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# THE IDEA OF 'SELF' AND MODERN PRAGMATICS

ROMAN KOPYTKO

## 1. Introduction

There are three main objectives of this paper *first*, to analyze some basic aspects of the vague and amorphous concept of 'self'; *second*, to consider the 'self' as 'mental dissipative structure'; and *third*, to relate the concept of self to the idea of the cognitive-affective-conative system proposed in the framework of non-Cartesian pragmatics (cf. Kopytko, 2000, 2001a, 2002). Clearly, the tripartite mental system derives from the Platonian triad *reason-feeling-will* (see Kopytko 2001a). The interrelations between the elements of the cognitive-affective-conative triad are the subject of my study (cf. Kopytko, 2002, and forthcoming).

Thus we shall first of all focus on the relations between the elements of the cognitive-affective-system as well as on a comprehensive investigation and defense of the notion of 'self' considered as a 'mental dissipative structure'. Obviously, the human self regulates the use of language to a considerable degree. Specifically, the current or working self-concept controls social actors' interactional behavior (their self-esteem, interactional goals, emotional expression, etc.).

The project of non-Cartesian pragmatics presented a critique of 'rationalistic pragmatics'. Accordingly, the theoretical sources of rationalistic pragmatics (viewed as a type of pragmatics based on rationalistic assumptions rather than on empirical findings) were identified as (1) philosophical essentialism, (2) modular pragmatics, (3) the principle of methodological reductionism, (4) the postulate of the 'rationality of human behavior' represented as 'ideal types', 'rational agents', etc., (5) categorical pragmatics and (6)

deductive-nomological, or deterministic predictive approaches. In addition the rationalistic program was found incapable of solving even the basic descriptive and theoretical problems of linguistic pragmatics. Therefore, an alternative to rationalistic pragmatics rested on a unified view of empirical pragmatics characterized by the non-modularity, non-essentialism, non-discreteness, non-determinism, non-reductionism, and contextuality of pragmatic phenomena (cf. Kopytko 1995).

Relational Pragmatics (i.e. a specific version of non-Cartesian pragmatics cf. Kopytko, 1998) promotes a pancontextual approach to language use. A broad, all-embracing view of context leads to an alternative, that is, non-Cartesian approach to pragmatics. It may be claimed that interactional pragmatics (1) questions the objectivity of the notion of 'context', (2) advises a defocusing of the subject/actor/language user, (3) proposes an interactional point of view in pragmatic analysis, (4) explains why communicative success in verbal interaction is never guaranteed and illusory understanding or miscommunication occurs so frequently, (5) suggests that actors' pragmabilities (i.e. individual potentials of language use) may change, develop and be enriched, (6) notes that the interactional processes (including actors' pragmabilities) adaptation, enrichment, etc.) of multifarious cooperation between actors may lead to some form of social *consensus* and understanding (which, however, may prove to be unstable and only temporary), (7) reveals the dependence of 'interactional pragmatics' on other disciplines that investigate the different aspects of the *pancontextual* set.

In the non-Cartesian view of pragmatics the Cartesian autonomous agent is replaced by Ens Cognoscens (EC) a 'pancontextualized' cognitive agent, dependent on a number of mental (viz. the cognitive-affective-conative system), and external (socio-cultural), interactive factors. Such an agent has to participate in 'joint actions', 'collective cognition', 'dynamic cognition' and be aware of a countless number of emergent phenomena and processes in social interaction. In other words, the 'new' Ens Cognoscens has to behave like a natural human being. EC is a heuristic device that has proved to be useful in the descriptive and explanatory tasks of theoretical pragmatics. Kopytko (2001a) claims that beside the emerging non-Cartesian trend in pragmatics a parallel development is taking place in cognitive science. Obviously, the two disciplines should cooperate to achieve their objectives. Cognitive science and AI researchers specifically, have noticed the importance of including emotions in their project in order to make progress in constructing artificial intelligence.

The above observations are important because they clearly show that essentialist, categorical, and discrete approaches to pragmatic theory, epistemology and the philosophy of science are inadequate. Pragmatic,



philosophical, and scientific phenomena in general are non-discrete, non-categorical, fuzzy, scalar, etc. (cf. Kopytko, 1995); On the most abstract and general level, three pairs of bi-directional causal relations make the pragmatic system in non-Cartesian pragmatics: (1) Interactant ← → Language, (2) Language ← → Context, and (3) Interactant ← → Context. A full account of these concepts and their relations is a *sine qua non* of a holistic, non-modular view of research in pragmatics.

As emphasized frequently, EC is a defocused, socially distributed and socially constructed being. But Ens Cognoscens is not dead (cf. Kopytko, 2001b); it actively participates in social encounters and cooperates to construct them and also is, to some extent, socially constructed in this process. In short, then, Ens Cognoscens may be represented as follows:

> EC – [Cognitive-Affective-Conative system ← → Pragmability-Affectability] ← → [Social- Cultural-Interactional Context].

In the following sections we shall concentrate on some modern approaches to the self-concept and subsequently on the reanalysis of that concept as 'mental dissipative structure'.

## 2. The idea of self – some conceptualizations

Harré and Lamb (1986) view the self-concept as a system of beliefs an individual comes to form about her- or himself; and 'social identity' or the social category to which people assign themselves or to which they are assigned by others.

