-trauma studies and empirical therapy research have ascertained about phenomena of mental injury.

The young (fictional) psycho-trauma clinician Dr Goodheart reads into poststructuralist trauma theories and first is fascinated, than baffled and at last taken aback by paradoxical ontological statements like: "*the Trauma*" is "always already inscribed" in the human psyche as its "permanent implication"; he becomes increasingly estranged by assertions like: "the trauma has to remain inaccessible to memory" (Weinberg), and that attempting to remember and express trauma equals an abominable "excorporation", a "sacrilege" and "betrayal of the dead" (Sebald, Baer, Braese), a violation of the blissful "jouissance of traumatic knowledge" (Juranville, Bronfen), a deplorable loss of its "unique incomprehensibility" and its formidable force to perform an "onslaught to comprehension" (Caruth). I then go ahead and analyse these

kinds of discourses as following certain patterns of (ab-)using clinical sources in order to garner an interdisciplinary profile while at the same time continuing to buttress literary scholarship's deeply engrained defence mechanisms against empirical research and psychology.

Moreover, these mechanisms can be traced back to what psychodynamic therapy research has established as mechanism of 're-traumatizing acting-out', i.e. a passive-active inversion in which those who were victimized (in however physical, emotional, relational or even intellectual manner) unsuspectingly turn perpetrator themselves or at least unwittingly identify with perpetrator perspectives and thus inadvertently get entangled in supporting counter-therapeutic discourses -- be it in areas of interpersonal, institutional or intellectual action. This then might, in the end, also lend itself to acts as drastic as simplistic trauma-therapy bashing (see Welzer above xx) thus impacting the work of practicing psycho-trauma therapists -- and also raising the still open question of how 'intellectual violence' and/or 'intellectual ethics' and quality control of academic work might be adequately defined.

In this final section of the essay, however, I would like to go beyond the particular issue of literary scholars' (ab)use of trauma concepts. For, what we have perceived as a problem of poststructuralism might very well be embedded in a much larger context which pertains to the humanities on the whole and to German speaking traditions of literary and philological scholarship, i.e. the *Geisteswissenschaften*, in particular -- irrespective of their special theoretical affiliation. Since, in concluding that poststructuralism's thinking about trauma basically does nothing else than employ a paradoxical approach of *non-psychological psychology* in order to fend off – or else misappropriate – clinical narratives and empirical expressions of trauma experience, we may go ahead and realize that conventional humanities in general, too, are strongly devoted to an *anti-psychological* and *anti-empirical* perspective onto their subject matter.

For sure, only valid empirical proof of such interactional dynamics on the institutional level could possibly substantiate what thus far has always been a mere suspicion: that there is something wrong with the humanities at large. But, for now, one wonders, can it really be true that conventional humanities and poststructuralism which always seemed so very much at odds with each other in fact converge in this quite fundamental respect, i.e. tacitly agree on an impetus re-philologize and share a common anti-empirical habitus?

xxx Some unsystematic observations about the humanities' epistemological self-positioning

Quite evidently, it has long been an essential and vigorously defended tenet of literary scholarship at large that works of art are to be regarded as *autonomous* and that there is a fundamental, ontological difference between the realm of aesthetic and fictitious narratives on the one hand and real life narratives on the other. This particular concept of *autonomy* is understood to mean that art is in essence disconnected from and un-affected – and as it were unimpaired – by aspects of the extra-textual empirical world, at least if it comes to actually practicing text exegesis. And this quite unconvincing but strongly ingrained assumption seems to be defended all the more rigorously, the more the general appeal for interdisciplinary research seems to threaten traditional beliefs and interpretation routines ("Interpretationsgewohnheiten") of literary scholarship. Therefore, *autonomy* also – and above all – is meant to indicate: that works of art may not be scientifically approached by any explanatory means which apply to the real world and are used to researching the real world. In particular it may not be approached by developmental and psychodynamic psychology. In fact, the German speaking fields of literary scholarship to some extent even seem to conceive of art, literature and reading as being *autonomous* to the extent of being beyond any approach of explanation -- be it explaining what goes on in an fictional narrative in terms of the characters actions, or be it attempting to explain what goes on between the narratives and their readers.

Given this almost pre-enlightenment approach it seems quite understandable that the linguist Uta Quasthoff already in 1980 pointed towards the high strategic risk it would imply if the humanities continue taking "the comfortable position that the large and important aspect of human (inter-) action is inaccessible to scientific explanation" (1980, S. 131-148). More so even today one has to concede that this stance, albeit being evidently less than scientific, by and large seems to have become the consensual attitude in most contexts of literary studies' text interpretation. Additionally, we also may deduce from Quasthoff's statement: Our main observation that poststructuralist theory takes 'trauma' as – in essence – having to "remain inaccessible to the memory", does correspond with and is, in fact, even surpassed by what Quasthoff observed as the general operational principle of the humanities: the belief that not only 'trauma' or 'truth' or any other specific issue but *human (inter-) action* altogether in its manyfold subjective intentions, motivations, and modes of expression are "inaccessible" to explanation. The trope of the "inaccessibility of explanation/truth" can actually be taken to be a central motive and interpretation routine ("Interpretationsgewohnheit") of most fields of philological culture studies especially in the German speaking area. Hence, whenever it comes to the actual interpretation of literary texts and whenever the research questions go beyond particular issues of social history of the arts and their institutions which do not require txt exegesis proper, then this

anti-empirical schema of "inaccessibility" of "explanations" seems to be put into force excluding the empirical aspects of a fictional text's content.

Defying any appeals to integrate psychology into text analysis, mainstream literature scholarship's *anti-explanatory* stance often advances rather simplistic arguments, contending for instance that 'one could not put a literary text on the couch of (psycho-) analytical investigation' or that one 'could not analyze literary characters in psychological ways because they are textual entities and no persons and thus do not have a psyche' (Schönau xx). Doing this would, in any event, 'infringe on the autonomy' as well as 'on the aesthetic nature of the work of art', and it would ignore the 'ontological cleavage between fiction and reality' (HW JfP, Langv. ZKH xx).

Obviously, such kinds of contentions are nonsensical by any standard of science in the tradition of European Enlightenment: For, to begin with, it has never really been the person as such who 'was put on the couch'; what psycho-analysis looks at is how stories are told and how relational processes of articulation, co-narration and interaction work. Also, knowing how imaginative, sometimes even unwittingly poetic factual self-expressions may get even with so-called real persons, might give us some reason to put somewhat less weight on the difference between fiction and facts. Above all, however, fictional characters and their (inter-) actions, of course, do have a psyche, if you whish. This is because they are conceived of by the psyches of their authors who use all their explicit and implicit knowledge about the world and about human interaction and mental life; and also because these characters are then perceived and mentally assimilated by the psyches of their readers who also draw all their registers of psychological knowledge and capacities to understand and subjectively appropriate what these characters and their actions are all about psychologically.

Looking upon it this way makes it pretty clear: not only do fictional characters follow a psychical logic, they do not even really 'exist' empirically speaking outside of human psyches and the mental processes of (re-) construction – except one takes the status of *being a text*, printed black and white on paper, to be the most essential prerequisite of cultural 'existence' and 'empiricity', -- and thus wilfully abstract from the human beings who write and/or read such fictional texts, which the humanities sometimes seem inclined to do.

These quite obvious considerations have recently inspired the narration theorist Alan Palmer to introduce the systematic „study of fictional minds" as a „clearly defined and discrete subject area in its own right within narrative theory" (xx). For, the „constructions of the minds of fictional characters" have to be considered an essential component of literary interaction, which unfolds between authors and readers via the mediated narratives they create and mentally absorb (xx LIR). These considerations, in the end, also lead us to the contrary of what the humanities' contentions of 'inaccessibility' or 'inexplicability' hold. Rather, the contrary seems to be correct:

Fiction narratives cannot be understood but psychologically. As Peter von Matt stated already in the 1970s, "anybody who attempts to study and interpret literature cannot do without psychological concepts" and be this, as often happens, that s/he -- in unspoken and merely implicit manners -- uses everyday psychology. At any rate, one "will have to employ some sort of psychology" (46).

Nevertheless, the anti-empirical and anti-psychological positions observed above seem to be crucial elements in the institutional and ideological belief system of the humanities. They are, however, not always easily detectible – which means that the documentation and systematic study of these beliefs could be quite difficult. Surely, one may frequently encounter statements like the ones on the inexplicable autonomy of art verbatim in internal institutional contexts of recruiting individuals for professorial posts or in discussions about the funding of pending research projects. However, one will hear these statements in their fullest clarity only in non-public discourse where the need to pay lip-service to principles of interdisciplinary research which has become obligatory today, is not as imperative.

To give but one example: The referees of a leading German institution of research funding might turn down a project of psychological culture studies and text analysis because the project does not respect 'the particularly aesthetic character of a work of art' and instead 'hands over the definition monopoly from the humanities to psychology' thus 'relegating the humanities to the status of a secondary and auxiliary science'; furthermore the referees may hold, that 'the academic division of disciplinary authority and legitimacy' ("die disziplinären Zuständigkeitsbereiche") were disregarded and the 'areas of philological competencies' discounted (Weilnböck 2007b). However, this degree of clarity will most likely be only found -- as it was the case here -- in non-public telephone conversations about confidential referees' statements.

