Theories of action, speech, natural language, and discourse

BRONCKART, Jean-Paul

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Jean-Paul Bronckart

Human action as the main concern of psychology

Reflections on the status of psychology are normally summed up in several commonplace propositions as follows. First, the subject matter of the discipline is behavior, or rather observable behavior and the mental phenomena associated with it; radical behaviorism confines itself solely to behavior, and within the framework of this perspective we do not discuss directly the status of animal behavior. Second, behavior is dynamic; the human organism behaves (conducts itself), or in other words it interacts actively in its setting or beyond it in the world. Thus, behavior is still activity, in the first and general sense of the term, Leont'ev's Tätigkeit. Third, active behavior involves a simultaneous transformation of the world and of the organism itself; one form of the organism's transformation is the growth in understanding. Hence, the commonplace yet conclusive formula: Understanding is derived from activity. And fourth, the task of psychology is to interpret forms of active behavior. It is first of all to explain (or understand) the structure of these forms of behavior, how they function, and how they are constructed. The follow-up task is to explain (or understand) the structure, functioning, and ways in which this understanding produced by the behavior is elaborated.

The quasi-ecumenical nature of these propositions is obviously just a facade; some fundamental differences exist with regard to the actual
status of behavior, the foundations of activity, the role of understanding, and, as a result, the actual type of interpretive process to be applied to these objects. The key to these divergences revolves around the status given to human activity, and it is this notion that we propose to examine in terms of five general points.

**Leont’ev’s interpretation of action and activity**

For a wide range of theoretical approaches, undoubtedly a majority, human activity is first and foremost an externalization of the biological characteristics of an organism. Not just for Piaget, but also for the radical behaviorists, these are functional characteristics. In contrast, in the neo-ativist approach dominant today structural characteristics are given priority.

Running against these currents is the perspective which argues that the structuring of human activity is of a sociocultural nature. It is within the framework of this opinion that the term “action” may find itself given a first general meaning. We know from the perspective of Leont’ev (1979) that the notion of activity concerns the most general forms of the functional organization of behavior, through which the members of a species gain access to the world. It is possible to differentiate among activities by looking at the motivations of the species to which they are linked (e.g., activities of feeding, reproduction, avoidance of danger). In the case of socially organized species (and in particular in the case of humankind), activity develops through actions; it breaks down functionally into structures or substructures of behavior oriented toward goals and underpinned by the group’s usage of rules. Thus, actions form the practical social modalities through which activities are carried out.

In spite of their global relevance, the concepts introduced by Leont’ev remain inadequate since the problem arises as to the conditions of participation by an individual agent in a socially governed action. What relation is there between the aim of a social action and the representation that the agent has of it? Put another way, what psychological status should be given to the intentions, decisions, and "reasons for acting" that an agent has for participating in an action?

**Events and human action**

To answer the questions outlined in the preceding section, it is fitting to recall the distinction made by Elizabeth Anscombe (1957) in her volume *Intention*. She distinguished between “events produced in nature” and “human actions.” The statement “Two tiles fell off the roof due to the effect of the wind” describes an event (the falling of the tiles), and this event may be explained. That is to say, one may attribute a cause, in the classical sense proposed by Hume (an antecedent logically independent of the event and capable of being identified separately). The statement “I arranged for two tiles to fall off the roof to damage my neighbor’s car” also describes an event that may be interpreted in a causal manner. But since it also describes a human action, it should moreover be analyzed as referring to an action, involving an agent (e.g., human organism endowed with the ability to act, or a capacity for action), a motive (or reason for acting), and thus a purpose (a plan). Consequently, in addition to a causal (or explanatory) analysis of the objective characteristics of the event, the interpretation of the action requires a comprehensive analysis of the relations that exist between these characteristics and the relevant tools in the repertoire of the agent’s capacities for action.

**Human action and its context**

The analytic framework for actions, as opposed to events, outlined earlier is illuminating, but it fails to address the issue of the social foundations of human activity that Leont’ev emphasized, and it should be expanded from the perspective proposed by figures such as Max Weber (1971), Paul Ricoeur (1986), and Jurgen Habermas (1987). Ricoeur makes a point of emphasizing that all human activity is social “not only because it is (generally) the work of several agents so that the role of each one of them cannot be distinguished from those of the others, but also because our acts get away from us and have effects which we had not foreseen” (1986, p. 193). Even if, in the first analysis, an action seems to be the result of the intentional intervention of an agent, the action becomes detached from this and develops its own consequences. In reality the action constitutes an “open work” (in the
sense proposed by Umberto Eco). That is to say, it constitutes a phenomenon whose meaning hangs in doubt.

