

# Critical Personalism, Language and Development

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**ABSTRACT.** Taking off from William Stern's theorizing about the role of language in person development, the article attempts to open new possibilities for the developmental analysis of subjectivity and individuality. Stern's notion of '*Stellungnahme*' (the taking of a position) is made relevant for current discussions of positioning in discursive approaches to subjectivity and identity research and applied to the analysis of emotion talk. The article concludes with a discussion of the centrality of discourse for human action and language for discourse.

**KEY WORDS:** critical personalism, development, emotion talk, *Ganzheit*, language practices, positioning, subjectivity

## Overview

The purpose of my contribution to this issue is to distill the potential of Stern's critical personalism, particularly when it comes to designing new or alternative frameworks for developmental research. I will take off from Stern's theorizing about the role of language in person development and then motivate the argument that language, when given a more central place in person development, opens up new possibilities for the developmental analysis of subjectivity and individuality.

In the first section I will elaborate Stern's dialectic position of relating self and world, then sharpen the connections between his theoretical stance and the language practice approach put forward by Budwig (2000). Of particular interest in this section is the question of whether we can push Stern's notion of 'language' to become constitutive in human meaning construction or whether we have to rely on an unanalyzed unit behind the meaning production, as Harré (2000) puts it, from where discursive wholeness (coherence) emerges.

In the second section of this contribution I will explicate the indexical function of language (see Budwig, 2000) because it seems to capture aspects of Stern's approach to the analysis of language acts that methodologically

lead to features through which individuals construct themselves, that is, their subjective sense-making capacities. In this context, I will highlight and place special emphasis on Stern's notion of '*Stellungnahme*' (the taking of a position) and relate it to what has been termed positioning analysis, that is, a method of analyzing talk as the place where personal sense comes to existence.

In my third section I will employ this notion of positioning and apply it to the analysis of discourse about a particular topic—emotions. I have picked this topic because the emotions, at least in our folk theories of the modern self, are taken to be an inherent property of the most inner parts of the self. Thus, illustrating how this topic emerges and how it can be shaped (with considerable variability, depending on the possibilities of different positions in a discourse setting) is meant to demonstrate the 'constructability' of what we might otherwise consider to have a pre-existence before and outside of discourse.

In my concluding section, I will end with some suggestions on how to forge the language practice approach, as suggested by Budwig (2000) and myself, with Stern's critical personalism.

### **Stern's Theory of Language in Critical Personalism**

Let me start out by cautioning that my answer to the question that I want to address head on, whether Stern's critical personalism can be elaborated into contemporary developmental research along the lines that I want to suggest further below, is based on a selective reading (and understanding) of Stern's very large and impressive body of work. And before I draft my answer, I should also mention that I came away from perusing Stern's work with a tremendous respect for what he had been trying to achieve, being way ahead of his time and in many ways ground-breaking, although the path laid out by Stern has not been picked up on either in American or in Continental European mainstream psychology. I feel in many ways inspired by Stern's approach to development and see my suggestions principally as attempts to connect and bridge his developmental research with current developmental analyses in social constructionism (see Bamberg, 1997b, 1999, 2000; Harré, 2000).

For Stern, the person is the central unit from where the exchange between '*Person*' (person) and '*Sache*' (world) is organized in terms of '*Selbsterhaltung*' (self-maintenance) and '*Selbstentfaltung*' (self-unfolding) (Stern, 1906). The two 'directions of fit' between person and world are dialectically organized from the person as a central unit. On the one hand, '*Entfaltung*' (unfolding) is directed toward the outside, opening up and imposing organization onto it (an unfolding of self into world as an externalization); on the other hand, '*Erhaltung*' (maintenance) is achieved as a maintenance process,

a taking in, in the form of a binding, that is directed toward the self (as an internalization process). This distinction qualifies Stern's personalism distinctively as a dialectic theory, or a 'spontaneous-dialectic theory', as Schmidt (1977, pp. 426ff.) puts it. And it is with this differentiation that Stern's approach to the person as 'critical personalism' can be characterized as truly critical and at the same time teleological, particularly vis-à-vis predominant empiricist/behavioral approaches and the genetically based '*Anlagentheorien*' (faculty theories) of his contemporaries.