According to Geertz (1973), while the concept of person includes that of 'self', it is not identical to it. Personhood is a cultural universal, while selves may exhibit different forms, for instance, the western 'individualistic' self; the 'impersonal' self of the Eskimo; the 'bifurcated' self of the Javanese with an "inside" and an "outside" self, or the 'player' self of the Balinese and others (see also Geertz 1975).

Reber (1985: 676) gives six different uses of the term self in psychology. Concisely they are the following: (1) Self as inner agent or force with controlling and directing functions over motives, needs, fears, etc. Here the self is a hypothetical identity. (2) Self as an inner witness to events. Here the self is viewed as a component of the psyche which serves an introspective function. (3) Self as a totality of personal experience and expression, self as living being. (Acceptable synonyms include: 'ego', 'person', individual', 'organism', and others). (4) Self as synthesis, self as an organized personalized whole (equivalent term 'personality'). (5) Self as consciousness, awareness, personal conception;

self as identity. Finally, (6) self as abstract goal or end point on some personalistic dimension.

Mead (1934) holds that social behavior is a necessary condition for the emergence of selves and minds. The mind has two fundamental components – the social and the personal. The social component consists of beliefs, attitudes and ways of responding to objects that are shared by other members of one's community, known as the 'generalized other'. This requires that one be able to take the role of the other or to take the attitude of the community toward his/her own overt behavior. This is the 'me' component of the self. The personal or private component of the self is the 'I' the actor, performer, the decider.

Social Psychologists (including Mead) recognize the interpersonally determined and consequently malleable nature of the self in contrast to psychoanalytic and humanistic formulations (see Rogers, 1961; Laing, 1967; and Maslow, 1968) that presume that beneath the surface appearance of roles and masks there exists a permanent underlying self. The former view owes much to Goffman's (1959) theatrical analogy and other self-presentation models of social behavior. An implication of the theatrical analogy of interaction is that people do not have any central reality or 'self beyond the performances they put on for others. Goffman is considered to be an heir to the tradition of 'symbolic interactionism' (see Blumer, 1969). All symbolic interactions are claimed to share the view that human beings construct their realities in the process of interaction with other human beings. The person *versus* situation controversy or the debate over whether people do or do not have consistent personality traits seems to be far from a solution. Trans-situational consistency is regarded by some researchers as the exception rather than the rule. Conceiving of the self as a wholly inter- rather than intrapsychic phenomenon can lead to extreme situationism. More recent trends in social cognition (see Markus et al., 1985) underline the role of stable beliefs about the self (self-schemata) in determining people's perception of their social world.

Baumeister (1986: v) characterizes the 'public' and 'private' self as follows: "The public self is the self that is manifested in the presence of others, that is formed when other people attribute traits and qualities to the individual, and that is communicated to other people in the process of self-presentation. The private self is the way a person really is – even if other people fail to recognize it".

The self-concept belongs to a set of synonymous terms (self-identity, self-image, self-ideal, phenomenal self) relating to self-perception (cf. Harré and Lamb; 1986). Mead (1934) wrote of the social construction of the self-concept. He is also responsible for the distinction between the self as the person perceives it (self as object), and the self as the agent of activity (self as subject).



Epstein (1973) distinguishes three major functions of the self-concept: (1) to optimize pleasure/pain balance of the individual over the course of a lifetime; (2) to organize the data of experience; (3) to maintain self-esteem.

Markus and Wurf (1987: 299) in their review of research on the self claim that "the self-concept has been viewed as dynamic – as active, forceful and capable of change. It interprets and organizes self-relevant actions and experiences; it has motivational consequences, providing the incentives, standards, plans, rules, and scripts for behavior; and it adjusts in response to challenges from the social environment". They continue: "In this review we focus primarily on research that views the self-concept as a dynamic interpretative structure that mediates most significant 'intrapersonal' processes (including information processing, affect, and motivation) and a wide variety of 'interpersonal' processes (including social perception, choice of situation, partner, interaction strategy and reaction to feedback").

According to Markus and Wurf, progress in research on the self-concept came as a result of the realization that the self-concept is not a unitary but rather a multifaceted entity, as well as the fact that the understanding of the self-concept's functioning depends on the self-motives, for instance, self-enhancement, consistency maintenance, or self-actualization; and on the immediate social situation. The self-concept as a multifaceted phenomenon has been regarded as a set of images, schemas, conceptions, prototypes, theories, goals, or tasks (for a review and references see Markus and Wurf, 1987).

In their research, sociologists also stressed the multidimensional character of the self-concept (identity). Identity is claimed to include personal characteristics, feelings, and images, as well as roles and social status (see Schlenker, 1985).

Markus and Wurf (1987) analyze the self-concept in terms of 'self-presentations'. Self-representations that can be the subject of conscious reflection are named 'self-conceptions'. Pervin (1989) defines self-conceptions in social cognitive theory as cognitive evaluations of the self. Markus and Wurf make a distinction between 'core' and 'peripheral' conceptions. Central conceptions of the self are more elaborated and affect information processing and behavior more powerfully than the peripheral ones.