For Ricoeur, the attribution of meaning to action is the result of three categories of factors. First, action is a directed system of behaviors producing effects in the world, and it should be analyzed from this point of view. Second, action simultaneously develops within a social framework producing a set of conventions (values, symbols, rules), and its meaning should consequently also be analyzed as a product of this level of social control. And finally, the way in which agents become integrated into a network of social relations leads agents to “sprinkle” their action with singular characteristics, which are traces of what it “offers” of itself to others. This third aspect of action also merits interpretation.

These three forms of interpreting action have been described by Habermas elsewhere under the headings of “teleological acting,” “acting in accordance with norms,” and “dramaturgical acting.” Habermas completes Ricoeur’s analysis by focusing more on the types of “worlds” that support forms of acting. In other words, he focuses on the different “systems of formal coordinates” in relation to which these three aspects of action may be placed and evaluated.

Teleological acting brings into play the coordinates of the “objective world” (the physical world). That is to say, this form of acting focuses on the *unaire* entity put forward by Wittgenstein in the Tractatus, “the totality of what the case is.” This first form of acting may be evaluated on the criterion of truth (Are the agent’s understandings and opinions those that agree with “what the case is”?) and on the criterion of effectiveness (Has the goal been attained?).

Acting in accordance with norms deals with the direction given to actions of a group’s members by the values (norms, symbols, etc.) that they share. This second form of acting involves the social world, which is the framework defining legitimate forms of interpersonal relations and in which the agents take part insofar as they play a role in these rule-governed interactions. The evaluation of social acting is based only on the criterion of appropriateness (whether action conforms to the norms recognized as legitimate).

Finally, dramaturgical acting refers to the fact that “the participants in an interaction form a kind of reciprocal audience for themselves to which each one of them plays” (Habermas, 1987, p. 101). Each agent has privileged access to the intimate sphere of his or her thoughts, wishes, feelings, and so forth and can control the interaction by ruling (or controlling) the access of the audience to his or her own subjectivity. According to Habermas, dramaturgical acting involves a subjective world, or a world of the agent’s “actual experiences,” to which the agent has privileged access. In our view, however, this third world comes largely (or totally) from the internalization of the social world. This third form of acting may be evaluated according to the criterion of sincerity: To what extent may the light that agents shed on themselves through their style of action be considered sincere or truthful?

In postulating these three forms of acting, Habermas is in fact defending a central hypothesis according to which all human action, as it unfolds, exhibits three forms of *claims to validity*. It presupposes a common understanding of an objective world, on the basis of which claims to truth can be assessed; it presupposes the sharing (acceptance) of relevant rules from the social world, through which the claims of appropriateness can be evaluated. And finally, it presupposes the recognition of the subjective world of every agent, through which claims of sincerity can be evaluated. And it is these abstract presuppositions (that is to say, independent of predetermined content) that make up the *context* of human action or meaningful action.

**Communicative action, the foundation of meaningful action**

The context of an action may thus be defined as being composed of the three worlds put forward by Habermas. But these worlds are formal, they are made up of understandings (of representations), and the latter are necessarily the product of a construction.

According to Piaget’s theory, the elaboration of understanding comes primarily from the progressive differentiation of modalities of interaction between the organism and the objective world, then from the abstraction and internalization of the logical properties of this interaction. For Piaget, it is these *bio-logical* structures alone that make possible the construction of an objective world at the same time as a subjective world (moving from the state of initial indifference or egocentrism to a state of decentration) and that then allow for the construction of the social world (later processes of socialization).
For Habermas, on the other hand, the construction of the three worlds comes from the “rationalization” of a subject’s “actual world,” which is a result of the communicative action characteristic of all of human society. The production of meaningful actions in effect requires the establishment of an “understanding” (an agreement) between interactants on what the situation of action (the context) is in the sense defined earlier. And it is communicative action (or signifying activity, or, simpler still, human language) that constitutes the medium for (and in) which this necessary intercomprehension occurs. Signifying activity thus constitutes the fundamental process that enables the members of a group to establish a minimum level of agreement on the basis of which the event is transformed into a meaningful action.