Although Stern posits that the person has direct, and often immediate, access to her experience ('*Erlebnis*'—as the central category of psychic phenomena), particularly by way of introspection or self-observation, he cautions that any psychological investigation that claims to be scientific cannot stop here. It would only be able to describe what he termed 'the phenomena'. However, in order to arrive at a fuller understanding, we are required to move toward the 'acts' that are relevant to the phenomena as well as the 'dispositions' that ultimately enable the 'acts' and phenomena (W. Stern, 1911, 1917). Again, it is interesting to see how Stern positions his 'differential psychology' (as the methodological approach to critical personalism) between a purely behavioral approach and a genetically framed '*Anlagentheorie*' (faculty theory).

It is in this context that I wish to pursue the question of the role of language in Stern's theory of the person, his 'critical personalism', as well as his 'differential psychology', that is, particularly his methods for the investigation of individuality (which for the purpose of this article I claim to be synonymous with what nowadays is commonly referred to as 'subjectivity').

Although Stern spent considerable effort in studying the development of language (see C. Stern & W. Stern, 1907, 1909/1999; W. Stern, 1915b), and although the development of language is of considerable relevance for the development of the person, the role of language in Stern's notions of the person and development is not further centralized or reflected. Neither in his *Vorgedanken zur Weltanschauung* (Preliminaries to a World-Philosophy—W. Stern, 1915a) nor in *Die Kindersprache* (The Language of Children—C. Stern & W. Stern, 1907), places where we would expect more reflection on what language 'is' and how it figures as a potential resource in development, do we find a position that explicitly underscores the relevance of language to what it means to be, or to become, human. The place where language is credited explicitly with a large degree of generative or constructive power is in *Psychologie der frühen Kindheit* (The Psychology of Early Childhood). Here, Stern (1930) claims that in the child's course of intellectual development, 'language becomes a tool for an enormous development for the ability to imagine, to feel, and to intend; *language is the factor that ultimately enables any individual thought activity*' (p. 111—my emphasis).<sup>1</sup>

It is my contention that our current concerns to 'order' language, cognition and emotion, and to explicitly relate them with regard to one another in terms of their individual, domain-specific contributions, are very recent, and also possibly more of an American (or 'un-European') concern. However, in his methodological considerations on how to investigate individualities, Stern (1911, pp. 318–378—in the section on '*Die Erforschung der Individualitäten*' [The investigation of individualities]) elaborates at length on how to use the biography and the psychogram as methodological tools. And in his analysis of children's and adolescents' poems (Stern, 1915b), he illustrates the psychographic method outlined in his 'Differential Psychology' (1911). There, Stern demonstrates how to analyze the use of verbal choices (in written texts) as '*personale Akte von Stellungnahmen*' (personal acts of positioning—1911, p. 23) leading to phenomena of personal sense making (*subjektive Erlebnisformen*) such as war, loss, or the emotional framing of country, nationality and history. The fact that this method predominantly relied on written texts and observational methods, such as the diary studies of Clara and William Stern (1907, 1909/1999), is by no means a drawback for its general applicability, especially for diagnostic purposes. Its purpose to present and illuminate aspects of the variability within individuality, which, according to Stern, is the major advantage over standardizing across individualities, is nevertheless also viewed as a potential sore spot. All too often, Stern (1911, p. 326) argues, these methods result in exaggerated overgeneralizations of particular characteristics of the individual that are taken to represent her character in total.

In the following, I will take up on the way Stern framed the '*Individualitätsproblem*', that is, the way to investigate individualities (plural) by way of analyzing people's accounts ('*Kundgebungen*') in the form of personal acts of positioning ('*personale Akte von Stellungnahmen*'). In exploring the concept of positioning for the construction of individualities and subjectivities, I will initially follow Stern's claim regarding the centrality of the person in the construction of individualities. Subsequently, I will attempt to curtail and modify this centrality so that 'language' can begin to infiltrate and qualify the person simultaneously as a socio-cultural and historical construct.

### **Language, Language Practices and Positioning**

Contemporary theorizing on the topic of language commonly differentiates between two functions of language. On the one hand, language is used to refer to objects and events in the world, to label them, and to ideationally represent these objects and events in the form of (mental) representations. On the other hand, language is used to socially connect with others, to communicate and to engage in relational practices. Both functions, the one

that connects *person to world* and the other that connects *person to person*, are usually separately focused on; and often one is argued to serve as the developmental platform for the other to emerge. In the attempt to overcome this problematic dichotomy between referring and communicating, and following Budwig (2000), I would like to suggest centering on what is commonly called the 'indexical function' of language use (see also Bamberg, 1999, 2000; Duranti, 1997; Ochs, 1996). The indexical approach to language use and language analysis underscores the 'world-making' process in which individuals are involved when producing '*Kundgebungen*' (giving accounts), whether they describe the world the way they see it, whether they explain why the world is the way it is, or whether they try to justify and value the way the world is.