Nevertheless though, the guiding operational principles of such decision making processes may also become recognizable if one reads more closely what humanities' funding institutions say in their calls for proposals: For instance, as a matter of course, the Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation too, explicitly encourages applicants from "literature studies" to propose "cross-disciplinary" projects, as the annual activity report routinely claims. However, the text explicitly adds that "this above all refers to disciplines which also study issues of language (and text)" ("sprachliche Gegenstände") which is, as is swiftly specified, "for example the case with philosophy and theology" (140). In turn, no field from psychology or social sciences research is mentioned at all (although they undoubtedly also study issues of language).

The humanities' anti-psychological and anti-empirical self-concept was probably best mirrored by the internet website issued by the federal government's ministry for education and

research when announcing the "Year of the Humanities" in 2007. As was the case with the Thyssen-Foundation, it is "language" in the narrower sense of the word, which "forges the strongest bond holding together the philological disciplines". And when it comes to formulating the "ABC of Mankind / Humanity" -- and thereby also unwittingly articulating the humanities' high ambitions vis-a-vis the empirical world -- a website device allows the visitor to click each letter of the alphabet and have one humanities' key theme pop up, followed – for what reason ever – by a short list of three to four of humanities' disciplines in order to indicate that they are considered most conducive to the study of the respective key theme: None of the 26 alphabetical key themes referred to a field of psychological or social research, thus claiming that themes like "person", "creativity", "desire", and "memory" are to be studied best with the help of "musicology" as well as "art and theatre history" and "classical philology" (Weilnböck 2007b).[1]

As if this peculiarly scanted view of humanistic sciences methodologies needed any further emphasis, the website explicitly underlines that the humanities conceives of themselves "as not being primarily defined by their immediate societal usefulness". Such standpoint one may be tempted to call scandalous, given that we are talking about public spending research here. It, in any event, curiously contradicts the European Union's guideline for research funding which rightfully stresses "usefulness" and applicability. And it does so based on concepts of "use" which do allow for humanities perspectives -- provided they don't neglect the empirical and psychological dimensions of their subject matter. For, in the sector „Socio-economic Sciences and the Humanities" (SSH) the EU Commission underscores explicitly that fields like „literature" and „philosophy" should hand in proposals and that they should work together with „social sciences" and „psychology" in an integral fashion in order to contribute to tackling societal challenges on an European scale.

xxx The humanities' academic politics and their epistemological underpinnings

How necessary, timely, and, in fact, courageous this EU initiative of increasing the quality of EU scientific institutions actually is can only fully grasp, who has some experience with contexts of German and other national institutions of research funding and how innovative and methodologically advanced projects actually fare with these institutions (HW ZKH xx). Only then one will understand why the EU would make such a big issue of the quite evident option that psychology and humanities may and should collaborate. And only then one will understand how the newly founded European Research Council (ERC) could emphasize so much that, as a

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[1] The ABC-device has been cancelled after the year had ended, however the gist of the website remained unaltered.

"new organization, it will not be hostage to the conventional wisdom" of the individual academic disciplines and that it "instead, will take the best practice wherever it can be found". And while the ERC proceeds to explicitly prompt "interdisciplinary proposals in new and emerging fields" as well as so-called "high-risk, high-gain" research, which stands for "innovative investigator-initiated research" being unconventional and therefore particularly promising in object matter and methodology (ERC-Work Program, 2007) -- then one does also get a sense of how defensive and traditionalist some areas of national research funding actually are.

Speaking of research funding -- and indirectly also of university positions -- also reminds us of the material and political aspects of these ideological tenets – thereby indicating that the almost proverbial term 'interpretation routine' ("Interpretationsgewohnheit") might mean putting an all too innocuous phrase to what really is a bitter struggle of institutional and political power play. For, defending strong beliefs about art, literature and (idealistic) reading as carrying "truths" which are held to be "unfathomable and inaccessible" (be it ontological "trauma" or just the "true meaning" of the grand works of art) does not only refer to a certain tradition of academic thought and discourse. It, above all, serves the function of securing the institutional positions and funding means of those who work as hermeneutical "truth"-providers and have students and younger colleagues which they intend to place as their heirs. So, in a way, "trauma" and "truth" have to remain "inaccessible" because as such they don't threaten the institutional and administrational position of those who procure the intellectual management of this "inaccessibility". In turn, accessing "trauma" and "truth" and studying it as cultural issues in appropriate empirical and analytical ways might possibly be deemed epistemologically improper or else perceived as "sacrilege" and "betrayal" -- in part because it manifestly threatens the institutional power positions.

Looking at the institutional interests and politics should, however, not make us disregard the epistemological underpinnings which have been put in the service of these interests and thus come around to buttress the status quo of the discipline in quite lasting manner. Also, the anti-psychological and anti-empirical positions which form the core of this status quo are not only to be found in more or less informal and politically charged contexts of recruitment and funding, in which the rigor of scientific thought might understandably be compromised by strategic considerations. Rather, these epistemological positions are really meant seriously and are deeply internalized by literary studies' representatives, which is why one will also encounter them full-fletch in introductory and handbook texts designed for students, as for instance in Arnold/ Detering's xx authoritative „Essentials of literature studies". There it is also stated with the utmost determinacy that any „hypothesis about the behaviour and feeling of a literary character is not empirical", i.e. not permissible, because only statements about "real persons are empirical"

(483). With astonishing psychological naiveté it is held that, what is hypothesized about a person can be „definitively checked on" and verified/falsified (for instance by asking the person which one cannot do with a character), whereas any hypothesis about "fictional characters […] cannot be falsified" because fictional characters are "in principle indeterminable". In this view, a fictional character must seem to be beyond the grasp of psychological research and, in fact, of any explanatory approach.

From such a restricted view-point no attention is given to the fundamental insight of qualitative studies in socio- and psychology that even with "real persons" there is no way to "definitively check on" them or falsify/verify their statements once it comes to the psychological level of motivations and psycho-cognitive processes. What, however, can indeed be counted on is that these persons in their interactions and implicit motivations do follow patterns and structures and that these patterns can be empirically approximated i.e. reconstructively ascertained. But this, of course, also holds true for fictional characters. For, while they are imaginative representations of persons and not empirical persons, fictional characters' utterances and (inter-) actions, too, follow patterns and are guided by structures which have a mental and inter-actional logic and which one may, therefore, theoretically conceive of as 'implicit motivations' (HW xx sommer). Such conceptual clarifications, however, have proven incompatible with the institutional tenets of mainstream literary scholarship.

Already during the heydays of Freudian readings of art and literature in the 1970s the protagonists of this -- even then quite marginalized -- strain of literary studies at least in the German speaking area strongly insisted on imposing certain restrictions which were not only anti-empirical but also anti-explanatory and in the end, oddly enough, anti-psychological. Marianne Wünsch, for instance, stipulated that in text interpretation only those psychological concepts are permissible which the author of the text himself could have possibly been cognizant about (55). Yet under no circumstances is it acceptable to "explain for fact why a character might say or do something". In Wünsch's approach the only way to apply psychological concepts to literary texts is the "classificatory" mode, which categorizes characters and their behaviour according to a merely historical body of psychological knowledge which the author might possibly be assumed to be aware of. What is categorically ruled out in this strictly descriptive philological approach is the possibility to explain a character's action and to refer to any contemporary psychological knowledge which may prove helpful for such explanation -- as if fictional characters' interactions ceased to follow a mental logic in their "behaviour and feelings" (Rühling 483) once the author is not cognizant about psychological models.

The compromise formation of a merely "classificatory" -- and not explanatory -- application of psychological concepts by no means represents just a dated methodological

curiosity from the 1970s. It used to be and still is an incontestable common ground of mainstream literary theory and therefore is quoted as theoretical state-of-the-art on issues of interpreting fictional characters in Arnold/Detering's 1994 most respected "Essentials" (see therein Rühling 481pp.).[2] Un-scientific this procedure is in that it neglects the very core element of any scientific endeavour, the explanatory dimension. Social science epistemologist Hartmut Esser rightly takes the "fundamental structure of (sociological) *explanation*" to be "an essential component of any research dealing with the reconstruction of the subjective logic of human (inter-) action" (Richter/ Stein xx). In his authoritative works on the sciences of human social life and interaction, Esser claims that "subjective rationalities" may very well be ascertained objectively (Esser 1999, 204) for example in that one reconstructs the basic guiding principles of a person in interaction or else in that one reconstructs the her/his "believes about the world they live in". And this at least implicitly also encompasses the guiding operational principles of this person's aesthetic interaction, i.e. of her/his inner worlds of imagination and fictional constructs which anyone unwittingly entertains.

