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Jürgen Kriz

Polylogical Contribution of Person-Centered Systems Theory to an Integrative Therapy

Abstract (by AI – *notebookLM)* **:**

The Person-Centered Systems Theory, as described in the provided text, offers a polylogical contribution to an Integrative Therapy. Here are the essential concepts of this text:

- **Four Process Levels:** The theory posits that to comprehensively understand and address human experience, at least four interconnected process levels must be considered. While psychotherapy often focuses on the first two, the latter two provide crucial context:
    - **Psychic Processes:** This level broadly encompasses how individuals generate meaning through perception, thought, and feeling. People experience and evaluate "the world," observe themselves, and reflect on their feelings, acting upon the world through their resulting behaviors and speech.
    - **Interpersonal Processes:** This refers to the micro-social structures found in couples, families, or groups. Concepts like "interaction patterns" and "communication rules" highlight how the expressions of individuals are systematically related to one another. Familial therapy notably brought attention to this level. Psychic and interpersonal processes are always interdependent; actions influence and are influenced by perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, creating constant feedback loops.
    - **Cultural Processes:** These embed psychic and interpersonal processes within a broader social context of macro-social meaning structures that are largely pre-given. This includes "tools" like daily objects, laws, media, and especially **language**. Language is critical not just for communication with others but also for understanding one's own experiences, even the most intimate feelings. Crucially, language transmits "self-evident" meaning-images, principles, rules, and ways of understanding and acting that are often unconscious and powerfully influential, varying significantly across cultures.
    - **Bodily Processes:** The Person-Centered Systems Theory, in line with Ciompi's concept of affect logic, emphasizes that cognitive-psychic and affective processes run simultaneously. Affective (biochemical) processes provide a framework for rapidly changing cognitive (bioelectrical) processes, meaning physical reactions can linger long after a conscious event has passed. Furthermore, the human organism possesses significant structuring capabilities due to evolutionarily acquired pre-formations, such as the fight-flight-freeze system, basic needs, and attachment behaviors. The concept of the "social brain" highlights that the human brain's architecture is primarily adapted for complex dynamic embedding within a social community. This biosemiotic perspective suggests that organisms selectively assign meaning to environmental features rather than simply reacting to physical stimuli, creating a unique "subjective" environment for each being. The brain's architecture also provides numerous "supra-sensory" meaning categories (e.g., "face," "causality," "justice") that structure our experience beyond

direct sensory input. Ignoring these powerful, often unconscious, organismic effects would be inappropriate.

- **System-Theoretic Modeling via Meaning Attractors (Sinnattraktoren):** The theory uses concepts from synergetic system theory to describe how these process levels interact. A central concept is that of **Attractors**, which are self-organizing orders or patterns that emerge through feedback loops in interconnected processes. In the psychosomatic domain, these are termed "Sinnattraktoren" (meaning attractors) because they involve the generation of meaning. These attractors represent stabilized interpretations of "reality" that influence how further perceptions are integrated. The goal of psychotherapy, therefore, is to **destabilize these problematic over-stabilized meaning attractors** that manifest as symptoms, thereby supporting the emergence of new, more adaptive orders. Many symptoms are patterns that were once functional but have failed to adapt to new developmental tasks. This process involves "appropriate disturbance" to facilitate change. The interaction of processes is understood through **bottom-up dynamics** (elements forming structures, e.g., tones forming a melody) and **top-down dynamics** (structures influencing the perception of elements, e.g., a melody influencing how individual tones are perceived).
- **Complementarity of Objective and Subjective Perspectives:** A crucial aspect is the need to consider both the "objective" (or intersubjective, described by observers) and "subjective" (experienced by the individual) perspectives. Problems arise when seemingly objective conditions for change are met, yet a client does not change, indicating a failure to adequately understand their internal frame of reference. The theory emphasizes that taking diagnostic descriptions as the sole "truth" is problematic, as they represent only an external viewpoint. The client's subjective perspectives, needs, and experiences are equally vital and must be carefully elicited and considered. However, eliciting subjective experience is complex, as self-reports are subject to narrative and linguistic limitations, not necessarily a direct reflection of true "Befindlichkeit" (state of mind).
- **Complementarity of Biosemiotic and Symbol-Theoretic Perspectives:** This concept further elaborates on the subjective perspective by dividing human existence into two complementary ways of "being in the world":
    - **Bodily-Organismic (Biosemiotic) Perspective:** This refers to our embodied existence, driven by the evolutionary architecture of our "social brain". It highlights how we grasp the world pre-linguistically through "supra-sensory" meaning categories and innate search strategies, like how infants develop "inner working models" of attachment based on caregiver reliability. This involves **implicit knowledge**.
    - **Cognitive-Linguistic-Symbolic (Symbol-Theoretic) Perspective:** This refers to humans as reflexive, linguistic, rational beings who engage with symbolic systems. Drawing on Ernst Cassirer's idea of *animal symbolicum*, it describes how our understanding of the world is shaped not just by biologically anchored signs but by an unlimited space of artificially created and socially agreed-upon symbols, including language, magic, myth, religion, law, politics, art, and science. The text states that these two ways of "being in the world" must be constantly integrated. Many psychopathological phenomena are linked to a loss of adequate symbolic structuring of experience. Significant **tension and incongruence** can arise when individuals fail to "bring to language" their organismic processes and implicit knowledge, or conversely, when they speak in "detached speech bubbles" alienated from their authentic bodily experiences and needs. This mismatch can lead to a state where the

