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**“Ghost: Do not forget; this visitation / Is but to whet thy almost  
blunted purpose” –**

**Culture, Psychology and “Being Human”**

Alec McHoul (School of Media Communication & Culture) and  
Mark Rapley (School of Psychology)  
Murdoch University  
Western Australia 6150  
<mchoul@murdoch.edu.au> • <rapley@socs.murdoch.edu.au>  
Tel: +618 9360 2407 • Fax: +618 9360 6570

**Comment [Sct1]:**

## **Abstract**

After a brief inspection of some actual cases where people apparently “mis-identify” others, we draw some initial and tentative conclusions about ways of thinking about “who people are”. We then move on to look at underlying assumptions in psychology about this very question; with these assumptions considered under the rubric of psychology’s “model of being human”. Locating problems with this model on the basis of its affinity with Kantian thought, we conclude that what it misses is an understanding of cultural order as the primary medium for human existence.

Against this, we propose instead – via Harvey Sacks in particular and ethnomethodological thinking generally – that to be in the world is always to be in the cultural world. Consequently, what persons can do and be is never a form of governance or control by fixed rules; rather it is always already an orientation to publicly-known and material forms of cultural order. We end by speculating on the general consequences of such a re-formulated “model of being human” for a paradigm of psychology yet to come.

## **Key words**

Harvey Sacks, ethnomethodology, discursive psychology, cognition, behaviour, Kantianism, cultural theory.

**Comment [Sc2]:** New section

### **Introduction: therapy and voices**

Let us begin with an example from Harvey Sacks's data taken from a group therapy session. Here, some teenage boys are discussing a number of things including drag racing and each other's personalities:<sup>1</sup>

Roger: Ken, face it you're a poor little rich kid.  
( ): ((cough))  
Ken: Yes Mommy. // Thank you.  
Roger: Face the music  
(p. 420)

What this shows, for Sacks, is that a correspondence theory of naming cannot cover all possible instances of how people go about identifying themselves and others. Roger is clearly not Ken's mother, but still: "who it is that's being addressed by 'Yes Mommy' is understood by the Members, and they may well seem to have some way, apart from correspondence correctness, to determine that someone is being referred to by a membership category" (p. 418). The key to finding how it is that "Mommy" is referring to Roger turns on questions of conversational sequencing as a form of cultural order (as opposed to formal correspondence). That is, "face it you're a poor little rich kid" is produced by Roger as an insult and, in cases of an insult being issued in a first conversational slot, only a small number of possible utterances can be expected in the second, following, slot. And in fact, the most likely second (or "return") is a counter-insult. As Sacks puts it:

Insults come in pairs. To a first, a second may be returned. We can get at that in a fairly decent way, in that, for one, even if we're uncertain as to the fact that the first was an "insult", there are a collection of "second insults", i.e., locatable returns to insults. And misidentification[s] of kinship terms are, very regularly, just such things. (p. 419)

So what we have to do (as analysts or as co-participants), in order to find Roger as designated by "Mommy", is attend to the cultural rules for the practice of insulting: that is, to such things as "insults come in pairs" and "return insults can use kinship misidentifications". Who people "are" then (or in standard psychological terms, what their "social identity" or "self-categorisation" may be)

is not a matter of applying universal correspondence-based references (such as “schizophrenic”, “extrovert” or “mother”). Rather, it is a matter of the local application of a cultural (as opposed to an intra-psychic) order or, as Sacks sometimes calls it, an “apparatus” or “machinery”.<sup>2</sup>

That such a cultural order is significant for psychology is made amply clear in the field of discursive psychology where the application of apparently fixed and universal category names (e.g., clinical terminology) has been shown to be, equally, an effect of, and hence subject to, such a culturally commonsensical order, as opposed to being a matter of (“scientifically verifiable”) correspondence between “names” and “clinical types” (see, for example, Palmer, 2000).

Whereas the group therapy extract from Sacks’s work examined above could be taken as referring to matters of social rather than psychological (dis)order, there are now numerous studies that have moved such analyses into the heartland of psychology.<sup>3</sup> A case in point is offered by Leudar and Thomas (2000) in their investigations of the phenomenon of “hearing voices”: the question of “auditory hallucinations” (as the pathognomic indicator of the archetypal “mental illness”, schizophrenia) being both clinical psychology’s and psychiatry’s sine qua non. In mainstream psychological thinking, that is, hearing voices is routinely assumed to be exclusively something “in the head” rather than, as Leudar and Thomas take it to be (following Sacks), a question of local practices instantiating cultural membership. So instead of assuming static categories of “voice hearers” and “auditory hallucinations”, their inspection of clinical interview transcripts (among other mundane materials) shows how locally occasioned the phenomenon is. But still, and by virtue of being locally occasioned, the production of the phenomenon in talk turns out to be subject to quite ordinary forms of generally available cultural machinery based in a collection of “local concepts” equally available to clinicians and their “patients”, the “voice hearers”.

