

THEMATIC-THINKING

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The process of thematic-thinking (T-T) is the same for the one who gives expression and the one who understands it. This is how we are able to understand and communicate with others. We think in terms of themes.¹

Understanding is always in reference to something else. We understand by relating it to something we already know. A theme derives its meaning from a context or horizon within which it stands. The horizon is made up of that which it gives meaning. Each gives meaning to the other. In this way understanding is circular. Within this circle the meaning comes to stand.

Through consciousness something is presented to the experiencing person. Something stands out. It is a theme. It appears through a given act of consciousness.² This theme stands in the focus of attention. It is what the person attends to.

The theme emerges out of the thematic field. What is co-present in the thematic field is relevant to the theme. Also co-present with the theme and the thematic field is the margin. What is co-present in the margin is not relevant to the theme and the thematic field. All three of these dimensions (Figure 1): theme (T); thematic field (TF); and margin (M) are the dimensional consciousness (DCS).

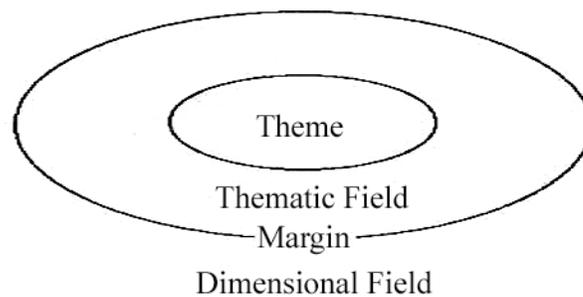


Figure 1

What makes sense in one dimension does not necessarily make sense in another. What is now a theme can shift to the margin. What is in the margin can shift to become a theme or reside in the thematic field. This discloses different degrees of dimensional consciousness and explains how we can come to new ideas. Each person does this shifting. In so doing a group of persons can shift ideas so much so that all can come to ideas and decisions that none alone could accomplish. It is also because each person contributes a given perspective.

It is experience and dimensional consciousness that discloses something in one or the other context. In apprehending meaning the person immediately amplifies the thought, referring to other thought. This is amplifying dimensional consciousness connections. It is thinking in terms of similarity with the differences in the margin.

When a theme emerges it is immediately amplified and other relevancies present themselves. These thoughts are given simultaneously with the theme yet the theme in turn points to them. The theme appearing to dimensional consciousness that emerges out of the broader context, the thematic field, is announcing itself through these thoughts and actions.

When a theme presents itself to dimensional consciousness it is focused. Yet the theme points beyond itself to other thoughts that it appears with and is referred to by it. The same theme can be given in different contexts. This gives rise to further meaning. In this way there can be variations on a theme. Again this is an amplification of dimensional consciousness. All of this is the thematic field, that which is not relevant is the margin. All of this is co-present. All of that which is co-present is dimensional consciousness. It is the wholeness. Whatever we choose as a theme is within perceptual or conceptual surroundings.

An example of being in a theatre and watching a movie can display this contexture. You are concentrating upon the character in the movie. The character appears within a given horizon. The character is the theme. The theme appears in light of the surroundings. Events are going on around the character. This is the thematic field, the context within which the theme presents itself to dimensional consciousness.

When one shifts, these are choices or decisions, what Henri Bergson calls attention to life. One thematic field can supersede another although the theme remains the same. Different events can move along in the movie while you are attending to a certain theme. Different thematic fields give rise to similar themes. A theme is what you as an experiencing person are thinking of in a given act of experience. Thematic-thinking is a universal dynamic structure of dimensional consciousness.

The thematic field has something to do with the theme. For anything experienced as relevant it has to appear within a contexture. The thematic field, the contexture, is what is embracing the theme it belongs and is related to the theme.

Now for an example of how themes emerge. While riding in a car I am able to attend to the surrounding without worrying about driving. When I am riding along the Panhandle just outside of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco I look at the old Victorian houses. When I look at one it becomes a theme yet simultaneously I perceive other houses along the way. These houses are not themes but reside in the thematic field.

As I move along the theme can shift to another house and the previous theme shifts into the thematic field. It is this field from which a perceptual theme emerges. What is relevant at the wider horizon is diffuse. Some content in the thematic field is clear and distinct, some coalesce and some are vague and indistinct. But all of the content has a similar organizational dynamic structure, as does the theme. Although the content in the thematic field is not a theme any of it can stand out at a given time as a theme. This is one way new themes can emerge. Other themes can emerge from the margin as dimensional consciousness shifts.

The dimensional consciousness is a categorical framework. It excludes from itself certain perceptions and conceptions among the range of possibilities. Without exclusion no categorical framework can come into being. It arises in distinction.

It depends as much on the excluded as on the included. Total inclusion means an all-encompassing framework that is impossible and total exclusion means there is no need for a categorical framework at all. The tension between the included and the excluded at once sustains the categorical framework and brings about its breakdown and replacement. Every categorical framework points beyond itself to what is excluded. It is a universal truth. It is relative. It should be mentioned that universal truth and absolute truth are not the same.

In the dimensional consciousness there are actual and potential themes. Anything in dimensional consciousness can become a theme. What is in awareness may not be actually perceived but has the potentiality of being perceived, brought into explicit consciousness. Awareness itself gives the possibility of elucidating it. Thematic-thinking has universal significance for focused decision making. It is in every moment of dimensional consciousness that thematic-thinking presents itself through a given act. We think in terms of themes.

Notes

- 1) James W. Kidd, “Hermeneutic Phenomenology: A Ground for Methodology in the Humanities”, *International Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Spirituality*, 2, no, 2 (1993); “The Hermeneutic Arc of Making Ethical Decisions: Visioning; Monitoring and Modifying—VMM” (*Superdirector. Com*, 2002).
- 2) Cf. Works of Henri Bergson; Aron Gurwitsch; William James and Alfred Schutz.