The vital impetus of any scientifically organized humanistic research for Esser is the fundamental desire to *understand* and *explain* human life. And this effort will always "exceed the mere *description* of the particular conditions and situations" people are in, as it also exceeds – one may safely add -- the mere description of the texts and textual substrates which human (inter-) action might produce. For, humanistic research aims at *understanding* the guiding principles which particular scenes of (inter-) action are based on -- individually and/or socially and institutionally. For, "the object mater of the explanation is the (inter-) action"; it is not in the first instance the material or textual products which such (inter-) action creates. And in order to explain (inter-) action one will, as Esser underlines, also have to look at and study the "psychic causation of (inter-) action" (205).

Current philological scholarship in mainstream humanities would neither be able nor even be truly willing to endorse Esser's fundamental propositions. It thus does not seems inappropriate how clinical psycho-trauma researcher Gottfried Fischer in looking back on decades of scholarly engagement in psychological culture studies, summarizes what he views as

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[2] Moreover, literature scholarship representatives seem to meticulously abide by this curiously anti-scientific stipulation. Malte Stein aptly points out that for instance Horst Thomè in his major work on depth-psychology and psychiatry in narrative texts of 19th century German realism refrains from any "explanatory" psychological thought and sticks to a merely "classificatory" usage of historical psychological concepts to literature (Thomé 6, in Stein 16). Therefore, in order to be able to refer to Freudian terms in a strictly historical and non-explanatory way, Thomé evidently feels obliged to instate the quite daring presupposition, "that Freud in building his psychoanalytic model only summed up and systematized what had already been current in anthropological debates or else in the popular knowledge of the 19th century" -- and therefore may be rightfully applied to these texts (Thomé 7). It almost seems as if no assumption can be too far-fetched, if only it allows the literary scholar to spare himself having to take an explanatory -- scientifically independent -- stance vis-a-vis a literary work of art.

the humanities' "robust prejudices" against any kind of psychological analysis: There "the work of art" basically is considered to "contain a secret which is to be kept and enshrined as a sanctuary." This means that "works of art may be adored, they even may be disliked at times […]. This is acceptable." And one might add, they may, of course, always be approached descriptively in formal and historical respects. "The real sacrilege, however, is to analyze them scientifically." Any such "methodical and psychological" approach to art is virtually "taken to be a betrayal" because "art is sacrosanct" (56).

xxx Scientific standards or/and unscientific 'Re-Philologization of the Humanities'?

Hence, much of humanities' epistemological and/or habitual positions seem irreconcilable already with the most basic criterion which Esser or also Karl Popper in his Critical Rationalism[3] formulate as unalienable prerequisites of any explanatory scientific investigation into how the empirical world works (of which fiction is a significant part) and why empirical persons act the way they act (in interpersonal as well as in mental and imaginative interaction). Therefore, these tenets would have to be considered in essence *un-scientific*. Looking at it from this angle makes it quite clear that the humanities' habitual, political and strategic self-concept and its epistemological underpinnings come with a high price. They tacitly sacrifice the very essence of an enlightenment scientific standpoint -- and thus compel the humanities to stay in an ever defensive location enduring a never ending, not unresolvable legitimacy crisis.

What also became more evident is that in this very problematic regard mainstream literary studies' habitus and epistemological framework does indeed largely correspond with the poststructuralist take on aesthetics and trauma. For, just as mainstream literary scholars in a quasi-religious manner and sometimes in an idealistic and melancholic tone cherish and celebrate *The Work of Art* as "sacrosanct" emanation (Fischer) of a genius aesthetic inspiration (on the part of a great canonical author) which is *autonomous* and, therefore, defies any analysis and explanation, poststructuralism with an equally idealistic adoration cherishes and celebrates *Art* and above all *The Trauma* in the arts as emanation of "truth" and source of "absolute pleasure" which is "unfathomable", "inaccessible", and may not be "betrayed" by scientific analysis. Both of these seemingly opposed approaches (Caruth, Weinberg, Seebald, Bronfen et al. on the one

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[3] Contrary to the above mentioned idiosyncratic screening by which the humanities gage the supposed relevance and applicability of a "non-literary theory", Malte Stein explicitly subscribes to Popper's stance "that each theoretical concept might be relevant inasmuch it holds the potential to produce an explanatory hypothesis about a (textual) subject matter in need of explanation" (Stein xx 16); and this of course also holds true for issues in and around cultural artefacts. Where "the theory comes from" which the explanation is based on "is of no importance to Critical Rationalism"; the only significant prerequisite is "that the theory is helpful in drawing further conclusions and producing propositions which then may be held against the text and be possibly falsified".

hand and Wünsch, Rühling, Thomé on the other) follow a paradoxical notion of *non-psychological psychology*; both are in unspoken agreement, that literary scholarship first and foremost has to "formulate strict pre-conditions" in order to examine and in the end "categorically exclude" any "non-literary theory" which "does not conform" with the humanities' anti-explanatory methodological stipulations (xx Stein 16).

Therefore, poststructuralism's problematic concept of psycho-trauma which we started out with is indeed embedded in a much larger problem which is posed by the *anti-empirical*, *anti-explanatory*, and *anti-psychological* habitus of the humanities' at large. In fact, poststructuralism in this context might even be considered an avant-garde of the above mentioned neo-conservative 'Re-Philologization of the Humanities' (Erhart xx), which has been under way since at last two decades. For while poststructural trauma theory might have started out as an innovative theoretical initiative at the fringe of the conventional humanities, in the meantime it certainly has come around with a vengeance to reaffirm traditional literary scholarship's epistemological tenets. Thus while juggling around some psychoanalytic or neuro-science terms -- in ways which almost seem to claim 'aesthetic autonomy' not only for art but also for its own jargonized discourse -- poststructuralist approaches in effect has unwittingly come to strengthen rather than to help dissolve the traditional humanities' epistemological obstacles. As an avant-garde turned reactionary poststructuralism seems to function here in that it defends the essentially *anti-empirical* and *anti-explanatory* tenets of literary and humanities scholarship at one of the more complicated fronts of this epistemological struggle, namely vis-a-vis the theoretically ambitioned representatives who might come closest to expanding the borders of the institutional habitus.

This also is what Rühling touches upon when he, alluding to Heideggerian terms, resumes that what poststructural literary criticism eventually comes down to in its epistemological position, is most adequately conceived of as "fundamental or transcendental psychology"; and that it rather exercises language philosophy than psychology which "makes it much more compatible with the epistemological stance of conventional philologies" than any truly empirical approach to psychological culture studies (Rühling 495). But, what Rühling did not and could not see -- after having explicitly reinforced the traditional decree of 'you ought not apply psychology in any explanatory fashion' -- is that main stream literary scholarship, too, exercises analogous sort of intellectual fundamentalism: which one might call in Rühling's words 'transcendental ontology of literary autonomy and truth'.

 xxx The hidden pitfalls of humanities' debates and more progressive humanities' approaches

The extraordinary force of main stream humanities' self-concept and epistemological defensiveness may also be gauged by those humanities' approaches which -- with some legitimacy -- consider themselves to be progressive. For instance, more innovatively oriented scholars in their attempt to broaden what they perceive to be a too narrow scope of German philology, have developed particular approaches as 'culture studies', 'new media', 'gender theory', 'post-colonial studies', 'discourse analysis', 'inter-cultural perspectives', 'narratology', 'didactics', 'hyper-textuality' and others (see Erhart). However, despite the innovative impulse, none of these initiatives touches upon the most crucial epistemological problem, which literary scholarship is affected by, i.e. nobody aspires to discuss or even only realizes the lack of serious interdisciplinary and inter-methodological collaboration with fields of empirical psychological and social research -- let alone venture to redeem this lack.

Rather, some of these novel approaches themselves seem to subscribe to an anti-psychological, strictly textual understanding of the object matter of literature and literary interaction; as if it was mandatory to endorse the common anti-psychological and anti-empirical consensus vis-a-vis 'autonomous' art in order to obtain licence to pursue any limited aspect of conceptual innovation. For instance, even 'literary narratology' which should almost automatically gravitate towards collaborations with narrative psychology and narrative sociological research does not do so at all -- even when getting in contact with narratologists from these empirical fields .[4] And yet more graphically: 'Literary affect research' or 'affect poetics' -- "Literarische Emotionsforschung" -- which put the psychological base concept 'affect/ emotion' centre stage in its self-labelling, acts as if texts themselves had feelings and, in turn, as if authors and readers had nothing to do with such 'literary affects'. As Thomas Anz aptly criticises, this literary approach to emotion and affect research only describe how feelings are depicted -- "encoded" -- in texts and entirely refrain from any affect psychology (Anz xx 212ff.). This version of the above mentioned *anti-psychological psychology* in certain instances may go as far as claiming that "feelings in and of themselves do not exist at all … or are at least not accessible" -- here the accessibility motive reappears -- "… because they are just the products of discourses". Such stance, however, unwittingly and/or tacitly imply: that there is no use of empirical psychology in social and culture research, period.