For example, in one transcript, a “patient” reports as follows:

NJ: ... my son said to me “Dad wouldn’t have been impressed with this would he?” (0.35) and I heard him say (0.29) “No, I wouldn’t”.

(Leudar and Thomas, 2000, p. 190)

Just as with the use of “Mommy” in Sacks’s transcript, we can note here that some figure called “Dad” is manifestly not present in the conversation between NJ and her son. In fact, “Dad”, the father/husband is deceased. Nevertheless, his “turn” (“No, I wouldn’t”) is perfectly understandable as an appropriate second part for an overhearing participant on hearing themselves addressed in a first part (“Dad wouldn’t have been impressed with this would he?”). The reconstructed conversation makes perfectly good sense and is far from being an event whose understanding requires (specialist) forms of knowledge over and above the order of everyday sense making:

A: Dad wouldn’t have been impressed with this would he?

B: No, I wouldn’t

Hence Leudar and Thomas’s conclusion:

The timeless and universal question “what is hearing voices? period” is therefore not a happy one – it impoverishes the phenomenon studied. It impoverishes it because it treats as incidental and unimportant its context-contingent aspects. In psychology, which aims at biological and evolutionary explanations of mind, the timeless question implies there is a basic, raw experience of hearing voices.... This position is clearly not supported by the materials we have provided with this book. As there are no mechanical behaviours (except in abstractions) which become intentional conduct when combined with psychological phenomena, so there are no raw experiences which become meaningful under descriptions but can be lived without them.... So the general conclusion is really that local concepts are constitutive of local experiences and there cannot be a psychology or psychiatry which can do without them. (Leudar and Thomas, 2000, p. 209)

So “to be a (particular type of) person” is highly eventually specific. How is it possible that the locally specific could be of use for (meta)psychology? Can it, that is, have a more general status beyond what “scientific” psychology would construe as “merely anecdotal” on the grounds that local events are unsubjectable to the formal methodologies of “proper” sampling, testing, aggregation and proof? To some extent, we already have an answer to this question because, as we have seen, for both Sacks and discursive psychology, the locally specific is always

an instance of socio-cultural order. Why is such a version of “being human” relevant for psychological thinking generally?

### **Psychology and “being human”**

Each of the human sciences carries with it, implicitly or explicitly, fundamental assumptions about what it is to be a human being. As with Lakatos’s (1978) idea of each natural science having a “hard core” of unquestionable assumptions (usually assumptions about the very nature of nature), on the basis of which empirical investigations can be/are carried out, so the human sciences, too, have their fundamental tenets. What would some of these be in psychology? What does psychology fundamentally assume it is to be human?

Let us propose what is perhaps a rather bold hypothesis: that for all the differences between the many and various schools of psychology, there is a single “model of being human” in operation, albeit with distinct (and sometimes seemingly incommensurate) tensions. In particular, we think there may be two general tensions of this model which we will call, for the want of better terms, its cognitive and the behavioural versions.

It is important to emphasise, from the outset of our argument, that we are by no means saying that there are only two basic schools of psychology. Rather, what we are saying is that contemporary psychology behaves as if it currently has available to it only two sets of fundamental assumptions about the basic conditions of being human. Accordingly, we are using the terms “cognitive” and “behavioural” in their essentially theoretical, meta-psychological, or perhaps even philosophical, senses. Another way of putting this would be to say that there are only two psychologies in the philosophical sense of the term “psychology”. Here “psychology” would not refer to an extant discipline and/or its empirical procedures so much as to a set of a priori assumptions about “the ground of a relation to beings” (Heidegger, 1992, p. 99) – on which see the short discussion at the end of this paper.<sup>4</sup>

It is also important to note that, in the following exegesis (deliberately sketchy and tendentious as it is) we will refer to extreme cases of what our shorthand

refers to here as the “cognitive” and “behavioural” model(s) – knowing from the outset that they share fundamental assumptions vis-à-vis what it is to be human and that, in this respect, they are philosophically (or meta-psychologically) cognate, if not identical. To show this identity in extremis, and while we recognise that many proponents of each position may take issue, we will use innatism (or “nativism”) as the strongest possible exemplar of the cognitive model and a qualified Skinnerianism as its behavioural counterpart. If such polarised cases can be shown to share fundamental assumptions – as Potter (2000) has also argued – then a fortiori for the various (and common) “rapprochements” between the models, perhaps best exemplified inter alia by notions such as “cognitive behavioural therapy” or Lewin’s (1951) famous formula:  $B = f(PE)$ .<sup>5</sup>