The way this is typically done is through the use of so-called 'indexical expressions', that is, expressions that point to aspects of the text itself or aspects of the text-building activity. Indexical expressions such as pronouns, tense and aspect markers, particles, and the like, are ubiquitous in everyday language use. They are commonly argued to regulate the flow of speech into cohesive chunks and coherent wholes so that topics or themes of what the text is *about* can come to existence. For instance, a speaker, when using pronouns, substitutes a shorter linguistic element for another linguistic form that has been used elsewhere in the linguistic context. In terms of their interactive function, pronouns appeal to the listener's 'semi-active' state of consciousness, as Chafe (1995) has put it, and bring back some aspects of previous context into a situation of present awareness. Thus, the speaker with her use of pronouns is not only directing her own text-building activity but simultaneously instructing the listener how to go about the business of constructing his nascent text. As such, pronouns, as well as all other employed indexical forms, point to the activity of text-building itself: they are indices coordinating speaker-listener activities in terms of pointing back and forth, signaling 'this is where we are in our activity of text-building, this is what went on before, and this is where we are headed'.

For co-participants as well as the analyst, indexical language use assists in determining more closely what kind of activity the interactants are attending to, for instance a description of a spatial layout, an account of what happened, or an argument for saving face and deflecting attention from one's own wrong-doing. Referring back and pointing ahead establishes the context for what can count as text. Alternatively (to borrow the metaphor of 'constructive grounding'), the use of pronouns assists in establishing a ground so that new figures can emerge against a slowly changing and growing ground. Thus, indexical forms do more than simply tie clauses and sentences together into a text. Owing to the fact that they are most often indeterminate and vague, and that they gain their contour and meaning only in the concrete activity of building figures against grounds, they function as close-to-optimal indicators for the analysis of activities of 'texting', that is,

the formation of what texting is *about*. And these activities are not achievements of the isolated 'mind', but rather are interactively (dialogically) constructed, even in monologues, autobiographies and dreams. Thus, the fact that we usually know what we (and others) are talking about lies in the indexical function of language, and can be analyzed by attending to how indexicality is achieved in talk.

This brings up a second issue that connects more closely with Stern's notion of positioning. When we say *something*, we always concurrently communicate what we do *not* say, that is, we select from a large variety of forms and expressions. By doing so, we communicate that all those other possibilities have not been selected. In this sense, then, it can be argued that language and language use always constrain and ultimately also limit us—or, as Ina Užgiris (2000) has termed it, 'there seems to be more to our thoughts and existence than can be expressed in language' (p. 132). Consequently (and we have to ask whether this is the direction in which Stern's notion of the centrality of the person is pointing us), it seems that the right direction is to look *beyond* (or *behind*) language in order to break through these constraints and limitations. And among the possibilities that suggest themselves, we find the poetic function of language, or other, alternative means of communication such as music and art, or even simply silence.

While it is certainly possible to construe language as the principal obstacle to an authentic and creative subjectivity, I would like to suggest that the means to transform and expand this subjectivity beyond the constraints of what can be said in linguistic form *also* lie in language. However, in order to see language as the potential key to novelty and creativity, to communal and individual liberation, to poesis, art, music and silence, it cannot be taken as a system of regularities existent outside of (and before) human practices. Rather, it *is* practice, relational practice, within which a speaker and her audience jointly engage in a building of text and context—with neither of the two as previously established and given. Both text and context are the products of this joint activity, and the forms being used index the activity under construction.

It is in this sense that the indexical view of language seems to break away from the assumption of shared backgrounds (and inter-subjectivities) that co-participants in interactions bring to the practice of text and context construction. This implies that everything has to be negotiated from scratch any time a conversation starts. Obviously, this is not the case. I hold a strong conviction that people do 'have' a history and that they do 'have' memories. However, the co-conversationalist as well as the analyst have no direct access to these constructs (and I would like to claim, neither do the speakers themselves) unless they are indexed in the encounter, and as such become shared objects of attention. It is in this respect that we not only actively position ourselves as agents in language acts, but we are simultaneously

positioned by the simple fact of using language forms that have been used for antecedent purposes.