Markus and Nurius (1986) propose that among one's set of self-conceptions are 'possible selves', that is, the selves one would like to be or is afraid of becoming. This type of self-knowledge refers to how individuals think about their potential and about their future. Possible selves (including the ideal selves) function as incentives of behavior providing images of (1) the desired, for instance, the successful self, the rich self, the creative self or the admired self; and (2) or the undesired future self such as the depressed self, the

incompetent self, the alone self or the unemployed self. It should be emphasized that possible selves are linked to the dynamic properties of the self-concept – to motivation and to change both momentary and enduring. In addition to accounting for an individual's future behavior possible selves play an important role in providing a context for supplementary meaning for the individual's current behavior.

Markus and Wurf (1987: 306) introduce the idea of the 'working self-concept' that is characterized as the self concept of the moment, a continually active, shifting array of accessible self-knowledge. They hold that not all self-representations or identities that constitute the self-concept will be accessible at any one time. Thus, the self is not viewed as a fixed or static entity but rather as a malleable concept. There are two types of changes that occur in the self concept: (1) the temporary change 'when one set of self-conceptions is activated and accessible in working memory'; and (2) the enduring change 'when new self-conceptions are added to the set, when self-conceptions change in meaning, or when the relationship among self-components changes.'

The working self-concept directly influences (mediates) 'intrapersonal processes' such as self-relevant information processing, affect regulation, and motivational processes; and interpersonal processes such as social perception, social comparison, and the process of interaction.

Thus, maintaining the stability of self may be considered as one way to regulate affect and conversely, the stability of affective state is crucial to maintaining the structure of the self. Another important function of the self-concept is that of motivating individuals to action. Markus and Nurius's (1986) idea of possible selves (discussed above) regards them as the cognitive components of motivation. Similarly, Schlenker (1985: 74) proposes the concept of 'desired selves' that are characterized as "what the person would like to be and thinks he or she really can be".

In sum, the view of the self-concept as a complex dynamic phenomenon seems to be more convincing and fruitful than the traditional view that sees the self as a uniform, monolithic structure. Essential for the present analysis is the insight that the self-concept is dynamic and capable of change (see Markus and Wurf 1987, Markus and Nurius 1986). The question of the self-concept's stability or malleability is still a controversial one (see Wylie, 1979). Among the researchers who claim that the self-concept is highly malleable are Tedeschi and Lindskold (1976).



## 3. The self in social contexts

Studies on motives of the self have distinguished three major sets of motives termed in Banaji and Prentice (1994) as 'self-knowledge', 'self-enhancement', and 'self-improvement'. Self-knowledge refers to the desire for accurate evidence of one's traits and abilities, especially for evidence that confirms one's self-evaluations. The need for self-knowledge can presumably be reduced to a more basic need such as the need for consistency, for uncertainty reduction or for the ability to predict and control the environment. Self-enhancement refers to the desire for positive feedback about the self as well as the self-protective desire to avoid negative feedback such as threats or negative experiences. It is probably rooted in the more basic tendency to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Most researchers would agree that self-knowledge and self-enhancement (or some versions of them) are the two general sources of goal-directed behavior. Some self theorists would add a third self motive – the need for 'self-improvement' or the desire to strive for ideal selves and avoid feared selves. It is presumably rooted in more basic needs for control and/or achievement (for self-motives see Schlenker and Weingold, 1989, 1992; Higgins, 1987, 1989; Markus and Ruvolo, 1989). Recent investigations of the link between the self and social behavior have concentrated on the strategies that individuals use to satisfy self motives in particular social contexts. Characteristically, the studies avoided all-encompassing strategies like Freud's (1925) defense mechanisms or Festinger's (1957) dissonance reduction. Instead, they have focused on the motives driving the self and the opportunities and limitations inherent in the social context.

Markus and Kitayama's (1991) analysis has examined one aspect of how people see themselves, that is, their separation from *versus* connection with others. Two types of self-construals have been distinguished: an independent construal and interdependent construal. In the former the self is viewed as a separate and autonomous entity, guided by internal thoughts, feelings, and actions; on the other hand, in the latter the self is connected with others and to some extent guided by perceptions of others' thoughts, feelings, and actions. Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1994) argue that Western cultures promote the development of an independent self-construal, whereas many non-Western cultures advance the development of an interdependent self-construal. Of particular importance is Markus and Kitayama's (1991) claim that these two types of self-construals have specific consequences for cognition, motivation, and behavior.

The study of the self-concept in the social context is strictly related to the research focused on self-presentation and impression management (see Goffman, 1959; Giles and Robinson, 1990). The importance of the role of the self-concept

in social interaction cannot be overestimated. It is the case frequently that the actor wishes to convey a specific self-image to the audience both to the external and internal one.

The concept of self is used by many psychologists to express pattern, organization, and consistency in personality functioning. It also gives expression to integrative aspects of system functioning (see Kelly, 1955; Rogers, 1961; and Pervin, 1989). Cognitions and beliefs about the self are also involved in social cognitive theory (cf. Bandura, 1986). It is regarded as a broadly integrative concept that can account for diverse phenomena. Social cognitive theory emphasizes the role of the self in the organization of human personality. In the cognitive information-processing approach to personality (cf. Markus, 1977; Pervin, 1989) the self is viewed as consisting of schemata that organize and integrate the functioning of other parts of the system. However, it should be noted that in lieu of a single all-encompassing concept a multiplicity of selves have been proposed such as 'possible selves' (see above, and Markus and Nurius, 1986; and Higgins, 1987). In this view, that self-concept will be regarded as a dynamic multifaceted structure capable of change and responsible for a large portion of social cognition. Its explanatory (heuristic) utility remains to be demonstrated both for intrapsychic and interpersonal communication.