According to an extreme cognitive model, to be human is to have wired-in, innate capacities prior to action and experience; capacities subsequently deployed in specific empirical situations and circumstances as understandings of and actions in those situations and circumstances. In many sub-versions of the cognitive model, moreover, these innate capacities are taken to be universal (distributed identically through the human species), to work automatically or unconsciously, and to be, as a consequence, beyond the control of their human vehicles. A direct example would be Chomskyan psycholinguistics which, as we note below, asserts the existence of an innate human capacity for language acquisition prior to (and generative of) actually-occurring natural language-use. But moving to a more “social” or “cultural” case in point: even where, as in Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT), analysts working within the cognitive model attempt to allow for situational specifics, they nevertheless end up privileging pre-given mental mechanisms:

the functioning of the social self-concept is situation specific: particular self-concepts tend to be activated (“switched on”) in specific situations, producing specific self-images ... as a function of the interaction between the characteristics of the perceiver and the situation. (Turner et al, 1987, p. 44)



This leaves SCT and its ilk with a highly mechanistic and intendedly “depersonalised” version of human identity – a version that we will later describe as “cultural dopism”:

A “salient” identity is one that is currently psychologically active, determining self-perception at a given moment... [I]ndividuals acting in terms of shared social identity are in effect not individuals but depersonalised. (Turner and Oakes, 1997, p. 364)<sup>6</sup>

By contrast, the behavioural model – as we are calling it – starts out with specific situations and circumstances as they arise empirically. It then assumes that responses to these stimuli by human organisms give rise to patterns or structures that, in turn (and with modifications arising from further sensations and experiences), produce such things as “understanding” (although strict behaviourists would of course eschew such a mentalist term) and “acting” in further environments. The model is, by and large, organicist and, as such, implies that human control of situations and circumstances is less important a determinant of behaviour than those environments themselves. An instance of this model is offered by Barker’s (1968, p. 17) account of “behavior settings” which he defines as: “stable, extra-individual units with great coercive power over the behavior that occurs within them”. An alternative account of this position is summed up in Milgram’s (1974, p. 205) observation: “It is not so much the kind of person a man is, as the kind of situation in which he finds himself [that] determines how he will act”.

A little further inspection, however, shows that these two positions (as with many antitheses) can be read as offshoots of a single underlying model of how things stand with being human. Fundamentally, both are deterministic and organicist in their own ways: to be human, on both accounts, is to be governed; either by cognitive “wiring” or by brute environmental factors. Accordingly, both positions propose a distinction between, on the one hand, experiences and circumstances and, on the other, patterns and structures. For both models, the two are directly connected – with one of them acting as an a priori ground that effectively determines the other.<sup>7</sup> The difference, then, is effectively a matter of the

side of the binary one prioritises, takes as most fundamental and, for purposes of empirical investigation, starts with as given (or takes for granted).

### **Assumptions about “being human”**

In this section of the paper, we note a number of problems (again in the philosophical sense) with the limits imposed by the range of possibilities for “being human” in psychology today (as sketched above). The first of these has to do with the model’s ancestry. That is, it can be taken as a “scientific” re-working of Kant’s sensual-moral picture of being human; with “behaviour” as the scientific proxy for the sensual and “cognition” as its moral counterpart. Let us, then, expand upon these affinities.

The Kantian view is complex but, for our purposes, can be summarised relatively simply. Kant realised that the whole philosophical tradition from Plato to Descartes – since it took “man” to be unique by virtue of being the “rational animal” – contained a paradox.<sup>8</sup> The paradox was this: if rational, then how also animal, and vice versa? How could one be both a spiritual and intellectual being (a being of pure mind and reflection) and, at the same time, a fleshly organism, driven (as Kant thought) by the bodily senses and their tendencies towards pleasures and corruption?