As these innovative humanities approaches obviously miss the point, so do some of the most emphatic critiques of the humanities. To be sure, Harald Welzer's appeal levelled against the humanities to "stop being useless" (thus his title in the weekly journal *Die Zeit*, 25.01.2007

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[4] See Meister xx (HW xx homo + Zh, for a telling exception see Jesch et al.

Nr. 05) deserves attention. Welzer points out that "today in the USA it is 30% of all employees which are working in the creative industries which encompass the media, art, education, science, information technology and management"; also, in Germany "the 35 billion turn-over of the culture industries – galleries, agencies, publishing, theatre et cetera" is almost as high as the energy industries turn-over. In foregrounding these pieces of information Welzer intends to provoke who he polemically calls the humanities' "reflection mandarins" and incite them to leave behind their exaggerated anxieties about "neo-conservative usefulness-fetishists" and overcome their fundamentally "anti-applicationist" stance. Rather humanities' scholars should notice and take advantage of these indeed noteworthy economic factors and adapt to them in theoretical and methodological respects. Such appeals may indeed be helpful, especially if they are further differentiated in terms of what potentials the situation actually holds for the humanities.

However, Welzer's more specific recommendations -- and already parts of his problem analysis -- are misleading. Moreover, they appear to be affected by what seems to be a rather philological bias itself. For, what social psychologist Welzer calls the humanities' methodological attention to is not the fields of social, psychological, or qualitative-empirical interaction research. Rather, Welzer advocates the natural sciences and in particular brain studies. Not only, however, have the humanities already been engaged in this area of investigation and raised important questions about the history, self-concept, and ethics of the natural sciences as well as their interrelation with art and philosophy (Hörz). Moreover, banking on the neurological ticket this way does entail the risk to grossly overrate its value for the humanities -- or else tacitly endorse that neuro-science is abused as yet another interdisciplinary alibi. After all, it seems quite questionable whether the humanities may really expect much methodological surplus value from entering into an exchange with neurological laboratory research -- and whether any excursion into the natural sciences may prompt the development of novel interdisciplinary approaches in the humanities. One only needs to recall when a couple of years ago one of the most insisting philologists of the country in his responsibility for the Arts and Letters section of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* had the molecular structure of the DNS printed over two news paper pages. Such gestures are as grandiose as they are null and void unless they are accompanied by a thorough expansion of the humanities' theoretical and methodological framework towards integrating fields of explanatory inter-action theoretical research.

Moreover, where Welzer wants to encourage culture studies scholars by pointing out ways in which they could reach a more advanced self-concept, he mentions some most general issues which the humanities already for the longest times have prided themselves of covering, as for

instance "give commentaries, analyses, ideas, stories" about the world and "enhance self-reflexivity". Plus, Welzer's appeal ends with an emphatic plead that the humanities should recover the "somewhat forgotten notion of political engagement". Well, with somewhat more "self-reflexivity" Welzer could have recalled that in the past, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, this political emphasis may have contributed to the ideological consciousness of people in and around the humanities -- and sometimes they seemed to have enlarged and indeed inflated the humanities' ego to the point of out-right arrogance. But those days' political engagement per se did not at all expand their scope of methodological capacities. Rather on the contrary, heated political debates and emphatic societal critique may have tended to make people forget about questions of systematic research and rigorous method -- and tempted them to point to literature once again as the sanctuary of (ideological) truth.

Hence, Welzer's diagnosis that the humanities could easily succeed if they just wanted to and that it is only their "self-concept" which "is behind" and not up to their true potential, misses the point. And his well-intentioned appeal is at risk to contribute to the cover-up of the pressing challenges rather than to accomplish them. For, neither will the rejuvenation of the humanities' engagement in political partisanship contribute to bringing them closer to truly interdisciplinary and empirical approaches, nor will the exchange with the natural sciences and experimental brain studies do so. Welzer is – as it were – tricked by the humanities into focusing on the more sensational antagonism of culture studies versus natural sciences, while the real point of conflict and epistemological challenge is overlooked: the humanities' deeply ingrained hesitance to engage in psychological and (inter-) action theoretical thinking and adopt qualitative-empirical methods. Curiously, here social psychologist Welzer passes over and, in fact, elides fields of research and methodology, which he himself personally represents, thus tacitly implying that they are already an integral part of the humanities – which they are clearly not.

Hence, both such critical humanities debates and the various novel approaches of 'new media and cultural studies', 'post-colonialism', 'hyper-text theory', 'literary affect research' and so forth, which aim to confront the neo-conservative "Re-Philologization of the Humanities", curiously fail to get to the point. Plus, sometimes they get entangled in almost acrobatic compromise formations -- 'affect research' while sidestepping any empirical affect and psychology -- and other humanities epistemological obstacles themselves.

For sure, one reason for such tragic entanglement and acrobatic compromise formations even with the more progressive humanities approaches may be that being somewhat non-traditional, innovative, progressive, sometimes even pioneering and ground-breaking, also sceptical, critical, even oppositional etc. -- at least to a certain degree -- has always also been and still is part of the humanities scholarship self-concept (an aspect which humanities might have

received from concepts of genius or from literary motives of the 'angry young man'). The obvious double bind between the appeal to also sometimes proceed in somewhat unconventional and unruly ways and occasionally even cater to an almost revolutionary habitus on the one hand and the demand to still not violate the basic epistemological tenets of the discipline on the other, does make for quite a potential of highly conflictuous entanglement.

xxx Some perspectives of possible causes for the humanities' epistemological defensiveness

Other more elaborate historic and psychological explanations of the literary habitus are up for grabs. The question where these strong and complicated defence mechanisms -- and, in fact, anti-enlightenment impulses -- vis-a-vis empirical approaches come from which can be found in traditional as well as more advanced humanities (and also in poststructural takes), is hard to estimate off hand -- and would need some serious investigation. Here we can only lay out a view most general causal hypotheses.

First and quite evidently, there will always be mental and institutional defence whenever conflictuous and/or mentally challenging issues, experiences and memories are touched upon. Naturally, this especially affects emotionally challenging issues as for instance violence, destruction, and psycho-trauma, also sexuality. Mental defence is always and everywhere whenever such issues arise (which is not to say that analytic assumptions about mental resistance should be used always and everywhere). It is therefore not at all surprising that poststructural and also other culture studies representatives in an albeit highly ambiguous ways gravitate to issues of trauma and violence.

Moreover, mental and institutional defence even works on lesser levels of emotional challenge: Already any mere reference to issues of the *human psyche* per se is most likely to activate some degree of defensive reactions. This, of course, also concerns humanities' authors when they write about literary texts and characters and thus inevitably about at least those phenomena of mental life which are depicted in the characters. And the less experienced an institutions and/or its representatives are in terms of directly dealing with issues of the human psyche both intellectually and in concrete empirical environments -- let alone with issues of mental trauma -- the more will such mechanisms of defensive affect the work which the institution is designed to perform. Hence, the humanities' impulse to stay away from the human psyche or at least reduce -- or divert and distort -- any pertaining scientific engagement to a paradox mode of *non-psychological psychology* reflects the almost trivial fact that any

psychological inquiry -- and above all any making 'accessible' traumatic experience -- will inescapably induce some level of anxiety in the researcher her/himself.[5]

Another more historical cause for humanities' epistemological defensiveness might reside in the fact that academic literary and philosophical scholarship in Germany was highly implicated during the Nazi regime and during the war, thus being implicated in contexts of heretofore unimaginable degrees of violence and trauma (Albert). Given how challenging and difficult it is to work through the social and cultural legacies of violence and trauma in order to avoid being endangered by the repetitious vicious cycles of violence, and given that this ambition requires encountering full-fletched awareness of the violence and the psycho-trauma that occurred and also on the institutional and personal implications thereof, does make it quite understandable after all that an institution would be tempted to follow anti-explanatory and non-analytic paths of professional conduct.

Therefore one might ask, whether the observed epistemological defensiveness may have to do with the fact that German humanities' institutions and personnel have not yet succeeded in sufficiently working though the implications which the legacy of this period of their own institutional history has up to the presence. Already our observations about a certain kind of fundamentalism inherent in some humanities' discourses may be taken as an indication here. For, claiming "truth", "absolute" forms of "pleasure" and "trauma", advocating "inaccessibility" of meaning and conceptually vague practices of "assault", ordaining what may and may not be thought and said about "trauma" and what constitutes "sacrilege" and "insult", and also instrumentalizing art and literature as proof of such truth claims – all such interactional patterns inevitably raise associations of both anti-enlightenment and political dictatorship. Moreover, the 1968 students' movement which set out to aggressively confront their fathers' and mothers' behaviour during the Nazi period did take quite elaborate stance on society, culture, and literature, as has been sufficiently realized since, but they have often proved unable to transcend the fundamental forms of intellectual discourse and practice handed down to them by institutional traditions. The historical backlash thereof we might experience now in what is perceived by some as neo-conservative 'Re-Philologization of the German-Speaking Humanities'.