## 4. Dissipative structures

The main objective of this section is to present a model or guiding metaphor for analyzing the 'self' in its interactional context analyzed as a dissipative structure (see Nicolis and Prigogine, 1977; Prigogine and Stengers, 1984; Jantsch, 1980; Laszlo, 1987). First, however, a short discussion of Ilya Prigogine's ideas is in order.

Prigogine and Stengers attempt to reconcile chance and necessity (indeterminism with determinism). In their theory of change fluctuations force an existing system into a far-from-equilibrium condition and threaten its structure when it approaches a critical moment (that is, a bifurcation point). As the authors claim, it is impossible to determine the next state of the system at the bifurcation point. Chance will push the system down a new path of development. However, when that path is 'selected' (from among many) the system returns to determinism until the next bifurcation point is reached. We can never determine when the next bifurcation will arise.

Crucial for thermodynamics is the distinction between reversible processes, which are independent of the direction of time and irreversible processes, which depend on the direction of time. The latter in far-from-equilibrium conditions are associated with the formation of order (that is, new dynamic structures referred



to as 'dissipative structures') from disorder or chaos, for instance, by the interaction of a given system with its surroundings or spontaneously, for example, by the appearance of 'chemical clocks', that is, chemical reactions which behave in a coherent, rhythmical fashion. It should be emphasized that the state a particular system will reach depends on the previous history of the system. The fact that history has frequently been used in the interpretation of social and biological phenomena is not surprising, but that it may be also important for chemical processes is rather unexpected. The path along which a system evolves is characterized by a succession of stable regions, where the deterministic laws operate, and of instable ones, near the bifurcation points where the system can "decide on" the path it will take in the future.

Among the concepts of Prigogine's paradigm two appear to be of particular importance for this study: 'dissipative structures' and 'fluctuations'. Jantsch (1980: 29) characterizes dissipative structures as "those physical-chemical reactions systems which themselves maintain energy and matter penetration by way of the exchange with the environment and which give rise to the self-organization of globally stable structures over extended periods of time". Dissipative structures produce entropy and dissipate the growing entropy. There are three fundamental conditions for the spontaneous formation of such structures: (1) 'openness' of the system, that is, the exchange of matter and energy with the environment is possible; (2) far-from-equilibrium conditions, and (3) auto- or crosscatalytic steps in the reaction chain. Autocatalysis is a chemical reaction in which participate certain molecules (such as enzymes) that are necessary for the formation of molecules of their own kind. In crosscatalysis first an intermediate kind of molecules is formed and subsequently autocatalysis takes place. Dissipative structures continually produce entropy that participates in energy exchange with the environment. The metabolism of a system can be analyzed in terms of input, for instance, free energy and new reaction participants, and output – entropy and reaction end products. "A dissipative structure continually renews itself and maintains a particular regime (or order), a globally stable space-time structure. It seems to be interested solely in its own integrity and renewal" (1980: 31).

The property of self-renewal also referred to as 'autopoiesis' (from the Greek for self-production) is characteristic for living systems (see Varela et al. 1974; Maturana and Varela, 1975). A biological cell is autopoietic in its self-renewal through the interplay of anabolic and catabolic reaction chains. An autopoietic system is also called self-referential because, first of all, it refers to itself.

Jantsch (1980: 34) makes a distinction between structure preserving systems and evolving systems. The former exhibit the internal state of equilibrium or near equilibrium; conservative self-organization, devolution

towards equilibrium structure, or permanent equilibrium structure; relationship with environment – isolated or open (growth possible); logical organization – statistical oscillations in reversible processes or irreversible processes in the direction of equilibrium state. On the other hand, 'evolving systems' can be characterized by (1) dissipative self-organization (evolution); (2) their structure – dissipative structure (far-from-equilibrium), evolving; (3) their function – autopoiesis (self-reference); (4) their logical organization – cyclical (hypercycle), irreversible sense of cycle rotation; (5) internal state – non-equilibrium; and (6) relationship with environment – open (continuous balanced exchange).

The theory of dissipative structures in addition to describing the particular spacio-temporal self-organization of energy conversion in systems in exchange with their environment may also be viewed as an elementary description of the evolution of historical systems (that is, systems with history) whose development depends on the past history of each of its subsystems. Jantsch maintains that an evolving system is 'self-referential in respect to its own evolution'. Dissipative structures exhibit some sort of holistic system memory, that is, the memory of the initial conditions responsible for a particular development, in other words, the beginning of each new structure. The system is capable of linking backward to its own origin. As Jantsch intimates, the theory of dissipative structures will become the core of the future general dynamic theory of natural systems, valid for processes from chemistry through biology to sociobiology and beyond (for example, ecological systems, sociocultural systems or mental systems).

Jantsch (1980: 69) holds that "It may therefore be permitted to hypothesize that the theory of dissipative structures provides a general description of the dynamics of self-organizing systems where the parameters characterizing the space-time structure may be of a physical nature as well as of a social and mental nature".