In animal species, if individuals working together on the realization of a certain task have the capacity for representation, they are conscious of the world that makes up the context, and this consciousness of the situation includes the representation of other actants. The animal is furthermore capable of dealing appropriately with the communicative signals emitted by other interactants. But the communicative episodes of the animal world have a clear “releasing” character; the correspondence between the behavioral signal and the response is direct. It is not the object of any procedure of negotiation (and thus reply), as is borne out by the apparent absence of all dialogue. This implies that the only context prepared by the animal in the framework of its participation in an action is that of its negotiated representations of the world, which comes back to saying that the animal only manages the actions within the framework of its own “actual world.”

In the human species, communicative action introduces an intermediate term between the signal (or phonetic production) and the response. This is a socially negotiable (and contestable) proposition relating to the forms of connecting the signal to the world. Viewed another way, communicative action consists of the elaboration of interpreters (as understood by Peirce, 1931) or of values (as understood by Saussure, 1960) that lie at the heart of every semiotic system. In Vygotskian terms, it is in the construction of these negotiated values that the fusion of the processes of representation and communication occurs, which constitutes the human. In Habermas’s terminology, it is in this very social production that the formal coordinates of the objective, social, and subjective worlds are drawn up with respect to internal frameworks in which human rationalization may spread.

Characteristics of communicative action

From the preceding discussion, it follows that communicative action (or human language) has first and foremost an illocutionary function; it basically consists of action in which validity claims relative to the three worlds are sent out by the interactants. To the extent that the rational worlds are built and permanently transformed by this action, language should be considered as the “author of the world,” and this is the first meaning that one can give to the concept of mediation.

But the formal relations that are established between phonetic productions and representations of the world tend to become crystallized over time, and it is these crystallizations that make up signs. We are coming back here to Saussure, for whom signs are the formal means of correspondence between phonetic representations and representations of the world. But according to this author’s theory, these correspondences are relative to a system, or to a natural language. They are dependent on sociocultural context and develop over time. The two faces of the sign (the signifier and the signified, or meaning) are thus no more than momentarily stable, as a result of their fundamentally sociocultural nature. Language activity is thus endowed with a second function, a locutionary or declarative nature: Broad layers of represented worlds are found recodified in the particular signs and systems that organize them. The subject internalizes this verbal knowledge, and this itself makes up, as such, a filter for the subject’s access to the world. This is the second meaning that may be attributed to the concept of mediation.

As human activities mediated by language develop and change, the language also tends to become channeled into different forms of organization or discourses. Discourses are the modalities for structuring language activity through which illocutionary and locutionary aspects are integrated; they “tell” the world while acting within it. Generalizing the Aristotelian notion of mimesis, one can interpret the elaboration of all discursive structure as a step attempting to go beyond the state of disagreement characteristic of the actual (or nonrationalized) world. In
other words, it is like an attempt to understand the world by proposing a refiguration or schematization.

For example, narration may put forward a fictional world in which agents, motives, intentions, circumstances, and so forth are “staged” in such a way that they form a concordant structure. The individual events and incidents to which they are linked turn into a meaningful configurational structure or “story.” So just as is the case with meaningful action, the discourses formed have the status of open works — works on whose foundation subjects build their understanding of the world. This is the third meaning that one can give to the concept of mediation.

If one accepts the points outlined in the five preceding sections, one should consider that meaningful action is formed in and by speech, a particular activity of the human species that generates the rational worlds that define context. But one should also agree that speech appears in the form of diverse natural languages, which relate to the story and forms of organization of a social group and that the unities (or signs) of this language are fundamentally sociocultural. And finally, we should consider that each natural language occurs in diverse discourses, and these forms of discourse are adapted to, as well as help redirect, situations of action. In other words, discourses give situations of action a meaning. In this sense, individual discourse constitutes the most objective outline of the actual activity and interpretation of human action.

As stated earlier, action is first and foremost the object of the social sciences (e.g., sociology, anthropology, history). If, as proposed at the beginning of this chapter, it is also psychology’s primary concern, then the question is, How should we go about taking this step? This question leads us to the second part of the chapter, which concerns the elements of a program for a sociocultural psychology.

Elements of a program of sociocultural psychology

Given its present state of development, psychology should outline two different projects. The first concerns the interpretation of human activity, particularly the way in which agents take part in the signification of action. The second concerns the knowledge that is built and transformed in the action. The first project relates to practical reason, the second to pure reason.