Another case in point of this historical argument could be seen in the fact that the considerations and discussions about the criteria and implications of what it would actually mean

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[5] Georges Devereux already in the 1970s aptly described this phenomenon in his book *Anxiety and Method* demonstrating that the humanities and even the social sciences, in many instances craft and employ their research methods as means not only to gather insight but also to fend off the researcher's unconscious anxieties about the object matter – which, of course, will always compromise the scientific goal to gather insight and find solutions for empirical problems

for an institution to sufficiently work through such history of violence and trauma, has only been inaugurated in German academic and intellectual sectors since about ten or fifteen years ago. And the humanities did not partake much in these considerations which were entertained mostly by the social and psychological disciplines, in part also by history, or else by non-university fields of psychotherapy and organizational consulting which had responded to pressing needs -- which often proved to result from this very historical legacy.[6] Rather, if at all the humanities referred to these considerations they -- as we saw above -- twisted and distorted the concepts and turned their implications upside down, thus effectively thwarting the high potential that considerations of psychological and institutional working-through holds for a more self-conscious future habitus of the humanities.

Hence, one of the most crucial future challenges for the humanities might be summed up by an appeal which Dominick LaCapra had originally levelled at postmodernism, except that here it would be directed to the humanities at large, including the attached sectors of intellectual and societal life (as for instance the school system): For, the materials and observations discussed here may indicate that not only postmodernism and post-structural trauma discourse, as LaCapra said, but also the humanities in general to some extent may be regarded as a symptom rather than its cure, and that it thus "should itself be understood – indeed worked-through and not celebrated – as displacement, disguise, and at times distortion of aspects of the Shoah" and Third Reich historical violence (1994, 98).

Another of such tentative hypothesis about the historical and psychological causes of the humanities' epistemological defensiveness might come into view in an even more long-range perspective, if one looks back at two hundred years of history of bourgeois practice of belletrist reading and literary and culture studies. For, with regard to this extended period of time one has to consider the heavy investments and the high authority which art and literature carried in terms of national, intellectual, and spiritual identity formation (Bollenbeck) -- an investment in texts and hermeneutic interpretation which the scholars and intellectuals of the last two centuries had gradually inherited from no less authoritative and powerful (and also fundamentalist) institutions than the medieval churches. The implications of such highly charged context of power relations and identity issues may raise thoughts about specific *déformations professionnelles* with those persons and institutions who were responsible for implementing and representing this heavily burdened function via cultural issues and text exegesis. One might wonder whether the particular type of institutional habitus which arises from such tasks is not inevitably bound to be defensive about engaging her/himself all to intensely with empirical societal issues and even less so with

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[6] Transgenerational xx

issues of violence, mental injury and their aftermath. For, such psychologically challenging issues do not seem very conducive to supporting any stable and authoritative forms of identity -- be it national, intellectual or spiritual identity.[7]

xxx What might be the 'guiding interactional principles' of 'doing humanities'?

An entirely different way of speaking about these observations and tentative thoughts on the humanities and their professional habitus would be: to hypothetically envision what the 'guiding principles of humanities' institutions and personnel are, in the sense in which qualitative social research conceives of 'guiding interactional principles', which means asking what the unalienable and yet perhaps entirely unarticulated and unconscious rules of 'doing humanities' are and what the personality traits of characteristic type of representative would be. Moreover, such rather unconventional way of approaching the issue would also mean to begin with what will have to be done anyway: engaging in systematic research on the humanities and the humanities' institutional workings and creating a methodically sound and rigorous research design which uses appropriate procedures of qualitative-empirical and psychological research (but also of literary text analysis in order to include into the investigation how and to which results the humanities work in their main field of activity: hermeneutical text exegesis).

Being restricted here to hypothetically envisioning such 'guiding interactional principles' and institutional personality traits, our above observations seem to indicate the following aspects of personal conviction and patterns of (inter-)action: One characteristic trait of the typical humanities' habitus is a great *love of reading* and an emphatic appreciation and respect of texts from literary history. More precisely, our observations seem to indicate, that this emphatic *love of reading*, for the hypothetical personality type anticipated here, is based on the condition that literature is understood as most authoritative agent of a "truth" which is "unfathomable", holds an "inaccessible" meaning, as well as an "absolute" beauty and pleasure. Hence, this type of literary appreciation is not only intense but also seems to be of an *almost religious nature* -- an assumption which corresponds with our observations about an anti-explanatory bias in literary methodology, as it corresponds historically with the above mentioned relationship of institutional

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[7] Studies like Jochen Schmidts books xx on the concept of genius in German literature, philosophy and politics since the mid 18th century, or more recently Malte Steins psychological study on violence in gender and generational conflicts in the narrative works of Theodor Storm (also on literary texts from the Goethe period xx), and many contributions from the Freiburger Arbeitskreis Literatur und Psychoanalyse and similar sources may give an idea about how violence, trauma, cultural representation, as well as mental and institutional defence mechanisms in the study thereof may be an issue since at least two hundred years of German literary history -- and how this may be researched in an interdisciplinary and self-reflexive manner.

heritage going from ecclesiastical structures of society towards structures of bourgeois aesthetic consciousness and secularized academic education.

A further implication of this *almost religiously intense* kind of 'love and appreciation of literature' as containing an "inaccessibly" "true" meaning and absolute beauty it seems to be that literature is also taken to be "autonomous" in the above established sense, which means that literature is 'loved' and 'appreciated' precisely because it is understood as being '*autonomously decoupled* from the realm of the empirical world' and as being beyond reach for the methods and resources which scientific research applies to studying phenomena of the empirical world. Thus, evidently the hypothetically envisioned personality type on some essential level of professional vision and personal vocation is a person for whom it is a most pivotal conviction that "true" and "absolutely beautiful" art and literature while they undeniably refer to reality, are and have to be dealt with as being above and beyond empirical realities and research, i.e. being *trans-empirical*. Therefore this mode of thinking is quite aptly characterized by Gottfried Fischer above quoted impression that humanities' professionals tend to take art as "containing a secret which is to be kept and enshrined as a sanctuary" and consider any infringement onto this sanctuary a "sacrilege" and a "betrayal" (56) (thereby Fischer inadvertently uses terms which poststructural theorist as Weinberg, Sebald, Juranville have, indeed, emphatically used to describe their concept of trauma and/or art.)

To sum up these first assumptions and to do so by hypothetically stating what a qualitative empirical study would formulate as its result -- the 'guiding interactional principal(s)' -- generated by an elaborate process of interview research, hypotheses falsification and text analysis, the 'principal' at this stage of investigation would be: This type of an institutionalized professional is both personally predisposed and institutionally reaffirmed to engage believes and interactional practices of a an *almost religiously intense love of the "autonomous" "truth"and beauty in literature and its "inaccessible"/ inexplicable and trans-empirical meaning*

Looking at this tentative concept of a 'guiding interactional principal' of 'doing humanities' more closely and confronting it with further observations and empirical materials, let's say from narrative interviews -- as qualitative research would do in a highly elaborate fashion -- we might get to a point where we realize a latent logical problem or semantic contradiction. It resides in the fact that two aspects of our concept -- "autonomy" and "inexplicability" -- may be viewed as rather heterogeneous or even latently contradictory. For, "autonomy" in general semantic terms since at least 1800 refers to an 'autonomous person' -- intellectually, aesthetically and increasingly also societally autonomous in the sense of the Goethe-Zeit's concepts of enlightenment and aesthetic and moral education -- always also implies that this person autonomously decides on the basis of her/his personal experiences and

through her/his personally reached *explanations* about her/his experiences, personal situation and empirical environment. Thus, "inexplicability" and "autonomy" seem to in part clash semantically. But of course, any problem or contradiction on a merely semantic or conceptual level doesn't necessarily threaten the 'principal' established so far. They rather urge us to differentiate the concept and add further aspects thus rendering the concept more precise. Also we know full well that the realm of human interaction and psychodynamic mental life is rife with semantic and logic contradictions and any 'interactional principle' therefore is quite specific to an individual person or to a specific institution respectively.

Now, in attempting to account for this latent contradiction between "inexplicability" and "autonomy" by looking more closely at our -- quite limited -- empirical materials and observations, we might come to the conclusion: The interactional and psychodynamic logic which is at work in the 'principal' of *intense love of reading ...* also contains an interactional aspect of *subordination*. For, this *love* implies that the emphatic reader is not on an equal footing with the literary text. Rather the reader looks up to the text's "truth" and beauty and subordinates her/himself to it by conceding that s/he cannot reach the "truth", which is meant -- i.e. institutionally meant -- to remain unfathomable and inexplicable. Moreover, the emphatic reader, once s/he acts in a professional framework of institutional academic literary scholarship, at the same time looks up to and subordinates her/himself to the authoritative hermeneutical professional who has won by whatever procedure the institutional licence to ascertain and specify this very inexplicability. Thus, some aspects of our material seems to indicate that here "autonomy" implies a relational and psychodynamic constellation of *subordinating oneself* to something or someone else.