## 5. The self as mental dissipative structure

The major objective of this section is to analyze the self-concept as a dissipative structure. We may suggest that the construct of the self (or self-concept) exhibit the behavior characteristic of dissipative structures, that is, (1) they are in principle capable to evolve and change; (2) they react to fluctuations (by amplifying or damping them); (3) their evolution (or path) at bifurcation points as well as the occurrence of bifurcation points cannot be determined; (4) the outcome of the evolution also cannot be predicted; (5) they are self-organizing systems, capable of autopoiesis by means of auto- or perhaps crosscatalysis; (6) they are dynamic non-equilibrium systems; (7) they are open systems capable of exchanging (matter and energy) and, above all, information with the environment



(obviously, the exchange of energy and matter concerns first of all the 'bodily self' and perhaps also the 'spiritual self' or mental energy); (8) the processes taking place in the self are irreversible.

In sum, the model of self proposed in this study may be represented in terms of a dissipative structure, or rather, an interdependent system of dissipative structures in constant interaction with the environment. Crucial for this conceptualization of self is (1) the openness of the system and its interaction with the environment; and (2) its state of non-equilibrium or metastability and capability to change because of internal, that is, self-induced, and external or other-induced fluctuations.

Markus and Wurf's (1987) idea (see above) of the working self-concept (as the shifting array of accessible self-knowledge) reflects the malleability and instability of the self-concept (at the level of social interaction). That is, the fact that individual behavior depends on the set of dynamic structures (such as self-schemas, possible selves, scripts, etc.) which are accessible to and may be activated in the working-self-concept.

It is worth noting that the self-concept is open to influence (fluctuations) from within, that is, from other interdependent components of the self-system (and possibly other intrapersonal systems, for instance, the cognitive-affective system) and from without, that is, from social and natural environment. The term 'natural environment' refers to other than human or independent of human activity, for instance, geographical location, climate, natural environment, etc. The other intrapersonal systems that can probably influence the self-concept include also the cognitive structures associated with knowledge, beliefs, and value systems. The self as a dissipative structure is embedded in a natural, that is, bodily and physical environment (context). The self or person (or as it is often called 'the self-system') is a complex mental entity that is primarily based and dependent on the 'cognitive-affective-conative system' (this construct will be discussed in more detail as the study unfolds). The question of the structure of the self-system is far from settled.

Relatedly, Epstein's (1973) three major functions of the self-concept may be claimed to be rooted respectively as follows: (1) the organization of the data of experience – in the cognitive system; (2) the maintenance of self-esteem – in the affective system; and (3) the optimization of the pleasure vs. pain balance of the individual over the course of a lifetime – in the conative system.

At the generic level, that is, from the point of view of the history of humankind there were periods of change and development of the faculties of the human mind. One is tempted to propose that the evolution of the three faculties has a tendency towards reaching some sort of equilibrium between the affective and cognitive-conative system, or even towards the domination of the latter. That

is, from the (historically) predominantly affective brain towards the development of the cognitive-conative faculties of the mind (for a similar view of the development of the human brain as a "triune brain" cf. MacLean, 1990). The above mentioned evolution has probably been caused, among other things, by the development of (cognitive) knowledge structures, reasoning, and language.

Despite the claims about the immutability of human nature (see Midgley, 1980) a considerable progress toward the 'cognitive self' can be observed. However, a keen observer must notice that two other types of the self/personality co-exist in human society, that is, the 'affective self' and the 'conative' or 'striving self'. Moreover, some might insist that the 'cognitive self' is not the dominating type but in reality is in the minority. To complicate the picture (or rather to be more observationally adequate) it may happen that owing to the environmental influence (situational, social, physical, etc.) the same person can be categorized as 'affective' (expressing emotions and feelings), or 'cognitive' (showing restraint, composure, good judgment, rational behavior), or finally, as 'conative' (goal-oriented, well-motivated, and active).

The distinction between the affective and cognitive person clearly resembles that of the classical, psychological division of personalities as either the 'extravert' or 'introvert' type. On the other hand, the conative, striving self is clearly related to the concept of a 'high achiever', that is, a type A personality characterized by excessive drive and competitiveness. Thus, it may be assumed that human action and reaction hang on (1) the actors' attributes such as the predominance of either the affective, cognitive, or conative subsystem in their self-systems, and (2) on the external and interactional context of the event. Basically, if we divide human action into three phases: first, the 'pre-action', second, 'action', and third, 'outcome' it may be plausibly suggested that the pre-action is closely associated or embedded in the affective-cognitive system, the action proper is associated with the conative system and the reaction appears to be rooted in the affective system. Obviously, 'outcome' is, first of all, an input to the affective system and then to the other two (cognitive – evaluation and conative – another action or reaction).