The purely intellectual side of our being, he postulated, strives towards perfection, to knowing the suprasensory world in its absolute purity. But suprasensory things-in-themselves are unavailable to human thought. And this is because we are incarnate: our access to them is always effectively veiled by the flesh, the body and its dependence on its several senses. Pure noumena, which we would ideally attain were we disembodied spirits, are only mediately accessible to us as empirical and worldly phenomena. Our condition is, as the empiricists before Kant well knew, one of confinement to experience: experience must always precede knowledge. Kant completely accepted this – even to the point where he can be read as, at root, an empiricist himself. However, being deeply religious and spiritual, he also knew that this basic condition of “man” was, in the more universal scheme of things, corrupt and imperfect. It only described “man’s”

worldly and sensuous condition, leaving his striving for perfectibility out of account. If the strictly empiricist picture of human being stood alone, then, for Kant, we could legitimately mire ourselves in worldly pleasure, at the end of which our bodies would simply decay. Since Kant held strong ethical objections to this view – even though he could by no means deny the cogency of believing that knowledge derives from experience – he had to subscribe equally and simultaneously to a fundamentally rational view of man. Without it, the suprasensuous world of the spirit would be an impossibility.

But to hold both views is a paradox; an untenable position by any philosophical standard. Therefore Kant had to postulate a means of connecting the two. He had to find an underlying picture of being human – as it were “deeper” than the antinomy between the practical and the pure self – that could, without paradox, ground the two. This is the great work of Kant’s three critiques. The first of these discusses pure reason (the ur-form, perhaps, of cognitive models); the second practical reason (its ur-behavioural counterpart). However, the third critique, the Critique of Judgement (1952), puts forward a means of reconciling the first two. Cutting a long story short, the reconciliation of the antinomy makes each of its sides a set of checks and balances on the other. The capacity to perform such an equilibrium is the capacity for judgement. We can best summarise this latter capacity by turning to one of Kant’s final works, his Anthropology. Kant writes there:

The two kinds of good, the physical and the moral, cannot be mixed together, because they would then neutralize each other and have no effect on the purpose of true bliss. Rather, inclination to pleasurable living and inclination to virtue are in conflict with each other, and the restriction of the principle of physical good by the principle of moral good constitute through their very conflict the whole purpose of a well-bred, partly sensuous and partly ethico-intellectual human being. (1978, p. 185, our emphasis)

Note Kant’s exact terms – “a ... partly sensuous and partly ethico-intellectual human being” – which is strikingly redolent of Lewin’s  $B = f(PE)$ , if some one-and-a-half centuries earlier. The virtuous person, then, is not he who can resolve this conflict between his ethico-intellectual capacities and his sensuous

inclinations; for the conflict is irresolvable. Rather, the virtuous person is he who properly manages this conflict on a day-to-day basis and is, therefore, able to lead a harmonious life. The Kantian notion of the purpose of well-bred persons' being-in-the-world as the achievement of virtuous personhood and harmony by the balancing of these competing desires would seem to have a clear affinity with both historical (cf. the arbitration of conflict between ego and id by the superego) and contemporary psychological ones (cf. the increasingly shrill pronouncements from the psychotherapeutic and self-help industries of the necessity for the achievement or maintenance of "normality", "self-actualisation" and "mental health") – not to mention the penetration into both everyday and juridical talk of the idea that for the mind to be "unbalanced" is, in essence, to place its owner outwith the moral order.

The underlying problem with this picture is not simply its location in a tradition of spirituality but, more to the point, the fact that, as Hunter (1994) has shown, it is not so much a pure philosophy or theory of "man" as a set of quite practical asceses: spiritual exercises or "techniques of the self" (Foucault, 1986, 1988). That is, the Kantian "picture" – arguably a template for psychology's cognitive-behavioural model of being human – is not ineffective; rather it has quite concrete effects. Ultimately, it is not so much a set of neutral ideas about "man" as it is a definite means of actually producing persons in particular, and sometimes quite pernicious, ways. Pernicious, because this "man" that Foucault (1970) calls "the empirico-transcendental doublet" is forever anxious. Anxiety is his condition because, as Kant himself puts it, the empirical and the transcendental side of his being "cannot be mixed together, because they would then neutralize each other" – there can be no resolution only a precarious management or equilibration of the two. To have both at once, resolved to an impossible singularity, would be to have nothing, to be nothing. Modern "man", then is either fundamentally anxious about living an antinomic life or else (should he give up on modernity's unsatisfiable quest for a singular and harmonious identity – which, under any other circumstances would no doubt be a completely rational and viable option) he must surrender to becoming nothing.

No doubt this terrible condition will be recognisable by today's practitioners of the psy-complex (see Rose, 1990) – and while the psy-complex rarely, if ever, formulates this condition in explicitly moral terms, we must now at least suspect that this, morality, is what lies beneath its veneer of scientificity. So we hear that the patient's life is "out of balance" and has to be returned to stasis and harmony. He or she has to come to be able to "accept themselves", to "live with themselves", to "forgive themselves", and so forth, down through a long list of synonyms for Kantian equilibration. Anxiety and "identity crises" have to be "cured" so that the patient can lead a "normal" life. The clinician can choose to work either from the patient's behaviour (actual life practices) in order to "resolve" their deeper cognitive "imbalance", or else work with their "intellect" (via "cognitive therapy", for example) towards restoring them to their (supposedly) former "functional" existence.