A psychology of practical reason (or of action): some parameters

I begin by noting that all human action also constitutes an event occurring in nature, a sequence of observable behaviors comprised of an initial state, some transformations, and a final state. This can form the object of a first step of interpretation on an explanatory level (the construction of systemic or cybernetic models). This is the path that has been taken by various contemporary research approaches, most notably by Piaget and certain cognitivists. It should nevertheless be understood that the contributions of this first step in interpretation are, by definition, confined to the general characteristics of the architecture of action. This step cannot contribute anything more than some interpretive elements of the teleological aspects of action; they concern the objective world alone. Insofar as the objective world is one world, this kind of cognitive psychology is necessarily universalizing and, as a result, biologizing.

But my interest in meaningful action stems from the fact that it constitutes an intervention in the context of the three rational worlds produced by communicative action. On this level, meaningful action brings an agent into play — in other words, a “particular base” that, alone or with other bases, intervenes in releasing the event’s initial stage and in partially controlling the transformations and the final stage.

Consequently, from a psychological point of view, the purpose of action is that dimension of the action’s global meaning that can be attributed to the agent. Depending on the context in which action is incorporated, agents find themselves endowed with multiple forms of agentivity about which they are aware. They know that they can act on the objective world; they know that they are in a network of social norms; and they know that they give an impression of themselves in each interaction. Purpose thus constitutes the whole of proactive representations connected with the three worlds that agents construct as a result of their agentivity at the moment of intervention. This is evidently the product of a complex dialectic between the representation
of the agents themselves and the representation of determinations that make up the formal worlds.

From the same psychological point of view, the motive or reason for acting is the part of the "causality" of the event-action that can be attributed to the agent. It is made up of the entirety of the retroactive representations of the three formal worlds that the agent requests at the moment of intervention. Insofar as a reason for acting (like the purpose) is always "a reason for carrying out a specific, unique action," the relationship between the action and its motive is not registered in the form of the logical independence of an antecedent and consequent that characterizes so-called causality. The motive has a relationship of involvement with the action, which explains why, in the area of cognitive psychology, it can only be understood through the "grasp of consciousness" that Piaget has rightly underscored as being secondary, partial, and ultimately not very informative.

A psychology of practical reason (or of action): what methods?

How should we go about developing an interpretive approach to these parameters and the role that they exercise on the actual characteristics of action? As we know, psychology is struggling to develop a truly scientific approach in this area. Radical behaviorism puts forward two basic concepts - the history of reinforcements and the contingencies of reinforcement - that could constitute an outline for the study of determinations that intervene in the decisions of every agent. However, the conception of the setting that this approach puts forward is confined to the objective world (to what is observable in physical space-time). Furthermore, the methodology that it has developed does not allow for taking into account the representational nature of the treatment of these determinations.

In contrast, classical phenomenology centers directly on the actual world of agents (preconsciousness and representational consciousness) and advocates a reflexive (or introspective) method by which the subjects, in an inward-looking act, could "reclaim" in a clear and intelligible manner all the parameters of their intervention in the world. This step of "pure comprehension" leads to some philosophical dead ends, which have been analyzed in detail by Ricoeur (1986). Using a different route,

Piaget (1965) demonstrated its clearly nonscientific nature. Finally, the currents of research grouped together in the cognitivist "haze" shy away from the problem of action, hiding in that of the architecture of human knowledge.

For my part, I am attempting to develop a psychological approach to "human action as practice" within the framework of two different methodological approaches. The first is centered on the analysis of a typical form of meaningful action - educational action (but a similar approach could be developed with regard to other types of action such as therapeutic interventions). The second methodological approach is centered on the analysis of discourses, insofar as they constitute reconstructions of human action.

Educational action as meaningful action

Educational action develops on three levels. It has its source in what is called the educational system - in other words, in the whole of discourses through which a society expresses its expectations (or aims) in matters related to education. The contents of these discourses concern the objective world as well as the social and subjective worlds and constitute a prefiguration of the actions that should be managed so that (ideally, of course) the little person becomes a full member of the society concerned.