In order to productively build on the indexicality of language acts, and developing on Hollway (1984) and Davies and Harré (1990), who focus much more on the fact that language in and of itself positions the speaker, I have developed a sequence of analytic steps that reveal the positions that emerge in talk activities, with special emphasis on narrating.

In the first step, we attempt to analyze how characters within what is being talked about are constructed in terms of agency roles—for instance, as antagonists or protagonists, or as perpetrators or victims. This type of analysis scrutinizes the linguistic means that do the job of marking one person, for instance, as the agent who is in control, while the action is inflicted upon another; or how linguistic means do the job of marking the central character as being helplessly at the mercy of outside (quasi-‘natural’) forces; or as being rewarded by luck and fate, or personal qualities (such as bravery, nobility or simply ‘character’) (*positioning level 1*).

In the second step, we seek to analyze the linguistic means that are characteristic of the particular discourse mode that is being employed. For instance, does the speaker attempt to instruct her listener in terms of what to do in the face of adversarial conditions, or does she engage in making excuses for her actions, attempting to attribute blame to others? Thus, in this second analytic approach (*positioning level 2*), it is the pragmatics of the speaker–audience relationship that is at the center of the analysis.

In the third step, we address the idea that speakers also position themselves vis-à-vis themselves in their talk, that is, we attempt to analyze the language that is employed in order to make claims that are held to be true and relevant above and beyond the local conversational situation. In other words, we hold that linguistic devices employed in talk point to more than its content (or what the talk is about) and the interlocutor. In constructing the content (*positioning step 1*) and one’s audience (*positioning step 2*), speakers (potentially) transcend the question of ‘*How do I want to be understood by you, the audience?*’ and construct a (local) answer to the question ‘*How do I want to understand myself?*’—which is not any different from the answer to the question ‘*Who am I?*’

In the next section, I will try to illustrate how speakers take up positions in talk. The data that I will discuss consist of talk data, talk *about* emotions (and I will focus on anger talk as an example). However, in that the data consist of how people (here: English-speaking children) construe (by use of language) agency relationships for different discursive purposes, they illustrate the potential of language practices for developmental research. The fact that I chose talk *about* emotions (anger) to demonstrate how to approach language practices by way of positioning analysis is not entirely accidental because traditionally emotions are considered internal states, usually caused by (antecedent) situational and material conditions in the world, resulting in

behavioral (material) consequences. Thus, the order of these events is usually argued to be in the form of material states in the world, while talk *about* these conditions seems to reflect the contingencies between antecedents, emotional reaction and behavioral consequences. The activity of ordering that is performed dialogically with this talk about emotions usually is not taken as part of the analysis of what emotions are or what they mean to the speaker's subjectivity. However, as I will try to argue, it will be more than worthwhile to take them into consideration if we are interested in the subjective perspectives from which the talk is created as well as the subjective purpose for which the order of the content of talk is created.

### **Emotion Talk: Tying Emotions and Affect into Language Practices**

In contrast to theories that view emotions and language as two realms or domains that are linked via the organization of the lexicon (Wierzbicka, 1994), or the organization of image schemas that underlie both (Kövecses, 1995), I am suggesting an inversion of the traditional realist picture in which it is assumed that happenings and events take place in the world, to be represented in people's thoughts and feelings, so that they can subsequently form the topic to be spoken *about*. I am further suggesting that in the business of communicative practices, both events and stances toward them (evaluative and cognitive) are organized for discursive purposes. Events and the way they are thought about and valued, including their affective stance, are born out of the purpose of local talk. Consequently, the way in which the purpose of talk manifests itself in interactive contexts is not a by-product of, but rather the starting point for, the analysis of the local display and the meaning of affect and emotions.

Most relevant in these attempts to tie emotion and affect closer to communicative practices, where they can become recognized as meaningfully situated practices, is the notion of *positioning*. In talk about others and about self we position characters at the content plane (what the talk is about) with regard to one another, and we order them in time and space. In addition, since talk is dyadic, the speaker positions herself *vis-à-vis* the audience: she wants to be understood as neutral, as involved, as taking sides with one or more of the characters she is talking about—for the purpose of making an accusation, giving an apology, or to let the listener know that he is wrong. In bringing to bear the content in the here and now of the communicative situation, a moral position is drawn up for which the speaker can be held accountable—irrespective of whether the speaker herself has been the theme or whether anonymous others have been thematized.