individual system (body and mind) does not fit well into the world, leading to the development of "symptoms". A substantial part of both organismic and symbolic structuring processes occurs outside of conscious awareness. This implies that mindfulness should extend beyond internal processes to also encompass interpersonal and cultural processes, as they too exert unconscious influences that should be brought to consciousness.

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Xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx Full text, translated by AI (notebooklm):

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Polylogical Contribution of Person-Centered Systems Theory to an Integrative Therapy

Contents:

1. Preliminary Remarks (omitted here) 4052 words.

2. The Four Process Levels of Person-Centered Systems Theory

One can likely assume that most therapists today pay attention to both psychic and interpersonal processes and consider phenomena at both levels for their understanding of what is happening and for their therapeutic work. This applies equally to what specifically takes place in the therapeutic room, as well as to what constitutes and influences clients' lives outside the therapy room – even if we primarily gain knowledge of the latter only from clients' narrations. Furthermore, there is likely a consensus among therapists that psychic and interactional processes always work together. While a person's interpersonal actions are not determined by their perceptions, thoughts, feelings, etc., they are significantly influenced by them in most cases. Conversely, these actions are perceived, evaluated, and influenced by other people's actions in response – which is then again perceived and evaluated by the first person. Such constant feedback loops are essential. The psychotherapy literature is full of aspects that must be considered at these two levels and their interaction. Therefore, it suffices to briefly characterize these two process levels here.

"Psychic processes" are broadly defined as that level of our complex existence where meaning and significance are generated by the individuals involved. Through perception, thought, and feeling, they experience and evaluate "the world". They can observe themselves and reflect on it, or emotionally evaluate it (e.g., getting annoyed about being annoyed). With the resulting actions (e.g., speech acts), they exert an influence on "the world".

"Interpersonal processes" refer to the level of micro-social structures of couples, families, or groups, the consideration of which was primarily introduced into psychotherapeutic practice and discourse by family therapy. Clear or diffuse boundaries of parents towards children, coalitions between mother and son

against the father, manipulative behavior, etc., are aspects described by therapists with a view to the processes at this level. Concepts such as "interaction patterns" or "communication rules" indicate that the expressions of the actors are regularly related to each other.

The history of psychotherapy, spanning well over a hundred years, and the diversity of phenomena, aspects, and derived concepts at these two levels rightly justify the typical centering on psychic and interpersonal processes. However, this often neglects the broader context in which these processes are embedded and from which they sometimes gain their comprehensive meaning. This is because psychic and interpersonal processes take place within a framework characterized by cultural processes on one hand and bodily processes on the other.

