

Series Editor Preface

Spaces In-Between: The Arena for Development

This book *The Origin of Life Patterns—In the Natural Inclusion of Space in Flux*, written by Alan Rayner, inaugurates the new SpringerBriefs series *Psychology and Cultural Developmental Sciences*. As the firstborn, this book has to accomplish the task of drawing the coordinates for our intellectual enterprise, outlining the theoretical basis and the methodological approach within which a vivid debate at the intersection of cultural psychology and other developmental sciences (biology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, education, etc.) will be promoted. The aim of this series is to create fertile ground that integrates knowledge from many fields into a new synthesis—a general science of cultural psychology that deals with the highest psychological functions of human beings (Valsiner et al. 2016). Much of contemporary developmental science has natural liaisons with cultural psychology. The SpringerBriefs series creates a forum of scholarly interchanges for that interdisciplinary synthesis.

This book is a programmatic statement focusing on some aspects of the complex phenomenon of becoming human in the social and natural world around us. We have already had the fortune to benefit from the intellectual work of Alan Rayner in 2011, when, on the pages of the Springer journal *IPBS: Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* (of which, this series is also a topical extension), appeared a quite unique theoretical elaboration of the notion of inclusionality and the role of the ‘space in-between’ and borders in developmental processes (Marsico 2011; Rayner 2011). However, much of that space remained uncharted back then—and is accomplished now in the present book.

Rayner’s new scientific biological paradigm, here extensively developed, is based on the shift from an abstract passive conceptualization of space as ‘void background’ to a natural, relational view of space as a ‘receptive omnipresence.’ This model greatly contributed to our intellectual attempt to elaborate the general

notion of the liminality of the human condition. Let us highlight a part from Rayner's conclusion which we consider to be revolutionary for our contemporary social sciences:

Abstract thinking removes the middle ground of self-identity as a dynamic inclusion of neighbourhood. This explains why two incompatible kinds of abstract logic have been at odds with one another for millennia. 'Two-value logic' (also known as the Law of the Excluded Middle) straightforwardly regards one or other of the two mutually exclusive alternatives (bounded or unbounded) to be 'true' and the other as 'false'. Dialectic logic holds both alternatives to be equally true, which results in paradox. *Since there is no way to resolve this paradox naturally, by allowing boundaries to fluidize and space to be continuous, the brutality of one and the softness of the other are held in 'living contradiction'* (p. 105, emphasis added)

This 'living contradiction' of the two systems of logics has been around for more than two centuries in contemporary European thought, and the 'paradox' of the dialectic still hinders our view of the many 'spaces in between' which Rayner so beautifully and artistically demonstrates in this book on the basis of phenomena from nature, and amply illustrates by his own paintings. Rayner's is a new version of *Naturphilosophie*—attempted two centuries after its earlier romantic versions were attempted (and abandoned). We hope that the readers of this book will pick up the challenge—to give explicit form to the 'fluid and continuous' boundaries that are prominent in nature and in the human psyche. Advancement of new models of developmental mereotopology could be one of the solutions (Marsico 2011). Development of the philosophical principles of 'double negation' (elaborated by Engelsted 2017) could be another.

It is nice to encounter humble authors in our editorial efforts. Alan Rayner did not even realize how central his evolutionary standpoint has been for the psychological investigation over the past several years. From his inspiring work, so many questions about the mutual adaptation between the space and the living system from a cultural psychology perspective have been raised. That is why this book series, which is meant to be interdisciplinary in its nature, could not have any other inaugural book than *The Origin of Life Patterns—In the Natural Inclusion of Space in Flux*.

Alan Rayner is also a brilliant example of how intellectual work is an unceasing enterprise. Over the last months during the preparation of his manuscript, we had intense correspondence that was of great help in understanding the theoretical roots and the methodological options, as well as the integration of science, psychology and arts that the author provides into the volume. It is always fascinating to see a brilliant mind at work! In one of his recent messages, Alan Rayner incisively defined the central theme of this book which seems to be the *compendium* of what he has been elaborating over decades. It has to do with what *The Nature* is, and then, what is the quintessential aspect of *Human Nature*. At the core of Rayner's argumentation there is the idea that in our contemporary scientific, educational, theological and governmental structures, the predominance of a fragmented way of thinking that separates what is material from what is immaterial, and that which is

to be considered the ‘subjective’ and the ‘objective’ as mutually exclusive, or collapsed one into another, make it impossible to understand the complexity of the human nature in a manner that preserves the wholes while studying carefully their parts. Understanding emerging, developing and self-maintaining wholes is the task of new science.

It is this that the current rapidly developing perspectives, in what are subsumed under ‘Cultural Psychologies’ (Valsiner 2014), are oriented to do: Keep the focus on the wholes while recognizing the high variability of their constituent parts. Both biological and social sciences operate on phenomena that are characterized by *variability amplification*, as pointed out by Magoroh Maruyama in his crucial introduction of the notion of ‘second cybernetics’ more than a half century ago (Maruyama 1963). Biological and social systems—open in their relationships with the environment—constantly produce innovation. New forms come into being, which are transformed into still newer forms—while maintaining *generative continuity* with the past. This leads to a number of deep changes in the ways in which scientists need to think about the natural and social orders—moving from thinking in terms of causality to that in terms of catalysis (Cabell and Valsiner 2014), and to the corresponding abandonment of thinking in terms of ‘independent’ and ‘dependent’ variables (Valsiner and Brinkmann 2016).

Alan Rayner’s book will surely foster reflection on what ‘Our True Nature’ is—guiding our attention to the way in which any living system is constantly in dialogue with its natural neighbourhood, on the basis of an interdependent and co-evolutionary process involving both the context and the organism. We are sure that *The Origin of Life Patterns—In the Natural Inclusion of Space in Flux* will have a beneficial effect on those who are trying to overcome the traditional borders between basic sciences and humanities (*Geistwissenschaften*). Our ways of knowing are similar across the artificial divide of the two kinds of sciences, created in the nineteenth century. It is time to restore the understanding of that similarity.

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