In the following I will illustrate a way to investigate talk that is in line with the arguments that have been laid out, that is, with regard to the way I

see language, communication and emotion being all intertwined within how we construct ourselves as persons in and through language practices. In spite of the fact that I could have presented data that document 'developmental' changes over time in the way children participate in what could be considered 'the same' task,<sup>2</sup> I will focus instead on how children, irrespective of their age, solve different (though in some sense, similar) tasks. However, the set-up and arrangement of the tasks, and the way the participants in the study approach the tasks, can also be interpreted developmentally (Bamberg, 1996, 1997a, 1997b).

*Anger: Who is Doing What to Whom? Why Perspective and Genre Matter*

The project I will draw on consisted of collecting talk from children of different age groups on the topic of emotions. Emotions were picked initially as situations that give rise to different evaluative orientations. At the same time, it was assumed that from early on children are likely to be able to speak to questions that probe into emotions. Similarly, we also assumed that this would allow us a large degree of 'control' for the topic of the children's narratives and concomitantly open up the space for their own personal experiences as well as their very own subjective sense-making capacities. With this in mind, we asked 80 children from four grades (preschool, kindergarten, first-grade and third-grade) 24 different questions—varying along the dimensions of four topics, two perspectives and three genres:

(1) The 24 questions were differentiated with regard to *four* different emotion topics (*I–IV*):

- angry (*I*);
- sad (*II*);
- scared (*III*);
- happy (*IV*).

(2) Further, the topics were sub-divided according to *two* different perspectives<sup>3</sup> (*A* and *B—Making vs Being 'angry'*):

- someone making someone else angry/sad/scared/happy (*A*);
- someone being made by someone else angry/sad/scared/happy (*B*).

(3) In addition, we asked the children to take these two perspectives on these four different emotion situations in *three* different genres<sup>4</sup> (*a–c*):

- the first-person genre (*a*);
- the third-person genre (*b*);
- the generalized-person genre (*c*).

The following discussion will be confined to how children between preschool and third-grade relate the 'angry' topic (*I*) from the two different

perspectives (A and B) in the three different genres (a-c), and what this can tell us about children's (communicative) development. But let me first briefly expand on some of the motivations for why we asked for accounts of emotion situations along the lines of perspective and genre.

First, it should actually come as a surprise that most of the emotion research (with adults or children) is based on verbal responses from subjects describing in one or another way an emotional situation, whereby the description is taken to be a reconstruction of an event that led to (or in some other way was connected to) 'the emotion' (see Bamberg, 1997b, for a discussion of this issue). Even in research that focuses less on verbal resources and more centrally on other expressive means such as transpiration, heart-beat, adrenaline level or pupil dilation, we are left with interpretive issues regarding the question of how these symptoms are experienced and what they actually mean to the person, since none of the subjects is taking these symptoms for the emotional experience itself, while a verbal description (of, for instance, what happened) is more than just a symptom or a symbol. Upon further consideration, however, and in light of our introductory remarks on the indexical functions of language and communication, it should not come as a surprise at all that the phenomena that are taken to be at the core of psychology, such as intentions, emotions and motivations, are researched via their 'verbal expressions'. How else are we supposed to gain access to such 'interior' constellations but through our verbal and communicative acts for sense making?<sup>5</sup>

Thus, talk about an emotion such as 'anger' as a topic may be done for quite varied purposes. It nevertheless requires an ordering along temporal dimensions and actor involvement that reflects such discursive purposes and simultaneously instantiates them. It is exactly for these reasons that we chose 'emotion talk' as the domain for our inquiry.

At first glance, the issue of *perspective* seems to be irrelevant when it comes to talk about particular situations. What seems to be the basic fabric of emotion situations is that two people interacted in a particular way so that a particular (emotional) outcome was generated. Why should it matter from whose point of view one is reporting or describing the sequence of events? However, as we know from other instances, it may become highly relevant whether 'Monica kissed Bill' or 'Bill kissed Monica'—and it may become even more important where and how they are forced to talk about 'their kissing'.