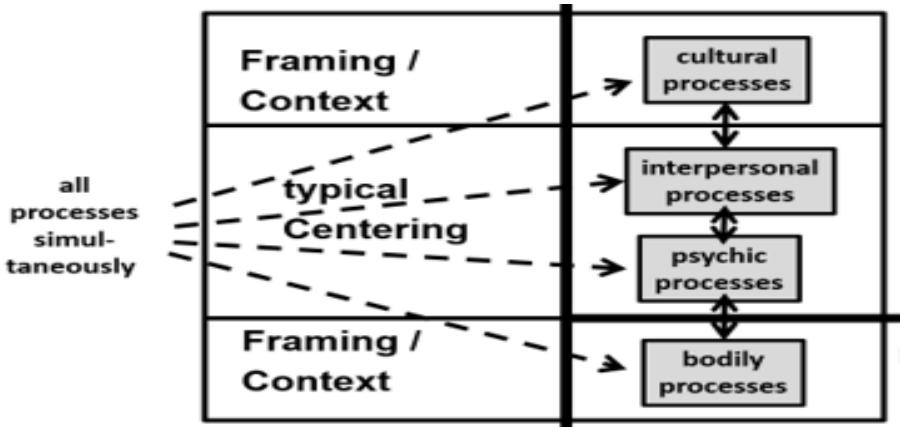

Figure 1: The four process levels of Person-Centered Systems Theory

Figure 1 depicts these four process levels, which, from the perspective of "Person-Centered Systems Theory," must be considered at a minimum (!) if significant effects in the overall process are not to be systematically ignored. It is emphasized in the figure that the distinction into these four process levels is, of course, only an analytical-classificatory one – in reality, processes occur at all four levels simultaneously in every moment, influencing each other in complex (especially: non-linear) ways (detailed in Kriz 2017). It is also important to note that these four levels represent the "minimum" differentiation, and for many questions, further system levels must be included (for example, the processes at the father's workplace or at the eldest child's school, etc.). Despite the brevity of this contribution, the cultural and bodily process levels will be explained in more detail.

3. Cultural Process Level

The meanings of words and sentences, of inner images about living together or about the expectations of fellow human beings, which are relevant in interpersonal processes, exist within a broader social context. Many of these macro-social, overarching meaning structures are largely pre-given when we enter the stage of life, begin a partnership, or start a family.

We perceive the embedding of our life processes in culture most clearly through "tools". Most things of daily life, the laws and rules of social interaction, the mass media penetration, and communicative networking (mobile phones, the internet) of everyday life – all these are achievements that have been created over many generations. With these cultural tools just mentioned, their tool character is usually more or less conscious to us. We imagine that they enrich us and simplify life – but they seem to have little to do with our "actual human existence". This is distinctly different with another cultural tool, namely "language". We can only understand the "world," other people, and even ourselves by using

language. While we can have sensations purely on an organismic level, without any language, as is true for many animals, our organism can evaluate perceived objects and situations as useful or harmful and react accordingly. It can even move appropriately and competently in its environment or regulate our relationships with social partners. For example, it can care for them, undertake things together with them, or sexually unite with them. All these are abilities that our organism is capable of even without any language.

However, to understand what sensations we have, we need linguistic designations. For instance, we distinguish whether a pressing feeling in the stomach indicates, for example, satiety, something not well tolerated, or tension due to an upcoming exam. Similarly, we need language to describe or explain to others how we feel and why we behave in a certain environment and situation the way we do.

Language thus serves both communication with others and the understanding of our own experience. Even for understanding our most intimate, unique, individually subjective sensations, we need the cultural toolkit we call "language" – an important insight that is too often overlooked. This is by no means just about the grammatical sequence of speech sounds or the semantic meaning of words and their situationally appropriate use. This is undoubtedly important. But just as significant are the meaning-images, principles, rules, ways of understanding, living, and acting that are transmitted "as a matter of course" with language. Yet, although these are typical within a certain culture and can differ significantly between different cultures (and partially also between subcultures, families, organizations, etc.), they are usually hardly questioned in everyday life. Mostly, they are not even noticed. Thus, they exert a considerable influence, although they largely remain unconscious (Kriz 2017, 2018).

4. Bodily Process Level

In accordance with Ciompi's concept of affect logic (1982), Person-Centered Systems Theory also emphasizes that both cognitive-psychic and affective processes occur simultaneously in the human organism at every moment. In this, affective processes, due to the slower change of biochemical parameters, frame the rapidly changeable cognitive processes with their bioelectrical basis. For example, a threatening situation from a near-accident can be resolved rationally-cognitively in seconds: "I wasn't run over". However, the hormones released and other bodily reactions can often persist for hours or longer. Even in the evening, when the event has long faded from attention, one can still observe the effects themselves (or a carefully empathetic observer) in certain reactions.

But it is not just about the strong effect of affects on our conscious experience. Rather, brain research and infant research have uncovered the exceedingly important structuring achievements of the human organism due to evolutionarily acquired pre-formations (which will be discussed in more detail below). These include our fight-flight-freeze reaction system, but also the somatic basis of "basic needs" or, for example, what we describe and typify as "attachment behavior". These evolutionary pre-structurings were long underestimated, but they are now generally discussed under the concept of the **social brain** (Dunbar 1998). The ecological niche, to whose conditions every living being has adapted in the course of evolution to survive, is determined in humans less by physical characteristics related to food resources, predators, strength, speed, camouflage, mating behavior, etc.. Rather, it is the evolutionary architecture of our brain as a "social organ" that ensures highly differential dynamic embedding in the social community.