This system produces a variety of teaching systems - in other words, institutions that differ according to the age of the pupils, their supposed cognitive level, their socioeconomic status, and so on. These institutions have a fixed material organization (e.g., number of pupils per class), and they produce discourses relating to the goals to be reached - the formulation and the programming of the teaching contents - as well as to the methodological steps to be taken. These discourses shape the educative action that is actually carried out within the framework of didactic systems. The didactic systems are structures composed of the teacher, the pupils, and the content that is the object of their trans-action.

The work that Bernard Schneuwly (1988) and several other members of our team (e.g., Dolz, Rosat, and Schneuwly, 1991a) are carrying out in this field is centered around the two categories of agents involved in didactic systems: the educator and the pupil. In the case of the former, it is
first a question of analyzing the content of the discourses coming from educational systems and then of studying the effects that these discourses have on the teacher. The research of this group centers, on the one hand, on the representations that teachers build through their action, which requires the use of the comprehensive methods developed by the social sciences (controlled interviews, questionnaires, etc.). On the other hand, this research centers on the didactic action itself and involves controlled observation of work practices in class.

The first step sheds light on the construction of purposes and on the teachers’ reasons for acting, which derive from the internalization of discourses coming from systems on which they depend. The second step provides access to the actual structure of the educational event, within the multiple constraints of a situation of action. Comparisons of the two types of data make possible an evaluation of how the purposes and motives of the teacher-agent influence the realization of educational action.

With regard to the second category of agent in this process – the pupil – additional studies have been carried out. Having planned with the teachers diverse forms of educational action (taking the form of “didactic sequences”), the issue here is one of analyzing the optimum conditions for reaching the goals established by the teaching systems. I cannot go into this approach in detail here, but it has been examined at some length elsewhere (see esp. Schneuwly, 1988).

The analysis of discourses

The discourse analysis to which we now turn has been presented at length in *Le fonctionnement des discours* (Bronckart, Bain, Schneuwly, Davaut, & Pasquier, 1985), some aspects of which I will now summarize. Our research in this area consists of four major phases.

The first phase has led to the compilation of a vast body of *authentic texts* (oral and written) that were produced in the framework of diverse activities. This collection of texts is accompanied by the most complete body of information possible on the different parameters that make up the *production situation*: the type of social interaction in which the discourse occurs, roles developed by the agent and their receivers, the goal pursued, the space-time of the activity, and so forth. The extra-linguistic parameters of the speech thus collected form the empirical base on which inferences are made relating to the characteristics of the worlds represented, worlds that constitute the context of the verbal production.

The second phase of this research consists of an in-depth study into the characteristics of linguistic units that appear in each text. We applied various techniques of statistical analysis to carry this out. In particular, we focused on the distribution of each unit and its discriminative power (by comparison with texts from other groups). This second phase allows the identification of subgroups of texts characterized by the emergence of relatively specific subsets of units, and on this basis it allows the establishment of a table of sets of units that ideally define a *type of discourse*. This then makes it possible to measure the degree of dependence between the types thus identified and the situations within whose framework they were produced.

The third phase of this research has led to the identification of *values* that make it possible to identify units in the organization of texts and/or discourses. This central stage of our approach involves creating a model of *language operations*, or of different procedures for treating worlds where linguistic units form the objective tracks. The “base of concepts” that we have put forward in *Le fonctionnement des discours* is organized on three levels (about which I shall not go into detail here).

The fourth phase of our approach concerns the *validation* of the model by returning to the empirical data. Given the present state of our research, this phase, which is basically explanatory in nature, seems rather premature. This is because the conceptual base elaborated to date cannot be considered a formalizable model. In the absence of a global model, the formulation of “local models” is foreseeable, however. These relate to the operations that underpin the functioning of previously delimited subsets of linguistic units. In the case of “units of a temporal character,” for example, we are attempting to formulate an exhaustive model of underlying operations (cf. Bronckart, 1990, 1993), and we have undertaken various experimental, comparative, and developmental projects aimed at testing validity (see Dolz, 1990; Dolz, Rosat, & Schneuwly, 1991b).