This speculation, in any event, does help us to realize how diverse the subjective or institution-specific meaning of a term like "autonomy" may be. Since, while *subordination* is not part of how "autonomy" would generally be understood -- commonly implying *in*dependency rather than the dependency of an inherently asymmetric relational constellation --, subordination clearly is a possibly semantic investment which the term "autonomy" may carry under certain personal or institutional circumstances. Therefore, our speculative hypotheses about the 'guiding interactional principles' of 'doing humanities' would have to be expanded and differentiated as follows: The envisioned type of institutionalized professional would have to be conceived of as being personally predisposed and institutionally reaffirmed to *almost religiously love and appreciate the "autonomous" "truth" and beauty in literature and its "inaccessible"/ inexplicable, trans-empirical meaning -- and to subordinate her/himself to this true meaning*.

A case in point for this increasingly complex 'interactional principle' might be seen in the general observation that literary studies' institutions and personnel usually insist strictly that a

radical separation of private pleasure reading and professional text analysis must be observed and that any personal reader response has to be rigorously kept apart from interpretation and exegesis (a position which actually resembles orthodox psychoanalysis in that is assumes that one should -- and could at all -- be entirely neutral before the text). And while this forceful decree evidently is in an unacknowledged manner highly conflictuous -- one only needs to think of the many scenes in which literary scholars are very frank and enthusiastic about their personal liking of the literary texts they study academically -- it does indeed represents a strongly held conviction throughout the fields of literary scholarship.

A case in point this is, because splitting off and disregarding the personal level of reading with the utmost personal and institutional rigor does lend itself to supporting a subordinated position vis-a-vis one's literary object matter and any institutional 'meaning' invested in it. For, the one and only way to secure that we are and stay on an equal footing with our object matter of study -- and that we don't fall back onto a pre-enlightenment state of subordinating us to its "truth" and beauty -- is our personal reader-response.

More precisely: Any non-subordinated relation to the objects of our interest (and/or study) is predicated on the awareness and regard which we have for the fact that one cannot escape and should not attempt to ignore having personal (reader-) responses to such objects and that as researchers we should attempt to integrate these responses in an methodical way in our research design once we engage in professional interpretation and/or text analysis. Therefore, instead of radically splitting off private and professional reading -- thus supporting a subordinated object relation -- both activities of reading need to be viewed as being gradually and modally different. This difference does, of course, require some methodological precaution when it comes to text-analysis. However, not only is personal reader response inescapable but it also enables us, and in fact empowers un as researchers to gain methodologically sound -- and arguably *insubordinate* -- scientific insight. In other words: there is no 'autonomy' in any modern epistemological sense without self-reflectively accounting for the subjectivity of the observer's/ reader's position, i.e. without aspiring equal footing vis-a-vis one's object matter; just as there is no autonomy wherever "inexplicability" is claimed.

These deliberations also alert us to the question in which ways and to what extent a humanities' 'guiding operational principle' resting on interactional and psychodynamic elements of "love/ appreciation of reading", "truth", "autonomy", but also of *subordination*, does in fact reflect the impact of quite forceful institutional traditions and power relations -- rather than a firm dedication to go about acquiring scientific insight in most economical and promising methodical ways. Moreover, in any further analytic pursuit of this line of interactional phenomena one would have to be particularly attentive to evidence indicating that *subordinating*

her/himself to the true meaning under certain circumstances of institutional interaction also implies *subordinating others* in case their reading conduct does not comply with the methodological decrees establish by the institution or else contradicts with what was institutionally established as *true meaning*. We only need to remind ourselves of what we learned above: that even the more progressive literary studies representatives decreed that it is not acceptable under any circumstances to "explain for fact why a character might say or do something" and that psychological concepts may only be applied in a "classificatory", i.e. descriptive and historical perspective and not in any explanatory way (Wünsch, Rühling).

Such epistemological subordination, at any rate, is most likely to occur once the reader with all her/his personal predispositions enters into any institutional framework of professional literary reading. And indeed, anyone who was ever engaged in introductory courses for first-year literary studies classes in German speaking humanities will know that with literary scholars it is generally perceived as a big pedagogical problem -- and not at all as a promising potential -- that these "young and inexperienced" students engage in psychological hypotheses all the time and tend to "psychologise literary characters", and that it is of prime importance to get the students to stop this and instead learn the ropes of literary scholarship proper. These moments for any of these students constitute a significant biographical crossroad at which the levels of personal disposition as a biographically molded reader and the institutionalized principles of professional literary reading meet. For, these different levels may coincide and mutually reaffirm each other or else they may conflict. Either way, such biographical crossing-moments have impact both on the personal and the professional development of a young person, and constitute important moments in the process of forming a professional indentify -- as well as forming the institution itself.

Surely, it will predominantly be the personally 'predisposed readers' in the above defined sense who are motivated to enter the analogously disposed academic institutions of literary scholarship and thus become professional readers. These readers will do so on the basis of corresponding interactional dispositions and they will then inadvertently work on supporting the epistemological and methodological stance which allow her/im to further buttress and also strengthen institutionally what have been and still are her/is intuitive dispositions and practices of reading and exegesis -- including their particular function as mental defence mechanisms (and possibly as trauma-compensatory mechanism). In this respect, the insights of organisational psychology and group-analysis leave no doubt: There always are wide reaching correspondences between the psychodynamic framework and historically determined workings of an institutionalized profession on the one hand and the biographical and psychodynamic predispositions of the personalities which are drawn and/or actively recruited to join the

institution on the other. Nevertheless, there always also is to some degree the opportunity that conflicting personal dispositions and non-conforming reading practices may impact back xx on the institution and contribute to altering its ways and traditions of going about things; and these conflicting practices would then most likely constitute significant impulses of institutional innovation.

Hence, having been prompted by empirical observations to further substantiate our speculative concept of the humanities' 'interactional principle' and add the aspect of *subordinating her/himself* as well as *subordinating others*, we may have gained a quite significant insight -- especially if it comes to finally evaluating the epistemological and societal ramifications which this aspect of the 'principle' has for 'doing humanities'. And such evaluation of actual social practice -- here: of the workings of a field of academic scholarship -- must be the ultimate goal of any scientific research, striving to observe its obligation to be applicable and responsible research in societal respects.

Continuing the close analytic work with the empirical materials about the humanities' self-concept and institutional workings, a qualitative-empirical study in its elaborate step-by-step analysis method would probably come to realize yet another semantic inconsistency -- and thus be prompted to further differentiate the 'guiding interactional principle' established so far. For, not only is there a latent semantic contradiction between the semantic elements "autonomy" and "inexplicability". "Autonomy" might as well be viewed as semantically clashing with the element of *anti- or trans-empiricism* which has been reconstructed as one main aspect of 'doing humanities'. Just as there is no autonomy in any modern epistemological sense without taking an explanatory stance and aspiring equal footing vis-a-vis one's object matter (thus relinquishing any "inexplicability"), there also can be no "autonomy" in any trans-empirical realm. For, human "autonomy", as stated above, since at least 1800 refers to an 'autonomous person', which also always implies that this person is in touch with the empirical world, even more so: is autonomously and successfully dealing with the empirical aspects of her/his world.

The notion of 'autonomy in the trans-empirical' as it seems to be held by main stream literary scholarship virtually equals a contradiction in terms. For, taken at face value, any concept of 'trans-empirical autonomy' refers to a paradox and illusory position which grandiosely assumes to be able to entirely abstract from one's empirical environment or to have elemental (quasi-magical) powers over it. And this, once again, reminds us that we simply don't know what is actually meant by a concept like "autonomy" unless we have meticulously researched the accurate interactional and psychological implications it carries for a particular individual or a specific institution.

Now, when attempting to account for the inconsistency between the semantic elements of "autonomy" and "trans-empiricism" and to thereby further differentiate the 'interaction principle' of 'doing humanities' -- which would, of course, necessitate to gather and analyze more empirical data -- we might come to conclude: This 'principle' encompasses an interactional element of *mental defence*, i.e. of psychically suppressing aspects of empirical reality. For, what was tentatively called a paradox and illusory position of the self, grandiosely abstracting from and assuming elemental (quasi-magical) powers over its empirical situation and environment, is more adequately and topically described as the position of a person who mobilizes strong forces of *mental defence* against consciously realizing certain aspects of her/his empirical situation and who needs to do so because certain characteristics of her/his situation demands such mental defence. Thus the paradox concept of 'trans-empirical autonomy' in terms of interactional research matters simply means: being in a personal and/or institutional position characterized by intense mental defence mechanisms.

Arguably, any such dynamic of mental defence would make for quite some potential of resistance in particular against empirical issues of violence, victimisation and traumatic experience, and respectively against the profound study of the pertaining phenomena in literary and cultural texts. This, of course, is most unfortunate since working precisely on these issues in a most interdisciplinary and effective way and thus attempting to reduce destructive patterns of societal interaction, undoubtedly has to be considered a chief obligation of any field of culture and social studies. Contrarily however, our mental defence hypothesis corresponds with the peculiar abuse of clinical concepts of trauma and/or the general neglect vis-a-vis clinical research altogether which we reconstructed above. Even more ominously from a psychological point of view is that any high level of such dynamics of mental defence will most likely also produce powerful forms of *reactive acting-out*, i.e. drive a so-called passive-active inversion, in which experiences of victimisation and destructiveness turn into patterns of (inter-) action which are themselves of a victimizing and destructive nature. And destructiveness here is taken in the broadest sense of the word and is meant to refer to all patterns of (inter-) action which are not able to effectively contributing to the societal task of interrupting the circles of violence, re-victimization and destructiveness and thus are incapable of having therapeutic/ productive effects.