Considering arguments and findings from biosemiotic discourses (von Uexküll 2014 ; Kriz 2017, 2022, 2023a), the idea that organisms "react" to physically-chemical "stimuli" from their "environment" is inadequate. Rather, according to the biological equipment of an organism, meanings are selectively assigned to certain features from the environment in the form of signs. And to these signs, in turn, the

organism reacts according to its possibilities. Therefore, for example, animals in a summer meadow all live in the same ("objective") environment, but each in its specific ("subjective") environment. "Ants," "bees," "beetles," etc., exist only in human textbooks; for each animal, only certain characteristics of the other animals have a meaning to which they react.

In the evolution of so-called "higher" living beings, increasingly extensive and differentiated "internal processing systems" in the form of complex nervous systems have been inserted between the sensory and motor systems. The evolutionary advantage is that this allows increasingly complex facts in an organism's environment to become part of its life-relevant environment. This, of course, requires considerable integration of the immediate sensory experience of the receptors. This effectively leads to "supra-sensory" meaning assignments (Mausfeld 2005) – to categories of meaning, that is, which cannot be realized by sense organs themselves, but only through their functional cooperation. For example, there are no sensory receptors or sense organs for distal object categories like "food," "enemy," "mating partner," or hidden attributes of objects like "edible," "dangerous," etc.. But through the architecture of the human brain – as brain and baby research show – a hugely rich array of further meaning categories are pre-given – such as "face," "inanimate objects," "animate," "my kind," "body parts," "fruits," "vegetables," "causality," and "intentionality" (ibid.) up to concepts and principles of everyday physics, of quantities, or of "justice" (see the compilation and discussion in Kriz 2022, pp. 133ff.).

Even if this extensive spectrum of differential functionalities of our social brain, unanticipated until a few decades ago, "only" interacts with the processes of the other three mentioned levels and can therefore be moderated accordingly, it would still be inappropriate to ignore these effects originating from the organism, or to reduce them unspecifically to "drives," "affects," etc..

5. On System-Theoretic Modeling

The naming and description of process levels naturally do not yet constitute a theory. Essential, therefore, are the concepts of how these processes are interconnected and jointly unfold their effects. This has been extensively developed and detailed in Person-Centered Systems Theory on the basis of synergetic system theory (Kriz 2017), and cannot be briefly summarized here. Roughly speaking, however, at each process level, it is about questions of stabilization (often: problematically-symptomatic over-stabilization) and therefore about an **"appropriate disturbance"** (ibid. pp. 271–278) within the framework of therapeutic change. For each level, the other levels are the "environment" and thus contribute to stabilization or destabilization. The processes on the four levels do not interact as parts, but in the form of **effect fields** that generate sense and meaning ("meaning fields"; ibid., pp. 175–186), which dynamically superimpose each other.

For a more precise investigation of over-stable orders, the concept of **Attractors** has been adopted, corresponding to synergetic modeling. In system theory, attractors are orders (or patterns) that self-organize in a process and typically arise through feedback loops in interconnected processes. Since in the psychosocial domain, unlike in natural sciences, it is not about energetic effects but about the generation of sense and meaning, the concept of **"meaning attractor" (Sinnattraktor)** was specifically introduced. This is easiest to understand with interpersonal meaning attractors, because there, A typically acts on B and B on A (though many more actors can be involved – for instance, in a family), and thus a common interpretation of "reality" emerges and stabilizes. But also in the psychic-cognitive domain, it is well understandable that a certain understanding of initial impressions (e.g., what my counterpart says) influences the reception and interpretation of what is further perceived. The advantage of synergetic

modeling is that the formation and change of such attractors can be precisely described, and certain assumptions can be derived from it, which in turn can be experimentally verified (and thus also easily used as heuristic guidelines in therapies).

The basic conception (albeit without mathematical modeling possibilities) already goes back to the Gestalt psychology of the Berlin School (Wertheimer, Koffka, Köhler and especially Goldstein, who coined the term "self-actualization" and undertook corresponding research).