This is what we are seeing in cases of, for example, depression: the patient reports an inability to work, to think, to eat, to get out of bed in the morning, to take care of themselves; they report having lost interest in sex, and so forth. What Kant calls the physical good has become bad. The basic therapeutic assumption is, then, that Kant's moral good (the patient's "normal" mental state) has become equally bad – though which has caused which will depend on whether the therapist works with the cognitive or the behavioural emphasis of the model. A vast range of techniques can then be brought to bear; either on the physical body of the patient or on his/her moral-cognitive condition: breathing techniques, psychotropic drugs (which strangely assume brain chemistry to be the seat of morality), talking cures of all sorts, the recommendation of regimes of exercise, meditation tapes, "bibliotherapy", ECT or Electro-shock Therapy (which even more strangely assumes that the destruction of the brain causes the destruction of moral conditions), and so forth, again, down through a very long list of techniques of the self. The Kantian-modern basis of psychology – which, we suspect, has been the essential foundation of its thought and practice since its inception in the 19th century – is no neutral or "merely theoretical" basis at all; it is, to be sure, theoretical, but by that we must now mean that it grounds

psychology's self-appointed, impossible and unsatisfiable task: to overcome an anxiety that is always and already built into to its own version of modern "man". This anxiety is much more basic and general than can be found in any particular clinical condition since it must apply, equally, to "normally" functioning and thinking human beings.

This is our first problem with the cognitive-behavioural grounds of psychology's model of being human. Our second is, while somewhat less trenchant, more pragmatic and leads us to propose an alternative grounded on a quite unique conception of culture. Let us propose, then, that both the cognitive and behavioural models of being human are, as we will put it, "aggregationist". Both versions, that is, and therefore their combination as psychology, work with the assumption that persons and their psychological processes, as well as the environments or situations in which they operate, are made up of component parts (structures of cognition, individual experiences, brains, stimuli, events, activities, behaviours, schemas, fragments of speech, and so on). So Kant sets the pace by breaking up being human into macro components (pure, practical and judging reason) and psychology follows by, firstly, transforming these (into cognition, behaviour and therapy respectively) and, secondly, by reducing each to further micro components. These individual micro components can then be aggregated, very frequently by statistical techniques, to form, for example, "norms" against which such things as "behaviours" and "mental capacities" can apparently be measured.<sup>9</sup> As we have just seen, fundamental to managing the Kantian (im)balance is an idea of norms and normality: an ideal but unattainable equilibrium ("a normal healthy life", for example) to which psychological practice is oriented. But of course, these statistical norms are, in fact, by no means recipes for psychological harmony and equilibrium; rather they are mere demographic averages (and the like), abstractions derived from populations which, in post-Kantian modernity, must be essentially (rather than merely "clinically") anxious.

But what if being human were not an aggregation of "factors"? What if it had a fundamentally different and distinct ontological status from things like the wind, neutron stars and capybaras? What, that is, if it were so utterly different —

qualitatively – from such things that it could not be thought of as aggregable and so could not be analysed (in the sense of disaggregation) under any circumstances?

### **Sacks and culture**

As we have already seen from our initial examples, Sacks and those following him have begun to work with assumptions that are fundamentally distinct from aggregationism. Can we now say, more explicitly, exactly what these assumptions are and how they work in the face of mainstream psychological thinking about being human? Sacks's fundamental assumption is that, in a primary sense, to be human is to be a cultural being. But he has a unique take on the question of what culture is that moves us outwith mere anthropology or, worse, cultural studies (both of which, we suspect, remain well within the Kantian camp).

In the Introduction to Sacks's Lectures (1992; see note 1), Schegloff puts the matter especially well and, for our purposes here, very relevantly; for he pits Sacks's position directly against the cognitive and behavioural models, albeit via examples that are somewhat peripheral to psychology itself. Schegloff (p. xlvi) notes that Sacks begins by wondering how it is that people actually come to be cultural beings; he opens up the question of cultural acquisition via the closely-related question of language acquisition. That is, he begins by wondering how it can be that:

any Member encountering from his infancy a very small portion of it [his or her culture], and a random portion in a way (the parents he happens to have, the experiences that he happens to have, the vocabulary that happens to be thrown at him in whatever sentences he happens to get) comes out in many ways pretty much like everybody else, and able to deal with pretty much anyone else (p. 485).