Such patterns of unconscious defence and acting-out are by no means restricted to interpersonal interaction but may as well appear in more abstract forms of action as for instance intellectual activity and philosophical thought, which implies methodological choice and epistemological self-positioning. For, intellectual forms of acting-out may -- in the larger context of overlapping societal discourses and institutional practices -- eventually come down to support

and perpetuate counter-therapeutic/ counter-productive patterns of interaction. All the more important it is to reconstruct and evaluate the 'guiding interactional principles' of practices of intellectual (inter-) action, too, especially if they are institutionalized practices of intellectual (inter-) action as for instance the practice of 'doing humanities'. For -- as was already underlined above -- the question how concepts like 'structural violence' or 'intellectual victimisation' and/or 'intellectual ethics' might be adequately grasped and how we could properly secure the ethical status and quality of our actions as intellectuals and scholars, is still a largely unanswered question.

In any event, having come across the aspect of *mental defence* and having realized it's high import, the 'guiding interactional principle' of 'doing humanities' and the hypothetically envisioned type of an institutionalized humanities' professional would have to be significantly expanded. This hypothetical type of professional from here on would have to be conceived of as: being personally predisposed and institutionally reaffirmed to *almost religiously love and appreciate the "autonomous" "truth" and beauty in literature and its "inaccessible"/ inexplicable, trans-empirical meaning -- and to subordinate her/himself to this true meaning -- and possibly also subordinating others to it -- and to do so for reasons of mental and institutional defence.*

Thus assuming that one of the most pivotal functions of 'reading' in the sense of 'doing humanities' is *mental and institutional defence* against certain issues of empirical reality eventually also reaffirms the other elements of the overarching 'interactional principle' and reveals the perspective of a possible inner logic of them. Firstly, the aspect of *mental defence* makes better understandable the at first hand quite peculiar emphasis with which the humanities insist on the *autonomy* of the work of art. For, this *autonomy* seems to basically mean: that the humanities' 'reader' is granted to remain *autonomous* in the sense that s/he stays unaffected and psychologically untroubled by those issues of her/his empirical and biographical reality which might require mental defence (be this traumatic and/or conflict-stricken issues or be this 'un-autonomous', incommensurable and institutionally unwelcomed issues for any other reason). "Autonomy" on this level basically means to be autonomous as reader from personal/ empirical experience.

Furthermore, the element of *inexplicability* becomes clearer, too. Willingly accepting the *inexplicability* of art and reading is not just an incidental side effect of the 'interactional principle'. Rather, relinquishing explanation is a constitutive element of mental defence. For, any ambition which aims to *not* become aware of issues of one's empirical world and biographical life situation will be supported by *inexplicability*. In contrast, any explanation or analysis which renders things more understandable will put mental defence under pressure. Thus, *inexplicability*

is, as it were, a firm trademark of mental defence. *Subordination* in turn logically follows from this, since whoever decidedly refrains from the impetus to explain and better understand one's empirical world and one's personal situation in it, accepts a subordinate position (which succumbs to any aspect of the empirical world or else to an institutionally acclaimed general "truth" of the work of art). The resulting forms of relational dependency and the abandonment of personal curiosity may then be compensated for by securing that other members of the institutional framework subordinate themselves, too, or by eventually getting into the (power) position of determining the "truth".

In terms of envisioning a heuristic image of a typical humanities professional which reflects certain institutionally preferred personality traits and a particular biographical thread of identity formation, this image then would seem to resemble a person who during earlier periods of her/his life develops 'love/ appreciation of reading literature' -- in the above circumscribed sense of "autonomy", "inexplicability", "truth", *subordination* and above all: *mental defence*. This means that this hypothetical person while s/he *turns to* reading literary texts at the same time in an complementary move *turns away* from and mentally defends against the realization of certain aspects of empirical reality and personal experience -- or even of empirical reality as such (thereby, of course, also unwittingly turning away from corresponding dimensions of the fictional texts s/he reads).

This heuristic image would also resemble a type of reader whose subjective personal engagement is high and whose mental processes of reading are psycho-affectively intense. Since a high level of mental defence activity generally brings about intense psycho-affective processes (except for dissociative and psychosomatic forms of mental defence). This intensity might typically reach the degree of a personal passion and take on the particular form of outright (philological) enthusiasm -- an enthusiasm which may be often observed in contexts of literary scholarship and teaching. Already the fact that at the centre of this 'love/ appreciation of reading literature' is a "truth" and a beauty which is looked at and cherished as being an "inexplicable" and "trans-empirical", makes for an almost religious degree of emotional and spiritual intensity.

However, the motivational source of this emotional intensity would still have to be traced back to the impulses of mental defence. Therefore, this reader -- in all her/his emotional intensity of reading -- would still strictly separate between personal (pleasure) reading and professional exegetic reading. And s/he would engage in intense/ enthusiastic processes of reading in both areas separately -- and in a different way. And above all, this reading would still strictly obey the rule of "inexplicability", i.e. it would refrain from explanatory lines of thought -- be they explanations of the logic of the fictional events or the motivations of the literary characters, or be

they explanations of the interactional potentials which a literary text may unfold vis-a-vis its readers.

For the professional reading of the person this implies that reading is enthusiastic in spite or rather precisely because of the fact that it is methodologically restricted to merely descriptive and historical procedures of text work and that it is a priori barred from any -- potentially disquieting -- explanatory ventures (which, like any explanatory thought, might to a certain extent always also implicate some attention to one's personal reader response). About the private reading of our hypothetical type of 'predisposed' reader -- about which we presently do not know anything because this would necessitate methodical research which hasn't been undertaken yet -- one may safely assume that it is anti-explanatory, too. This means that the private reading is emotionally and intellectually intense -- and possibly enthusiastic -- in ways which either remain entirely unconscious to the person as to their motivational workings and psycho-biographical underpinnings, or at least are not put into reflexive and discoursively articulated thought.

Hence, for both of these -- wilfully dissociated -- levels of reading we may assume: This reader's mental engagement of reading and studying in a most curious way is personally and emotionally intense and yet situated entirely apart of what putatively is the most powerful motivational force in any procedure of reading: *human curiosity*, the ambition to explain how things work, why events happen, and why people act the way they do. In other words: such reading on both of its levels is situated apart of -- and fundamentally split off from -- *explanatory human curiosity*. Instead, this type of reader seems to draw emotional intensity and enthusiasm precisely from forgoing being curious as well as from the compensatory reassurance of an intrinsic "truth" and beauty to which one may safely *subordinate* oneself as inexplicable entities of literary works of art.

One may even venture the additional hypothesis that these two levels of anti-explanatory -- or counter-curious -- reading which are so categorically disconnected from each other, in reality are surreptitiously interrelated and, in fact, join forces in the service of powerful impulses of mental and institutional defence: For, it may well be that the strong whish that personal reading response and *private* reading enthusiasm remains safely kept away from any explanation and analytic (self-) reflexion, which is the main motivating factor in insisting on the *professional* stance that the study of literature needs to be restricted to descriptive, historical, and "classificatory" perspectives. Thus personal defence mechanisms and dispositions would feed into and strengthen methodological customs and institutional defence mechanisms (Mentzos xx).

Looking back on this heuristic image of the hypothetical personality profile and at the elements of the overarching 'interactional principles' of 'doing humanities', one further possible

hypothesis comes into view, which, however, is a theoretically driven hypothesis. For, looking at this psychodynamic constellation which rests upon an *anti-explanatory* appreciation of *truth* in reading literature and encompasses a high level of *mental defence mechanisms*, would -- in any psychological perspective -- inevitably raise the question whether this complex *love of reading* is not only a 'love', an 'appreciation', or a 'liking' but in its mode of relational dynamic rather equals an *addiction*, i.e. indicates a structure of dependency in object relations. And this would also corresponds with our earlier observation that the inherently asymmetric relational constellation which is inevitably implied by any "inexplicable" "truth" to which the reading self *subordinates* itself, equals, in fact, an interactional dynamic of dependency. Moreover, any mental defence, being a never-ending task which requests a constant level of repetitious compensatory activity does lend itself to addiction-like behavioural structures, be this substance related or non-substance related addiction. Thus, wherever one encounters strong and institutionally supported structures of mental defence (against certain issues, object matters, methods etc.) highly repetitious, addiction-like structures of compensatory behaviour and interaction are likely to be found as well.