One of the long-term goals of this project is to distinguish, through the formulation of treatment procedures (or speech operations), between what belongs to the “eventual” status of the discursive action and what belongs to the status of meaningful action. In relation to the
nature of an event, the issue is, on the one hand, what constraints bear
on the production of all speech or all discourse (that is the only real
question that possible "universals of speech" pose). On the other hand,
the issue is the constraints imposed by particular lexical and morpho-
syntactic organizations that may be found in natural languages. These
constraints of speech and language in fact delimit the whole range of
possibilities open to agents of verbal productions as they make their
decisions, and these decisions are what make up the identifiable oper-
ations in relation to the meaningful action. This basically involves, first
of all, examining inferences related to the probable variables that con-
stitute the context and referent of a text. And second, on the basis of
an internal analysis of operations that support the units of discourse,
it involves inferences about the representations that these operations
request and effectively transform. Taking these two steps allows us to
establish a valid rule for the parameters of meaningful action that the
agent carries out and codifies verbally in discourse.

A psychology of pure reason
(or of consciousness)

If, as everyone seems to admit, consciousness comes from ac-
ction and if action presents the characteristics outlined earlier, one may,
on a hypothetical and programmatical level, form a schema of the on-
togenesis of consciousness organized in four stages.

The first stage concerns the sensorimotor stage defined by Piaget. In
this period, the child builds elements of representation of the objective
world for which the Piagetian description is still valid. But as Bruner
(1987), in particular, has demonstrated, this period is above all char-
acterized by intense social interaction (which Piaget neglected in his
explanation of development, even though he did in fact address it in
the same work), and it is within the framework of this interaction that
other understandings are built, those of meaning linked to action, pur-
pose, common attention to a referent, rules of exchange, and so forth.

To describe these illocutionary competences, one may, following Bick-
erton (1981, 1990), invoke a "protospeech" and recognize that because
it is an essential part of sensorimotor capacities, it is common to the
child and to higher animals. But it should also be recognized that these
representations really belong only to the "actual world" (I prefer this
term to that of "popular psychology" that Bruner proposes in Acts of
Meaning; 1990), in the sense that they have not yet become the object
of social negotiations that will develop with the emergence of the so-
called symbolic function. To explain how, in the human species, this
protospeech turns into speech, I do not think it is necessary to invoke
some "innate theory of the spirit." I am instead of the opinion that it
will be essential to study the modalities through which adult humans,
themselves endowed with a rational understanding of contexts of action,
guide and orient children during communicative action. And using
comparative studies it will be possible to determine the part that so-
ciocultural variables play in this first stage of development.

The second stage in the ontogenesis of consciousness concentrates
on the acquisition of signs and their organization — that is to say, the
locutionary aspects of communicative action. It is through the mastery
of these units of recodification of actual representations that the rational
representations of contexts of action (in other words, objective, social,
and subjective worlds) are elaborated. Vygotsky's developmental hy-
pothesis finds its real meaning here. On the one hand, human rational-
ity is a product of the locutionary function of speech, and on the other
hand, insofar as this function only occurs within the framework of
particular natural languages, the basis of its rationality is of a socio-
cultural nature. The initial representations of worlds are constructed
by the appropriation of values by a group, since these have been cod-
ified in the natural language that the group uses. Having focused too
exclusively on the syntactic aspects of the development of language, it
seems to me that psychology has neglected the central feature of this
stage of language acquisition, a feature concerning an essentially se-
matic question: How are the actual meanings of a language rebuilt?

The third stage in the ontogenesis of consciousness is characterized
by the internalization of signs, which provides the ingredients from
which "thinking operations" will develop. In this process of construct-
ing so-called understanding, one cannot fail to be struck by the thinness
of descriptions put forward by cognitive psychology for the long period
in ontogenesis lasting from the emergence of the symbolic function to
the construction of concrete operations. So it seems to me reasonable
to put forward the hypothesis that during this stage some processes of
abstraction and generalization of meanings in a particular language are
at work. These meanings are organized in diverse discursive structures.
and are dependent on the context. They are processes bordering ultimately on the construction of cognitive concepts of universal validity. Such a hypothesis has two implications: (a) Consciousness is first and foremost sociocultural, and only subsequently and under certain circumstances logical-cognitive; and (b) logical-mathematical operations do not come directly from the logic of the action at work in a sensorimotor stage, but from the logic that underlies human action as well as its recodification in discursive structures.

The fourth stage in the ontogenesis of consciousness is characterized by the appropriation of discursive structures themselves. A difficult and long process of appropriation occurs during which humans learn to reshape their action and give a status to the purposes and reasons of others. This carries on well beyond the period of formal operations, as many studies have shown. By carrying out this appropriation, humans come to understand themselves and the role that they play in the actions in which they participate.

References