In brief, it may be suggested that the 'cognitive man' is predominantly 'pre-active', which means that her/his action is preceded by intrapersonal cognitive behavior such as planning, careful choice of strategies, an estimation of costs and benefits, evaluation of the probability of success, etc. The 'conative self', on the other hand, is predominantly active, that is, his/her mental activity concentrates, first of all, on the action at hand rather than on the desirable pre-active deliberation about its course, probability of success, or consequences. Clearly, the conative system of such a personality is more closely related to the affective rather than cognitive system. Finally, the 'affective man', whose action



is frequently (if not always) a reaction to some external factor (for instance, a cognition) usually unfavorable to his/her self-image, focuses his/her mental activity on the desirable, positive outcome of the undertaken action rather than on the cost-benefit analysis, deliberation, etc. Thus, we may assume that the underlying order (that is, the structure or sequence of mental faculties employed in human action) of the faculties is different for the three types of personality advocated above. As a consequence, it may be useful, for both theoretical and descriptive purposes to propose a heuristic hypothetical construct of the cognitive, conative and affective 'self', respectively (clearly with some reservations to be specified below). Obviously, a specific type of self or person is expected to behave (act) in accordance with social expectations associated with a given personality. It is also evident that such expectations for various reasons, first of all, by virtue of contingent, contextual factors cannot always be satisfied; after all, the self is not a deterministic system resembling that of Newtonian mechanics, but rather an object of a dynamic type bearing a close relationship (resemblance) to Prigogine's dissipative structures. Obviously, the self cannot be identified with dissipative structures but it may be compared with them in order to grasp some underlying similarities of structure and behavior. It should be made clear that the self is an object *sui generis* that is, in fact, not reducible to any other type of objects or phenomena.

A simplified sequence of mental events associated with the activity of the 'cognitive self' may be represented as follows:

(1) Cognitive self – [X – $\text{Cognition}_1$ – Will – $\text{Cognition}_2$ – Y]

In the above sequence $\text{Cognition}_1$ stands for the pre-action cognitive processes, Will is responsible for the execution of the action and $\text{Cognition}_2$ represents the estimation of the outcome of the action. The order [$\text{Cognition}_1$ – Will – $\text{Cognition}_2$] will be considered as the 'core sequence' characteristic of the 'cognitive self'. The core sequence is usually embedded in the preceding (marked here as X) and the following context (marked as Y). If we accept that most (if not all) cognition is preceded and initiated by an act of the will, the X in the sequence stands for such an act. The following context Y may, for instance, represent affect, or the positive or negative emotions associated with the outcome of an action. In contrast to the 'core sequence' the contextual X and Y sequences will be referred to as the 'peripheral sequences'. Obviously, the representation of the 'cognitive self' in action is only an approximation (and simplification) of the actual complex mental processes, which are still to a great extent unknown. In this connection one more reservation should be offered. It is rather doubtful that 'pure cognition' exists (except as a theoretical construct). Human cognition as is

argued in Kopytko (2002, and forthcoming) is clearly accompanied by affective influence. Therefore, when we use the concept of cognition (especially in academic discourse), in reality, its proper referent is the cognitive-affective system rather than an isolated, pure cognitive system. Indeed this also holds for the conative and affective system. However, as already mentioned the purpose of the present analysis is to compare and point to the differences between the three hypothetical selves. Therefore, the heuristic method proposed here appears to be justified. Finally, the specific selves although primarily correlated with a specific personality may also be associated with specific social roles or contextually-induced behavior. In other words, each of us can be from time to time either cognitively, conatively or affectively-oriented; but clearly one of the orientations definitely predominates over others. The order characteristic of the 'conative self' can be represented as follows:

(2) the 'conative self' – [X – $Will_1$ - Cognition and/or Affect – $Will_2$ – Y].

The sequence in (2) represents $Will_1$ as underlying an action that is subsequently estimated (cognition) and as a result, some kind of affect may be produced. Irrespective of the quality of the affective event (or even in the situation of its absence) the next element of the sequence $Will_2$ will produce another action that will be estimated and the cycle will recursively go on.

Finally, the structure of the 'affective self' is represented in (3) below:

(3) the 'affective self' – [X – Cognition – Affect – Will – Y]

In this sequence it is affect that is the "prime mover" that instigates the will to action which is subsequently appraised. This schema represents rather faithfully the case of "being wise after the event". On the other hand, the pattern in (3) above represents an affective reaction to some external stimulation (cognition). It should be reminded that most (if not all) cognitions may be biased and deformed (see Chapter 2). Thus, inadequate cognitions become frequently a source of misattributions of motives, negative affect, or interpersonal conflict, etc.

Finally, one might ask a question about the status of the affective system in the 'cognitive self' represented in (1) above. Is it completely devoid of or immune to any affective influence in their intra- or interpersonal action or rational action such as decision making? A view of man as a machine may be regarded as a heuristic device but the almost infinite variety of human behavior (and its underlying mechanisms and motives) calls for an approach that recognizes the fact that each person possesses a specific affective system that has an important function in the majority of mental processes. The conceptualization



of the 'cognitive self' in terms of cognition and will indicates (1) the predominance of the two faculties (in the order of priority as indicated above) and (2) the fact that the affective system in the 'cognitive self' is most of the time under the control of Cognition and Will (it should be noted, however that contextual/situational contingencies can produce at times exceptions to the principle).