A melody ultimately consists only of tones. But as a melody, it has a clear structure, so that one can, for example, transpose it by ½ tone – no tone is then identical to the one before – and yet one recognizes the same melody. That individual "elements" (tones) organize themselves into a structure (melody) is called **"bottom-up" dynamics**. However, it is also important that the melody, in turn, acts **"top-down"** on the perception of the tones. The same physical stimulus – e.g., A at 440 Hertz – can be perceived as "calming" (if the other tones or the melody are perceived as A major) or "pressing" (if the other tones or the melody are perceived as D major). This is schematically shown on the left in Fig. 2. A Gestalt in the sense of Gestalt theory – for example, melodies – are thus to be understood system-theoretically as attractors that self-organize bottom-up and cyclically-causally act top-down on further dynamics. This is shown in Fig. 2 for various phenomenal areas (melody, interaction patterns, meaning of what is heard).

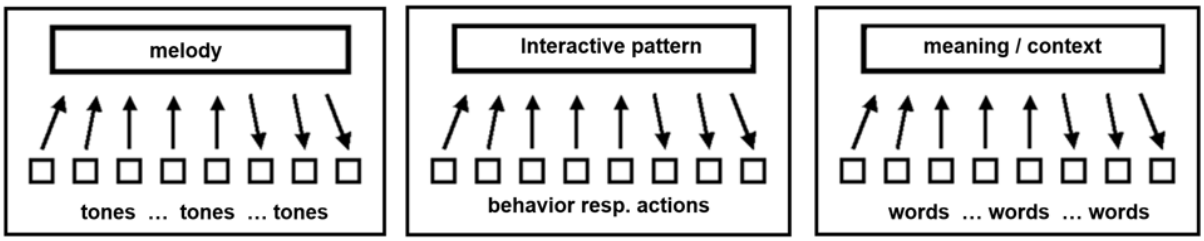

Figure 2: bottom-up an order emerges that top-down influences further dynamics

Insofar as perceived problems or symptoms are related to over-stable descriptions, interpretations, and ways of understanding the motives and actions of others or one's own inner and outer life processes, the task of psychotherapy is to support the change and new adaptation of these meaning attractors – which manifest as symptoms and problems in psychic and interactive processes – to the changed developmental tasks. This occurs in an **order-to-order transition**, in which (painful) orders are destabilized so that new orders can emerge that better meet the new conditions. This is because many symptoms were appropriate and functional in earlier developmental phases but have failed to adapt to new conditions. After all, human development – both at the individual level and in social systems – involves repeatedly having to abandon well-functioning processual patterns because new developmental tasks arise. For example, at the family level, different interaction patterns are necessary depending on whether a child has just been born, is going to kindergarten or school, entering puberty, starting vocational training, etc.. The same applies to the organization of the child's own psychic processes. In psychotherapy, therefore, the question of stability – or **over-stability** – as well as change and new adaptation to developmental tasks, is central. For more detailed representations, reference must be made to the literature (extensively: Kriz 2017).

6. On the Complementarity of Objective and Subjective Perspectives

In addition to the (at least) four process levels and the system-theoretic modeling of their interaction (from which several sub-concepts emerge), a third important aspect of Person-Centered Systems Theory is to consider the **complementarity of subjective and objective perspectives** on what is happening.

The starting point is the experience that we often wonder, with a particular client, why they have not yet made a certain change, even though all important conditions and aspects for it seem to have been worked out and are now present. "Actually," this person has sufficient competencies and resources to finally take the next step of growth. Our wonder, however, actually only shows that we have not yet sufficiently understood the inner frame of reference – the lifeworld from which they view themselves and their world, and thus also the conditions of their actions and possible changes. This is because in the subjective ("inner") lifeworlds of those involved, other aspects are often significant than in the professional, objective ("outer") descriptions.

Person-Centered Systems Theory has therefore formulated the central maxim: **The "world" as it is described ("objective"/intersubjective aspects) and the "world" as it is experienced (subjective aspects) are two complementary perspectives. Both must be taken into account**.

This complementarity is easily understandable in therapy and medicine through the distinction between intersubjective ("objective") "findings" and subjective "states of mind" (Befindlichkeiten). It would be one-sided to want to understand or model psychological events solely based on "objectively" observable or ascertainable "factors" (many of which, moreover, are not even conscious to the subject). But the lifeworld experienced by the subject alone would also be too one-sided. Usually, however, only those aspects that observers intersubjectively ascertain are largely considered and discussed as influences on experience and behavior. The complementary perspective – that of the subject in their lifeworld – would be at least as relevant for therapy and counseling, but it is often much less considered.

Even if this complementarity of subjective and "objective" (better: intersubjective) perspectives can only be explained very briefly here, an important demand arises from it. **Caution is advised against taking the descriptions of diagnosticians and other observers as "truth"**. This is because these are only one – albeit important – external perspective. Equally important are the careful elicitation and consideration of the clients' subjective perspectives, especially their needs and experiences. However – this will be discussed in more detail below – what exactly is meant by this is by no means trivial. For asking clients how they feel initially only yields self-reports from self-observers, which does not necessarily reflect their true state of mind, but is subject to the narrative restrictions and transformations of linguistic representations. This will be explained in more detail in the following section.