This theoretically driven hypothesis will appear less wilful and unlikely once one realizes that 'addiction to reading' is a concept which is by no means new and alien to the field and has accompanied the history of reading and philology for about two hundred years now. For, throughout this history one can find many instances of a historical debate about phenomena of "reading frenzy", especially around 1800, raising observations and thoughts about mostly female readers being lavishly devoted to reading novels. All the less surprised one should be when touching upon institutional patterns that indicate the repetitious and change-resistant dynamic which is characteristic for elements of an addiction-like interactional dynamic. And all the less far-fetched the assumption is that in the wake of the historical "reading frenzy/-ies" an *addiction-like* rapport to the object matter would in some form have become part of the institutional matrix of academic literary scholarship. To be sure, we seem to have already come across an instance which strongly indicates such an addiction-like interactional pattern: What we recognized with some of the above quoted authors as resembling what clinical trauma studies' established as "addiction to the trauma" (which reiterates certain traumatic and trauma-compensatory practices without becoming capable of working through the original experience) does evidently represent a highly defensive addiction-like interactional pattern of intellectual/ psychodynamic interaction.

Consequently, our evermore complex concept of the humanities' 'guiding interactional principle' in its final and most elaborate version would read: Doing humanities means being personally predisposed and institutionally reaffirmed to *almost religiously love and appreciate an "autonomous" "truth" and beauty in literature and its "inaccessible"/ inexplicable, trans-*

empirical meaning -- thereby subordinating her/himself and possibly also others to this truth/ meaning -- and to do so for reasons of mental and institutional defence, implying a certain extent of addiction-like rapport to literature as object matter.

xxx Conclusion and outlook: We need institutional self-research!

Our tentative observations and provisional conclusions about the 'guiding interactional principles' of 'doing humanities' amounted to a quite ominous array of functional elements and left a rather worrisome picture about the operational logic of the institution as such. If these conclusions were to prove correct this would pose significant problems and risks for the humanities' fundamental mission which is: to engage in interdisciplinary, application-oriented, and societally responsible research about culture. And also at risk would be in the long run: the societal reputation and academic standing which scholarship and teaching about culture and aesthetics undoubtedly deserves.

For, we have come across evidence which seemed to indicate patterns of *anti-enlightenment* though and *fundamentalist* discourse and which also pointed towards a strong influence of *institutional traditions* and *power structures* -- referring back to heavy investments which Germany's national and intellectual identity building placed on reading and teaching works of literary and cultural history throughout the last two centuries. Upon closer examination the albeit quite limited materials we have collected seem to reveal patterns of interaction and mental processing which are based on (i) concepts of an almost *religious* love and appreciation for the object matter, (ii) assumptions of a *principally inaccessible* and *trans-empirical* truth, indicating an *anti-explanatory* habitus, (iii) on a latent inclination to *subordinate* oneself and possibly also subordinate others to this truth (iv) and to do so for reasons of *mental* and *institutional defence* (v) resulting in a mode of object relation which in part follows an *addiction-like* interactional logic -- and as such is all the more deeply ingrained in an anti-explanatory standpoint. These aren't very promising patterns of institutional conduct, indeed.

Moreover, the heuristic image of a hypothetical personality profile representing a characteristic type of institutionalized humanities professional wasn't very encouraging either. For, there we looked at the picture of a type of person who while *turning to* reading literary texts at the same time has *turned away* from and mentally defended against the realization of certain aspects of her/is empirical reality and personal experience, also a type of person whose emotional engagement in reading is all the more intense -- to the point of (philological) enthusiasm -- and yet is situated entirely apart from and in opposition to any explanatory

human curiosity about how empirical worlds and their human inhabitants work; at last we look at a type of person who would instead take compensatory reassurance from assuming an intrinsic "truth" and beauty of literature to which one may safely *subordinate* oneself -- and others -- as an inexplicable intrinsic qualities of a work of art.

This image heuristic image seems troublesome indeed. It does certainly not represent the kind of academic professional who would induce great confidence in terms of her/him supporting interdisciplinary humanities and being concerned about the empirical and societal ramifications of humanities' research. Particularly limited this confidence would have to be if it comes to what we above have recognized as being a research sector of prime importance for any modern society: issues of violence, victimisation, traumatic experience, re-victimization, and destructiveness and in addition to this any issues of the human psyche. This would also include the associated question of how one may 'do humanities' in a way which effectively works as a constructive/ therapeutic counter force against destructiveness and mental trauma, put in more emphatic words: how the humanities may effectively safeguard the peaceful and humanistic essence of mankind in times of modernity -- a function which humanities' scholarship traditionally prides itself of procuring.

Is it then truly the case that the humanities' institutionalized ways of performing scholarship and teaching -- much to the contrary of its humanistic self-concept -- have unwittingly gotten into counter-productive patterns of activity? May it really be true that honourable academic disciplines as German studies, literary scholarship, philosophy or the other humanities have become part of the *problem* rather than of the *solution* -- in terms of their most basic vocational calling: to support the processes of endurable civilisation and mitigate the destructiveness in the world? Accepting the mere possibility that such hypotheses could be correct might seem almost unbearable for many in these fields. Whoever is raised in the canon of western cultural and aesthetic values will rather tend to feel that such thought is, in fact, an "unfaithful" thought which – to use Weinberg's and Sebald's words – had better "remained inaccessible" to conscious thinking and frank articulation, because it constitutes a "sacrilege" and a "betrayal which breaches the faithfulness towards the dead" (Sebald) or -- as Fischer vehemently criticizes -- a "betrayal" of "sacrosanct" "art" in general (56).

On the other hand, however, one might also wonder: Is this not an all too gloomy picture? Is there not also much evidence indicating if not the opposite then at least that the humanities are, in fact, very interested in the other disciplines and in contributing to societal tasks, and also that they intend "to build bridges between different cultures" not only "on the big stage of global conflicts" but also regarding the "communal living together of people …" (see above)? And aren't the humanities in reality not very open to probing themselves in

terms of their current state of affairs and to looking for promising venues to develop innovative approaches?

Yes indeed, these assumptions might be correct, too. And this definitely is the moment to reiterate: The empirical foundation and methodology which our hypothetical thoughts and conclusions are based on, are not at all sufficient and would never pass any standards of qualitative empirical research. In other words: we made some observations had some thought -- just like humanities' methodology free-wheeling habits of hermeneutical conclusions go! --, but we don't really know for fact and cannot reliably explain what is going on in the humanities, unless we conduct systematic research on this issue.

Therefore, this is also the moment to say: We then do have to undertake this research! We have to get down to engage in methodically rigorous investigations about ourselves as humanities professionals and the workings of our fields and institutions. Because one may not continue like this! We humanities representatives may not just go on moving back and forth between optimism and high self-esteem about our importance on the one hand and pessimism and critical suspicion about our incapacities and alleged 'uselessness' on the other -- just as any of the countless humanities-debates routinely do, which pop up every couple of years and go through the same old arguments of aesthetic 'truth', empirical vagueness, cultural education, critiques of having little practical implications, the claim of a need to reach beyond mundane uses and applications … and so forth -- debates which regularly don't leave any concrete impulse of institutional development behind them.

We cannot go on like this because even if we don't know much about the present situation and habitus of the humanities, one thing is certain: The complacent position that there is no problem at all and basically everything is fine, except that the humanities have to increase their public image and financial means, -- this majority position cannot be correct. We only need to remind ourselves: If the European Union in the year 2007 encourages humanities disciplines like „literature" and „philosophy" to apply for funds, to work together with „social sciences" and „psychology", and to develop perspectives of societal "usefulness", and if at the same time the website for Germany's Year of the Humanities implicitly supports the field's undeviating self-limitation to well-accustomed national funding mechanisms and the associated funding habits and, on top of this, explicitly stresses that fields like literary and culture studies "are not being primarily defined by their immediate societal usefulness" while also practically excluding psychology and social studies -- then, evidently, there must be some kind of problem.

Therefore, we do need to get into this kind of institutional self-research. And this research has to be intended and financed by the profession itself and not proposed/ imposed

by any outside evaluation. Also, of course, this kind of investigation has to be interdisciplinary and inter-methodological, i.e. it would have to draw on the methodologies which qualitative social research have to offer, having in stock various procedures of qualitative interviewing, document and text analysis, and action research.

The return which may be expected from such research endeavour is quite promising, indeed. For, not only would the humanities get into a position from which they could take action with regard to specifically expanding their methodology, choice of object matter, and repertoire of activity. Moreover, along the way of doing so the humanities would almost automatically become able to put themselves in a quite advantageous position on the international market of higher education services (Weilnböck 2002 xx b, c, 2003 b, 2007 f). Because, if humanities' students were offered an opportunity to not only study canonical cultural items but to also get acquainted with qualitative-empirical methods and psychological and clinical research, this will undoubtedly assist them in gaining expertise and competencies -- also the so-called *soft skills* of social and emotional intelligence and so-called 'self-reflexion' -- which one usually does not gaining neither with a standard psychology degree nor with a culture degree. These skills are much sought-for in all sorts of vocational fields today. And the humanities could develop a unique offer to not just train these skills but acquire them in ways which tap into aesthetic experience and cultural contexts as well as their psychological implications.