Sacks immediately rejects any aggregationist account of this remarkable fact of enculturation processes. For how such matters of enculturation come to take place “depends on the sort of order one takes it that the social world exhibits” (p. xlvi). Then:

An alternative to the possibility that order manifests itself at an aggregate level and is statistical in character is what he [Sacks] terms the “order at all points” view [(p. 484)]. This view, rather like the “holographic” model of information distribution, understands order not to be present only at aggregate levels and therefore subject to an overall differential distribution, but to be present in detail on a case by case, environment by environment basis. A culture is not then to be found by aggregating all of its venues; it is substantially present in each of its venues (p. xlvi).

Accordingly, a novice member of a culture can discover all sorts of matters about that to which he or she belongs by working from very few experiences of it. The experiences do not aggregate (as on behavioural theories) and, yet, neither, for Sacks, need we postulate deep cognitive structures that, as it were, are embedded in the member (via his or her species being) and which simply have to be realised as the empirical particulars of the culture he or she happens to belong to as a matter of historical contingency. Schegloff notes in particular the contrast between the “order at all points” model and the innatist model, taking Chomsky as his example:

In such a view [“order at all points”], one might conjecture, we have one, and perhaps the major, theoretically available alternative to Chomsky’s argument that, given the highly limited and “degenerate” sample of language to which first language learners are exposed, most of language – the crucial part – must certainly be innate; they surely could not be induced from the available “inputs” (p. xlvi).

And, of course, “induction from the inputs” (read, for example, stimuli emanating from the environment) is a succinct gloss on the behavioural model. So what’s being argued here is that Sacks has an original take on culture (via enculturation) that obviates both “innate ideas” and “induction from the inputs”. The obviation makes Sacks’s position completely and utterly distinct from both the cognitive and behavioural models (and/or the “cognitive-behavioural” model).<sup>10</sup> Instead, as with holographs – and this has important implications for such things as the “sampling” and “reliability” of “data” in psychology (McHoul and Rapley, 2000) – cultures have a special ontological status: any fragment of them displays the same fundamental order as any other and, indeed, as any “whole” that the fragments might compose.



So, for Sacks, the alternative to the aggregationism required by the cognitive-behavioural model of being human is, as Schegloff puts it:

to consider a culture — and language as one component of culture — to be organized on the basis of “order at all points”. If culture were built that way, then socialization and language acquisition might well be designed accordingly, and require induction [in its socialisational rather than its methodological sense] from just the “limited” environments to which the “inductee” is exposed (p. xlvii).

Schegloff then quotes Sacks: “given that for a member encountering a very limited environment, he has to be able to do that [i.e., grasp the order] ... things are so arranged as to permit him to” (p. 485).

The way in which we read Sacks’s view as radical is that it has the following implication: there is a counter-aggregationalist model of being human that stands completely outside the cognitive-behavioural model. On this alternative account, we are always and already cultural, in Sacks’s unique sense. If we are, to use Schegloff’s metaphor, “holographic”, then the Kantian bifurcation cannot hold as a “deep” description of our being. Kantian “man” becomes, effectively, an “historically adventitious” (p. 484) story we have been telling ourselves about ourselves — albeit for such a long time that it appears natural but such that, with Foucault (1970, p. 387), we could speculate that, one day, it will “be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea”. Sacks’s radical breakthrough is to have found (and to have founded) a new description of what “being human” is. This is shown most clearly by a concomitant of the “order at all points” theory: the reflexive relation of produceability and recognisability as a condition for cultural action.

By “produce” and “production” we mean the ways in which cultural members go about constructing such things as insults, armchairs and death. By “recognise” and “recognition”, we are not referring to a mental process; on the contrary, we mean the ways in which such members go about publicly co-producing them as insults, armchairs and death. Another way of putting this, using Garfinkel’s (1967) terminology, is to say that members’ cultural activities are “accountable”:

that is, they are produced and recognised (co-produced) in ways that make them audibly and visibly (that is, “accountably”) what they are, and not something else.

To prefigure our later example: one cannot be performing the culturally produceable-and-recognisable action called “waiting for a bus” simply by placing one’s body in a particular location, at a bus stop. To “wait for a bus” accountably – that is, descriptably – one has to perform a broad range of activities, in that place, at a bus stop, that are pertinent to that cultural practice, such that anyone looking and listening can see and hear that it is just that that one is doing – for example, because they may have an interest in “not jumping the queue” (an interest which is rendered irrelevant if one is not “waiting for a bus” but, say, “collecting used aluminium cans from a bus shelter”). If this holds for such mundane events, then, as numerous studies in discursive psychology have shown,<sup>11</sup> it holds equally for “having a memory”, “forgetting”, “having a mental illness” and the rest of psychology’s stock in trade – where these are now to be construed as public practices rather than as private states or events.