7. On the Complementarity of the Biosemiotic and Symbol-Theoretic Perspectives

Under the previously raised question of considering the subjective perspective, the four process levels can not only be differentiated, as done above, into "typical centering" and "framing". Rather – as shown on the right in Figure 3 (not provided in the source) – it becomes significant to divide processes into **"bodily-organismic"** on the one hand and **"cognitive-linguistic-symbolic"** on the other. This reveals connections to completely different discourses, where the focus is on the fact that we, as humans, exist in the world in two complementary ways:

Firstly, we are embodied in the world, with the evolutionary organismic architecture of our social brain. This **biosemiotic perspective** emphasizes that – prior to all linguistic-rational and conscious knowledge – we grasp "the world" in the richness and differentiation outlined above, not only through sensory

perceivable categories but especially also through the aforementioned "supra-sensory" meaning categories (Mausfeld 2005). This also includes the search strategies with which, in early childhood development, this world is searched for patterns and transformed into biographically relevant strategies. For example, the sound stream is searched for phonemes, leading to the grammar of one's own speech in accordance with the surrounding language community. In stress situations, the infant evaluates the reliability of attachment figures and develops its inner working models (Bowlby 1969) accordingly – to name just two examples.

Secondly, humans also shape their relationship to the external lifeworld and to themselves as a reflexive, linguistic, rational, and logically operating being. Although the biological basis of these functions is primarily seen in the neocortex, the functions themselves are only possible due to and through the dynamic embedding of cognitive processes in the symbolic-linguistic systems of humans. Due to the great relevance of these symbol systems for our way of "being in the world," Ernst Cassirer (2010 [1923–1929]) refers to humans as **animal symbolicum**, which shapes its understanding of the world not only on the basis of biologically anchored signs but also through an unlimited space of artificially created and socially coordinated symbols. In addition to language, according to Cassirer, magic, myth, religion, law, politics, art, and science are particularly important symbolic forms of mental structuring (which differs significantly from Freud's concept of symbol, but forms an important basis for the concepts of Susanne Langer, Alfred Lorenzer, and other analysts).