Theoretically, for heuristic purposes, it is useful to distinguish three major states/relations between the elements of the cognitive-affective-conative system. They include the states/relations of (1) 'perfect equilibrium' represented as [C-eq, A-eq, W-eq] – where C stands for cognition, A for affect, W for will, and the abbreviation 'eq' represents 'equilibrium'; (2) near equilibrium [C-neq, A-neq, W-neq] – where 'neq' stands for near equilibrium; and (3) non-equilibrium [C-noneq, A-noneq, W-noneq] – where 'noneq' represents non-equilibrium. Thus, in (1) the state of equilibrium of the cognitive-affective-conative system is represented. In such a state none of the elements of the system dominates over any other. This is an 'ideal type' in the Weberian sense (see Kopytko 1995), which reflects an ideal personality well-balanced and predictable in intra- and interpersonal behavior. The system in (2) reflects a near equilibrium condition, that is, a state that can return to equilibrium rather than reach the threshold of the far-from equilibrium condition. Finally, the triad in (3) represents a global disequilibrium of the system in far-from-equilibrium condition. The global disequilibrium of the system emerges when one of its subsystems (for instance, affective, cognitive, or conative) dominates over the other two, or perhaps when two subsystems in conjunction (for example, the affective and conative system) dominate over the cognitive system. The relation of domination and control of one subsystem over others introduces into the system the state of functional disequilibrium, that is, a far-from-equilibrium condition. Clearly, the state of disequilibrium in the cognitive-affective-conative system inescapably leads to failure in intra- and interpersonal behavior. The above claim holds good both for the contingent states of disequilibrium as well as for the more enduring or permanent ones, for instance, the inborn or acquired in infancy.

An alternative to the psychological approach to the functioning of mental faculties is the sociological account, for example, in the tradition of George Mead (1934). For many sociologists the functioning of cognition, conation and affect is socially conditioned or socially constructed (see Gergen, 1999, 2001). According to them, the social conditioning is responsible for the origin, development, and specific (current) functioning of mental faculties. By implication any disequilibrium in the mental system has its source in external, environmental stimulation. This is clearly too narrow a view of the mental aspect of human life sometimes referred to in terms of *Homo Sociologicus* (see Dahrendorf, 1973).

The psychosocial view of the self advanced here hangs on the claim that individuals can be characterized by way of specific functions or roles of the coordinated elements in the cognitive-affective-conative system. It may be assumed that these functions and relations (for instance, the domination of one system subsystem over another) can be either genetically inherited or acquired in the process of socialization. Finally, and most probably, they are too some extent inherited and also acquired in a specific psychosocial environment (cf. Pervin 1989). Evidently, the actual behavior of an individual depends not only on her/his specific pattern of functioning but also on the external, social influence that can modulate or even change radically the behavior characteristic or socially expected of the individual. So far three basic states/relations of the cognitive-affective-conative system have been proposed, that is, the state of equilibrium, near equilibrium and far-from-equilibrium. In the latter three states of disequilibrium have been discerned: (1) the domination of the cognitive system in the 'cognitive self', (2) of the affective system in the 'affective self', and (3) of the conative system in the 'conative self', respectively.

A more subtle analysis might proceed by asking the question about the order (or importance) of the two subordinate subsystems in the triad dominated by one of them. For example, the 'affective self', as intimated above, is dominated by the affective system, and the two other systems (i.e. the cognitive and conative) are subordinate. Potentially, they may be (a) dominated to a different degree, and (b) the relation between them may be also that of domination. For illustration, the core sequence of the 'affective self' may be represented as follows: [A [W – C]] which means that the affective system dominates the conative and cognitive one. This representation however does not present any information concerning the relation between W and C, which theoretically may be that of equilibrium, near equilibrium, or far-from-equilibrium. In the case of the latter it has to be decided which of the subordinate subsystems dominates the other. Clearly there are only two possibilities regarding the relation between them, namely, either W dominates C or *vice versa*. Such conditions can be represented as [A [W [C]]] or [A [C [W]]], respectively. Nota bene, personality theorists such as Mischel (1968) or Eysenck (1975, 1976) have proposed personality questionnaires and approaches to personality by way of factor analysis.

It can be plausibly suggested that the Big Five see below is controlled by the Big Three or cognitive-affective-conative system. Clearly, we may assume that the affective system underlies first of all three members of the Big Five (i.e. traits of human personality, cf. Pervin 1989: 315) that is, Extroversion, Agreeableness, and Emotional Stability, and to a lesser degree Conscientiousness and Culture. Conscientiousness appears to be first of all related to or embedded



in the conative subsystem and Culture in the cognitive subsystem. If correct, this is a very significant observation because it provides one more independent argument for the existence and necessity of the conative system. It would be rather odd to imagine that traits such as tidy, responsible, scrupulous, or persevering are, first of all, embedded in the cognitive and affective system rather than the volitional, conative system.

## 6. Conclusions

In the presented reanalysis the self-system is analyzed as *mental dissipative structure* that is, characterized by means of the following properties: (1) openness of its system, (2) interconnectedness with other systems, (3) far-from-equilibrium condition, (4) responsiveness to fluctuations, (5) irreversibility, (6) indeterminateness, (7) changeability.

It may be suggested that a change in a human dissipative structure depends on the following factors: (1) the state of the mental system (that is, near or far-from-equilibrium); (2) the strength of the fluctuation (disturbance); (3) the level of affective arousal; (4) the cognitive-affective appraisal of the threat of the fluctuation to the mental system; (5) the desire or "will" to resist or change the system; and (6) the specific individual differences including knowledge, experience, the self-concept, etc.