The significance of this can be seen in the following way. If we can and have to recognise cultural “objects” as what they are for us, in this culture (again, for example, as conversations, games of football, operas and so on), then we also can and have to produce them in that way. This seems straightforward enough, but what deeper aspects of our cultural being-in-the-world does it demonstrate?<sup>12</sup> For one thing, it clearly implies that, while cultures may display “order at all points”, this does not mean that members of them simply, as it were, “inspect” some common list of orderings (for example, a list held as a set of cognitive structures or as patterns derived from environmental stimuli) and, by matching them against what happens to be going on around them, thereby make sense of cultural events and activities. In short, cultural meanings cannot be read off against putative “rules”.<sup>13</sup> “Order at all points” does not mean that cultural members are (as on the cognitive-behavioural model) passive “vehicles” for anonymous psycho-cultural structures. Instead, they are as much active producers of cultural order as they are active recognisers of it. Lacking this insight, of course, cognitive-

behavioural accounts are prone to casting members as “cultural dopes” (Garfinkel, 1967).

This then opens up a quite distinct and unique question at the centre of what it is to have cultural being, or to be a cultural being. The question is: how are the production and recognition of cultural activities and events related? This question can lead us to a distinct view of how cultural orders are actively made by their members; and such that the procedures, techniques, methods or abilities that constitute that “how” could come to be psychology’s proper object, were it to embrace a Sacksian position.

Sacks’s answer to the production-recognition question (or, as he puts it, the generation-detection question) is startlingly simple at first sight:

A culture is an apparatus for generating recognizable actions; if the same procedures are used for generating as for detecting, that is as simple a solution to the problem of recognizability as is formulable (p. 226; p. xxxvi).

To put this another way: the relation between how we produce and how we recognise cultural actions is reflexive – each reflexively constitutes the other. And we have seen this in action in our first example: Ken produces “Mommy” as an insult (rather than as a sheer misidentification, for example) and that is precisely how Roger recognises it; and, reflexively, Ken’s first turn is dependent on Roger’s second (the counter-insult) for it to have been hearable as “an insult” all along. As Schegloff (p. xxxvi) notes, Sacks’s position on this matter may well derive from Garfinkel’s “central recommendation” for ethnomethodological studies. That recommendation is that:

the activities whereby members produce and manage settings of organized everyday affairs are identical with members’ procedures for making those settings “accountable” .... When I speak of accountable my interests are directed to such matters as the following. I mean observable-and-reportable, i.e., available to members as situated practices of looking-and-telling. (1967, p. 1; our emphasis)

The “identity” noticed here is, later in Garfinkel, glossed as “reflexivity” and, since it carries with it the crucial co-conception of accountability (defined above),

we might say that cultural objects and/or events (unlike their supposedly “natural” counterparts) have the unique ontological status of being reflexively accountable (produceable and recognisable) and, moreover, that their orderliness is identical with this status.

A good instance, also prefigured above, of this reflexively produceable-accountable status of members’ actions as socio-cultural order is outlined by Sharrock:

Social order is easy to find because it’s put there to be found. When you go about your actions [...] you do them so that (or in ways that) other people can see what you’re doing. You do your actions to have them recognized as the actions that they are. When you stand at the bus stop, you stand in such a way that you can be seen to be waiting for a bus. People across the street can see what you’re doing, according to where and how you’re standing.... [Y]ou’re standing at a bus stop and somebody comes and stands next to you and they stand in such a way that eventually you can see that these people are standing in a line and that one person’s the first and another is the second, and some person’s at the end. People stand around at bus stops in ways they can be seen to be waiting for a bus. (1995, p. 4)<sup>14</sup>

How it is that we perform the culturally-appropriate action of “waiting for a bus”, then, is radically different from merely standing at a bus stop. All such everyday cultural achievements can not sensibly be understood in terms of the relations between human organisms and their environments (a body under a shelter standing next to a sign reading “Bus Stop”); nor can they be understood in terms of fixed cognitive structures (an innate capacity for knowing how to queue, say). A machine or an animal could stand next to a bus stop and yet not, accountably, be seen to be doing the cultural action of “waiting for a bus”. And to imagine an innate capacity for queuing, we would have to invent something like an alien being.