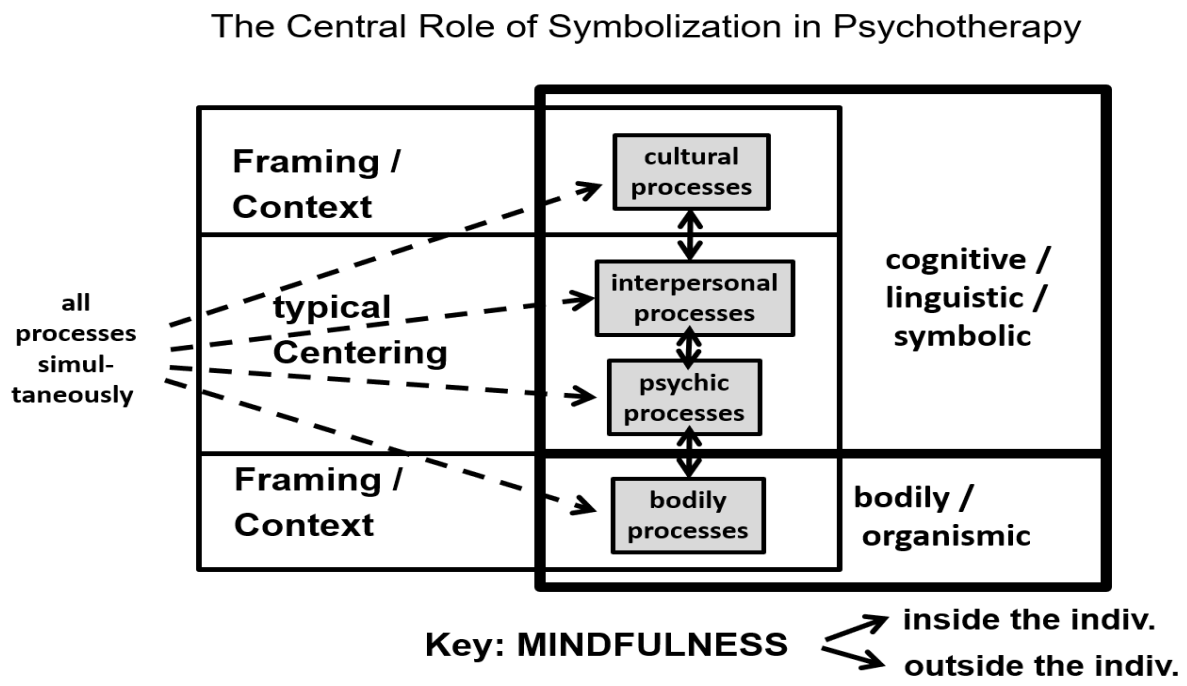

Figure 3: The central role of symbolizing in psychotherapy

Both ways of "being in the world" must be brought together at every moment of our lives. This is by no means always easy, especially since our increasingly complex societal forms and their diverse symbol systems require equally diverse abstraction capacities and perspectives – for example, to even recognize irony or non-literal meanings. Therefore, many clinicians who are interested in a processual understanding of psychopathological phenomena beyond a superficial DSM or ICD classification link

many symptoms to a **loss of adequate use of symbolic structurings of our experience** (Andersch, Barfi 2008; Andersch 2014).

Moreover, these two ways of "being in the world" cannot always be congruently and harmoniously related to each other. **If we do not "bring our organismic processes and the associated 'implicit knowledge' to language," i.e., do not (also) apply cultural tools to ourselves, we cannot understand ourselves, let alone explain ourselves to others**. This creates considerable tension in our life scenes. Conversely, it also holds true: If we only talk about the world and our (supposed) state of mind in "detached speech bubbles," we are alienated from our actual life basis. Our needs, emotions, and our "embodied" contact with the world are then not even consciously registered by ourselves. Instead, we impose foreign explanations, descriptions, and meanings on our bodily processes (e.g., "introjects"). With this lack of congruence, we do violence to our organism and disregard our needs and sensations. No wonder if, as a complete "human" system, we then, perhaps long-term, do not fit well into the world with our body and/or mind, or feel out of place in the world – meaning we develop what are described as "symptoms".

A considerable – if not the largest – part of both organismic and symbolic structuring processes occurs outside of consciousness. It would be important here to distinguish between the structuring forces and their content-specific, namable result. For example, what we call "anger" can be symbolized as "anger" with mindful attention to our inner processes (supplemented by self-observation of our behaviors). With this, we have described the event in terms of its content and brought it to consciousness. However, how and to what extent this "anger" influences our perception, thinking, decision-making, and actions as an operator, and possibly stimulates further feelings, we can grasp far less with our consciousness than the content aspect. Interpersonally, facial expression can also be used as an appellative operator of our social brain instead of an expression of an inner state (Benecke 2000).

Similarly, most structuring effects from symbol systems likely occur far from consciousness. Psychological books and various gazettes are full of examples of typical cognitive errors, logical fallacies, and irrational beliefs. Supplemented by those phenomena that were already the subject of Freud's investigation of everyday pathologies in 1904 and 1901 – such as slips of the tongue, errors, parapraxes, or mishaps – this proves the fragile structure of our rationality. That we, at the macro-social level, with our Indo-European grammar, which largely pre-determines linguistic symbolizations in nouns, attributes, and corresponding (fixed) relations, tend towards reifying descriptions of our experiences and "the world" is not yet known to many (including psychotherapists). We are also little aware of how strongly our view of the "world" and our actions within it are determined by simple cause-and-effect thinking or by belief in "balancing justice" in lotteries, roulette, "luck," and "misfortune" in life. But even within the symbol system "science," most scientists are not aware in their routine actions of how strongly their seemingly rational behavior is determined by the formative power of undiscussed worldviews and associated methodological approaches in their encounter with the world.

With regard to the effects of symbol systems, their massive expansion and change through the internet with its social media networks would also need to be discussed here. Because these are currently significantly changing the structuring processes of our experience – from the macro-social (alternative facts, "lying press," Trumpism) to the interpersonal (bullying, shitstorm, influencers) and into the psychic processes (what attracts the attention of subjects, what must and may be believed, how great is the pressure to conform to political correctness for subjects?). Similarly, the competence and performance of speaking about ourselves and the "world" are significantly influenced by the media – from the structure of messenger services to linguistic interventions by artificial intelligence like ChatGPT. Not to

overlook these processes is important – but for a serious discussion from which even heuristic guidelines could follow, I lack the space, time, and competence.