For this reason, we posed two different question types to the participants in our study: (A) to report an event where someone made someone else angry; and (B) to report an event where someone had been made angry. The difference between the two question types is simply one of word order and/or phrasing in the active vs the passive voice. In addition, and this should not go unnoticed, the first question (perspective A) differs from the second question (perspective B) in the aspectual (temporal) quality: while question

(A) orients toward the sequence of actions that led to the emotional outcome, question (B) focuses on the state of the emotion and is likely to be taken up from there to retrospectively recount the sequence of events that led up to this state.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the request to report the emotion situation in a number of different genres is similarly geared not toward the referential world of emotion talk, but to something that is closely related to a particular 'perspective' from which the sequence of events and its emotional relevance seem to be 'evaluated'. I may have been quite differently involved in a situation in which my own emotional well-being was at stake—let's say Bill Clinton's or Monica Lewinsky's case—than in a situation where someone unknown or a generalized other, who doesn't even have a name, is centrally involved as the actor or agent. And this involvement might figure into the given description of the temporal order of who did what to whom, so that the emotional outcome that is commonly recognized as 'anger' could be generated as the topic or theme. To probe into this potential ability to generate descriptions that differ along the dimension of involvement (and detachment), we asked the participants of the study to present the two perspectives (A and B) in three different genres. The first-person genre (a) required the participants to switch from the perspective of making someone angry, from *the I* as the perpetrator's perspective (A), to *the I* as the victim's perspective (B). In the third-person genre (b), our participants were asked to place themselves in *a friend's* shoes, and play out the perpetrator's versus the victim's perspective from his/her point of view. Finally, in the generalized-person genre (c), the subjects were asked to present the same two perspectives from *the generalized* point of view, which actually dissolves into 'nobody's point of view'.

In sum then, we asked preschoolers to third-graders the following six questions:

- (I-A-a) Can you tell me about one time when you made someone very, very angry?
- (I-B-a) Can you tell me about one time when you were very, very angry?
- (I-A-b) Pretend you have a friend whose name is Paula/Paul. One day Paula/Paul made someone very, very angry. Can you tell me what happened?<sup>7</sup>
- (I-B-b) Pretend you have a friend whose name is Paula/Paul. One day Paula/Paul was very, very angry. Can you tell me what happened?
- (I-A-c) Imagine I was from far, far away, and I wouldn't know what it means to make someone angry. How would you explain 'how to make someone angry'?
- (I-B-c) Imagine I was from far, far away, and I wouldn't know what it means to be angry. How would you explain 'what it means to be angry'?

*The Grammars of Anger—From Two Perspectives (in the First-Person Genre)*

Comparing the responses to the anger questions along the perspective dimension (*Making* vs *Being* 'angry'), two response types were found. A typical response to question (I-A-a) are examples (1) and (2):

- (1) <<ME—making my brother angry >>  
*it was a couple of years ago*  
*when I took the crab away from my brother*  
*then I stuck my fist out*  
*and he ran into it*  
*and got a bloody nose*
- (2) <<ME—making someone angry >>  
*we were fighting maybe*  
*I don't really know*

Meanwhile, a typical example of an answer to question (I-B-a) is (3):

- (3) <<ME—being angry >>  
*I was in the room*  
*and my sister kicked me*  
*and it went right into the rib bone*  
*and I went down to my mother*  
*and told her*  
*my sister got into trouble*

In terms of how the responses to the *Making* 'angry' question (I-A-a) differ more generally from the responses to the *Being* 'angry' question (I-B-a), we were able to distinguish the following discursive devices:

*For Making someone 'angry':*

- individuating the undergoer/experiencer as well as agent in highly specific <graphic > terms;
- marking the action as highly transitive;
- elaborating lexically on the effects or consequences of the actions;
- positioning the undergoer/experiencer in direct object slot, and the agent in subject slot—resulting in the construction of a highly transitive scene.

*For Being 'angry' (= having been made 'angry'):*

- frequent use of vagueness markers and hedges (e.g. *maybe, probably, kind of, like*);
- de-individuating the agent (e.g. by use of the pluralizing *we*);
- de-individuating the undergoer/experiencer (e.g. by use of the pluralizing *them*);
- partially agentivizing the undergoer/experiencer (e.g. by ascribing actions to him/her, e.g. *running into someone's fist*).