When it comes to any particular human beings (or to being human in general), we simply don’t do, for example, “waiting for a bus” in either of those ways. And the way it turns out that we do in fact do it – i.e., accountably for a given cultural order – ought, on our reading, to be of absolutely critical interest to anything that calls itself “psych-ology”.

For, to return briefly to Heidegger, the ψυχή (psuché) that psych-ology claims as its proper domain, while often translated as “mind” or “soul”, may better be thought via Heidegger’s (1992, p. 99) reading where ψυχή becomes “the ground of a relation to beings”. This may seem gratuitous – or, indeed, call (as all good conclusions should) for further investigation – but it is highly pertinent to what we have been arguing. Heidegger is asking the fundamental “psycho-logical” question of how beings relate; how (with respect to the human domain, then) sociality is at all possible. This relation, he posits, must have a ground of some kind; and what we have seen in the present paper is that at least one viable contender for that ground is the reflexively accountable (produceable and recognisable) character of everyday cultural action and talk. Accordingly reconfigured around a cultural “model of being human”, then, a psych-ology yet to come might be the study of the material ways in which persons come to be producible and recognisable as, for example, “hallucinators”, as “deluded” or, indeed, as “diagnosticians”.

Comment [Gr3]: New section

## Endnotes

1. From here on, we will refer only to the first of the two volumes of Sacks’s Lectures (1992). For convenience, we simply note the relevant page number(s) in the reference brackets. References to Sacks’s text will therefore appear in Arabic numerals and to Schegloff’s commentary in Roman. For further discussion of the implications of Sacks’s position for psychology, see Edwards (1995).
2. For a good introduction to Sacksian analysis and terminology, see Silverman (1998).
3. Canonical instances would be Edwards (1997) and Edwards and Potter (1992) on “memory”; Antaki et al (1996) on “identity”; Wetherell and Potter (1992) on “attitudes”.
4. An analogous case would be philosophical anthropology which, rather than having to do with empirical investigations of culture, refers to philosophical investigations of the grounds of daily life and experience.
5. For Lewin, of course, “B” glossed “behaviour” – but in its most general sense as what persons do and are: “being” offers a gloss with which we might be more comfortable. The interactive binary that interests us here is the “PE” side of the

formula, glossing, as it does, “persons” and “environments” where the former is to be read via “character” and “cognition” and the latter via “kinds of situations” or “behaviour settings”.

6. For an account of mainstream social-cognition research see Augoustinos and Walker (1995). For criticisms of this position, see Edwards (1997) and Potter (1996). On SCT specifically, see Edwards (1998).

7. From this, it follows that we are not arguing here for a simplistic distinction between rationalism and empiricism at a meta-psychological level. Our thanks to James Wertsch for bringing out this point.

8. Today, the term “man” is, of course, in disrepute for its gender-exclusionary connotations. We have no intention here of perpetuating such exclusions. We merely defer to a term which has had a quite particular meaning in philosophy since at least Descartes. One of the 20th century’s leading women philosophers Hannah Arendt (see Arendt, 1958) was, like many of her sisters in philosophy, equally prepared to risk connotations of gender exclusion for the sake of avoiding disciplinary inaccuracy and anachronism. Our discussion of Kant makes the term all but inevitable.

9. A case in point would be the “discovery” of various syndromes and disorders such as OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) where, measured against a putative norm, frequencies of such things as washing one’s hands can be deemed abnormal. For an analysis of such matters, see Miller and McHoul (1998, pp. 122-4).

10. This is also what distances Sacks’s position from other “culturalist” forms of counter-psychology such as Bourdieu’s (1977) “theory of practice” and de Certeau’s (1984) theory of the “practice of everyday life”. As Wetherell (1998, pp. 401) has pointed out, such theories wrongly assume that “Subject positions, and thus the identities of participants in social life, are determined by discourses and in this sense are prior, already constituted, and could be read off or predicted from knowledge of the relevant discourse”. She goes on to show how, as with mainstream psychology, these theories of the self “entail descriptive closure and cognitive consistency”. Our thanks to Jaan Valsiner for requesting this important distinction.

11. The studies that confirm this are neatly summarised in Edwards and Potter (2001).

12. On “being-in-the-world”, see Dreyfus (1991), and for its relevance to ethnomethodology, see McHoul (1998).

<sup>13</sup>. As is frequently pointed out in the literature on Sacks, he argues that members do not follow rules (as it were “slavishly”); where rules are concerned, members merely orient to them. See also, Edwards (1997) on script formulations and the rules of the road in Mexico City.

<sup>14</sup>. To see that such matters are culturally specific, one only need try doing this in Rome where the techniques for “waiting for a bus” are an utterly different and more clandestine affair.

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