The unconscious forces that significantly co-determine our experience of the world therefore act in both the realm of organismic and symbolic formations. **The currently fashionable debates and floods of books on mindfulness should therefore not only focus on "inner" processes, but also on the interpersonal and cultural process levels**. For effects also originate from here that should likewise be brought more into consciousness.

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Appendix (by AI agent)

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What is the "social brain" concept?

The "social brain" concept refers to the **evolutionary architecture of the human brain as a "social organ"**. This concept, discussed by Dunbar (1998), emphasizes that the human ecological niche, to which every living creature adapts for survival, is less defined by physical characteristics related to food, predators, strength, or mating behavior. Instead, it is primarily shaped by the brain's design, which ensures a **highly differentiated and dynamic embeddedness within the social community**.

Within the Person-Centered System Theory, the "social brain" concept is part of the **physical process level** and highlights the significant structuring achievements of the human organism due to **evolutionarily acquired pre-formulations**. These pre-formulations, which were long underestimated but are now widely discussed under the "social brain" concept, include:

- Our fight-flight-freeze reaction system.
- The somatic basis of "basic needs".
- What we describe and typify as "attachment behavior".

The "social brain" also implies that the idea of organisms merely "reacting" to physical-chemical "stimuli" from their "environment" is inadequate. Instead, based on an organism's biological equipment, **meaning is selectively assigned to certain features from the environment in the form of signs, to which the organism then reacts** according to its capabilities. This means that while animals on a summer meadow may share the same "objective" environment, each lives in its specific "subjective" environment, where only certain features hold meaning for them.

The evolution of "higher" living beings has resulted in increasingly comprehensive and differentiated "internal processing systems" within complex nervous systems, situated between sensory and motor systems. This evolutionary advantage allows more complex environmental facts to become part of an organism's life-relevant environment, requiring significant integration of immediate sensory experience, leading to "supra-sensory" meaning-making. The architecture of the human brain, as shown by brain and infant research, provides a vast array of pre-given meaning categories, such as "face," "inanimate objects," "living things," "my kind," "body parts," "fruits," "vegetables," "causality," and "intentionality," as well as concepts of everyday physics, quantities, and "justice".

While this extensive spectrum of differential functions of our "social brain" "only" interacts with the processes of the other three levels (psychological, interpersonal, and cultural), it is considered **inappropriate to ignore these effects from the organism or to reduce them unspecifically to "drives," "affects," etc.**.

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What are Sinnattraktoren?

In the context of the Person-Centered System Theory, "Sinnattraktoren" (meaning attractors or sense attractors) are a key concept used in the synergetic modeling of how processes are interconnected and exert their effects.

Here's a breakdown of the concept:

- **Foundation in System Theory**: "Attraktoren" in general system theory refer to **orders or patterns that form in a process through self-organization**, typically emerging from feedback loops in interconnected processes.
- **Focus on Meaning-Making**: In the psychosocial domain, unlike the energetic effects studied in natural sciences, the focus is on **the generation of meaning and significance**. This is where the specific concept of "Sinnattraktor" is introduced.
- **Interpersonal Sinnattraktoren**: These are most easily understood in interpersonal interactions, where individuals (e.g., A and B, or multiple family members) influence each other, leading to the **formation and stabilization of a shared interpretation of "reality"**.

- **Psycho-Cognitive Sinnattraktoren**: The concept also applies to the psycho-cognitive realm. For example, a specific understanding of initial impressions (like what another person says) will influence how further perceptions are taken in and interpreted.
- **Role in Psychotherapy**:
    - Sinnattraktoren can manifest as **over-stable descriptions, interpretations, and ways of understanding** both one's own internal and external life processes, and the motives and actions of others.
    - When perceived problems or symptoms are linked to these over-stable Sinnattraktoren, the task of psychotherapy is to **support their change and new adaptation** to evolving developmental challenges.
    - This involves a process of **destabilizing existing (and often distressing) orders** so that **new orders can emerge** that are better suited to new conditions. Many symptoms, while perhaps appropriate in earlier developmental phases, have simply failed to adapt to new circumstances.
- **Synergetic Modeling**: The advantage of synergetic modeling is that it allows for a precise description of how such attractors form and change. This, in turn, can lead to specific assumptions that can be experimentally tested and easily applied as practical heuristics in therapy.

Essentially, "Sinnattraktoren" represent the stable patterns of meaning and interpretation that emerge and are maintained through feedback loops within and between individuals, influencing how they perceive, understand, and act in the world. In psychotherapy, addressing problematic "Sinnattraktoren" involves facilitating a transition from unhelpful, rigid meaning-making patterns to more adaptive ones.

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