The necessity and significance of the self-system for human beings is unquestionable. The acquisition (construction) of knowledge structures depends critically on the operation of the cognitive-affective-conative system, which is indeed the condition *sine qua non* for the construction and development of all structures of the lower logical order such as knowledge structures and self-concepts.

As mentioned above, Marcus and Wurf (1987) consider the self-concept as an essential component of the individual's cognitive and affective system. In the present approach to the self-system that has to be considered as a hierarchy of interdependent mental dissipative structures the role of the self-concept has been considerably reduced; nonetheless the fact of interdependency between systems and subsystems cannot be denied. We might speculate about the division of labor between the primary (inherited systems) responsible for the generic (species-specific) features of mental entities such as the cognitive-affective-conative system and those responsible for the individual mental structures and features of both inherited and predominantly socially acquired descent. Such efforts however stand in need of a substantial empirical support.

We can clearly maintain that individuals differ in the content, structure, and function of their self-systems. Thus, they exhibit different content and

function of knowledge structures, cognitive skills, goals, self-knowledge, affective reactions, etc. In addition, and this seems to be of particular importance, individuals show different degrees of their self-system's metastability as well as resistance to fluctuations and change. Finally, the differences concern also the role that the elements of mental systems play in the intra- and interpersonal behavior of specific persons. We might suggest that it is a falsifiable claim that the content (scope), structure, and function of knowledge structures (including self-knowledge) in the cognitively-oriented personality is more complex and possibly to a greater extent involved in the intra- and interpersonal behavior than those of the conatively or affectively-oriented personality. Furthermore, we can expect that the self-concept of a cognitively-oriented personality will be more developed and more accessible; besides, it should show more stability and better reflect the relation between the 'real self' (that is, independent of the subjective conceptualization of an individual) and its mental representation as the self-concept. Thus, to such a personality Socrates's injunction 'know thyself' appears to be obvious and natural. Socrates's teaching was first of all directed to people for whom cognition or self-knowledge was clearly not the primary goal of their lives. On the basis of his philosophy Socrates himself may certainly be regarded as a cognitively-oriented personality. Clearly, we are obliged to note that even today Socrates's precepts seems to be taken to heart by a minority of the "existing" self-systems.

Certainly, we may assume that the self-concept of the affectively-oriented person may show the least stability and the greatest vulnerability to fluctuations and disturbances. Changing moods, imperfect or chaotic cognition, affective reactions, etc., can be held responsible for a radically different self-view of the affectively-oriented personality within a short period of time, or for a periodic change depending on circumstances. The extreme instability of the self-concept that may be associated with the affectively-oriented personality may be considered as a crucial argument against the notion of self-concept and in favor of the more sociological or contextual account of psychological phenomena such as proposed by American 'interactional symbolists' (cf. Mead, 1934).

We must emphasize the fact that all the notions and mental constructs discussed here (such as cognitive, affective, or conative personality) are obviously continuous, non-discrete, and fuzzy categories. Thus, belonging to a specific category (such as the cognitively-oriented personality) is a matter of degree. As a consequence, less typical and more typical instances of such categories may be distinguished. Rosch's (1978) theory of prototypes may be of some use to explain such phenomena.

There are many problems and controversial issues involved in the research focused on the content, structure, and functioning of the self-system. The model



of such a system presented here relies, first of all, on the idea of mental dissipative structures and constructs such as the 'cognitive', 'affective' and 'conative self'. Manifestly, the different selves are often involved in conflict with one another; moreover, various types of personalities are engaged in verbal (interpersonal) conflicts. Such events provide inestimable empirical data for studying mental structure and operation in terms of dissipative structures.

The view of Man presented here is not that of Man as *passivus* or "puppet personality" controlled entirely by situation or social context; instead, we prefer to conceive of the self as a mental dissipative structure in a holistic context, capable of change, dependent on feedback from the environment and information from the recorded history of the system. The most significant reanalysis of the self-concept in the present approach includes the following (1) the representation of the 'mental self' as a tripartite entity, that is, the 'cognitive', affective, and 'conative self' and relating them to the self-motives; (2) the application of the descriptive and explanatory framework associated with the theory of dissipative structures and suggesting the construct of 'mental dissipative structures'; (3) proposing a holistic psychosocial view of mental phenomena in interaction with the natural and social environment, and (4) by implication, claiming for the self-concept (self-knowledge) the status of a dispersed or distributed entity. The self is dispersed not only at different levels of the mental system and the self-system (for example, the higher vs. lower order entities such as the hierarchy [cognitive system → cognitive self → knowledge structures → self-knowledge]) but also it is contextually, socially dispersed and, as some researchers hold, the self is socially constructed. Actually, individuals shape their self-concepts to a great extent as responses to social evaluation and feedback associated with their social roles.

To conclude, as social communicators we must attend to different selves of our interlocutors, that is, on the one hand we have to handle the (to some degree) contextually controlled cognitive, affective and conative selves and on the other hand a number of 'possible selves'. Moreover, even the same individual can offer us a range of selves and correlated with them linguistic behaviors. A holistic investigation of human communication must account for the dynamic mental and social phenomena involved in verbal interaction. Alas, the issue of how the self-system controls language use in social intercourse remains to a large extent an unexplored territory in human communication research.

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