Thus, the employment of these linguistic devices results in two quite different displays of the agentive positioning within which the two characters are presented: while the agency (and control) of the character who causes 'anger' in the *Making* 'angry' situation is downplayed, it is highlighted and accentuated in the *Being* 'angry' situation. Hence, although at an abstract level both 'angry' situations seem to consist of the same 'make-up', namely one person causing 'anger' in another person, the two presentations in the form of answers to the two different questions differ drastically. It seems obvious that these differences are not accidental but can be traced back to the discursive positioning of the narrator vis-à-vis her audience (*positioning level 2*): while it is in the interest of a speaker answering in the manner of examples (1) and (2) to construct an identity that maintains herself in good standing, it is in the interest of a speaker responding as in example (3) to present an identity that has been invaded, thereby requesting some empathy or other forms of assistance from the audience. Both presentations are versions that construct descriptions of what happened for discursive purposes. Neither of the two descriptions is neutral or innocent; both versions are fashioned to account for a different orientation in the speaker-audience relationship (*positioning level 2*).

In sum then, as the responses from the two different perspectives demonstrate, two characters in interaction, with one of them ending up angry, do not a neutral situation make. The characters are viewed from a moral perspective in terms of who is right and who is not right. The possibility of taking sides with one of the characters in one description vs the other results in two very different situations. From the responses given, the presupposition that both situations are similar, in the sense that both result in the emotion called 'anger', as may have been suggested by the interview questions, is definitely not warranted. Rather, as revealed by this type of analysis, two differential subjectivities are emergent: although it can be argued that all accounts have 'anger' as their central theme, subjectively there are very different experiences that constitute those themes. Thus, the notion of emotions as topics or themes is something that has been extracted from and generalized across very different subjective experiences.

Again, this should not be taken to imply that emotions do not have an existence outside of talk. However, building on Stern's methodological suggestions, in working from and through personal accounts toward what he called individualities (subjective experiences), we never will be able to gain access to the actual 'experience'. However, by way of employing how speakers position themselves (*positioning analysis*), we gain insight into their ordering activity. And the argument here is that the order is first of all *in the activity*, the way it is organized interactively, dyadically; and from here the order of what is being talked about (world) and the order of the author (the person) become analytically approachable as two separate entities.

### Development, *Ganzheit* and Language

The analysis of positioning when people topicalize emotions, that is, when they make emotions the themes of their talk as in the above examples, can be viewed as very much in line with how Stern in his 'The Differential Psychology' (1911) proposed to analyze 'subjectivities'. The '*Stellungnahmen*' (positions) that are drawn up by speakers for interpersonal (pragmatic) purposes are analyzable as 'personal acts', that is, in terms of what Stern saw as the connection between 'phenomena' and 'predispositions'. As such, the analysis of language is first of all the analysis of human actions. Our talk lends order to phenomena and in this it can be said that talk itself creates what the talk is about (see Bamberg, 1999). It should be clear that talk does by no means offer a direct window into the phenomena the talk is about. Rather, language, analyzed as human action, that is, as situated in practices and for purposes, gives insight into the way phenomena are given order. Thus, the positions drawn up to order the phenomena the talk is about, here emotions—or better: emotion situations—become components of the phenomena in terms of their order. In other words, the position from which the phenomena are ordered does not remain as something that is external to the phenomena, as if the phenomena already had an order in and of themselves. Rather, the order first comes to existence in, and through, the taking of a perspective (in the form of a position) from where the phenomena are subjectively viewed or framed.

While these considerations parallel the way Stern (1911) suggested analyzing language data for the analysis of subjectivities, as illustrated in C. Stern and W. Stern (1907) and in his analyses of children's poetry (W. Stern, 1915b), I would like to suggest that they can be taken a step further. In the same way as I portrayed the role of language practices as constitutive for what the talk is about, I would want to argue that they also constitute the order that we assume to exist *IN* the speaker. In other words, the order that comes to existence in the process of language practices in what is being talked about (the world the way it is constructed by persons in positioning) simultaneously brings about the order in the person who is considered the constructor or author.

While this may strike one as odd, since it seems to deny the subject and agent of the construction process, it may lend an interesting interpretive twist to Stern's juxtaposition of person and world. While Stern credits the person with '*Ganzheit*' (wholeness), it nevertheless is meant to be an ideal that drives the developmental process. He states that

. . . all single developments of unique functions are always carried by the development of the person as a whole. . . so that the person is a whole and remains one; she is not torn into a multiplicity, but precisely the living relationship of the levels with one another, her structural connections and

her living exchange of powers is in essence the person. (W. Stern, 1930, pp. 27–28)<sup>8</sup>

Taking up on Kaplan's (1983) assumption that development cannot be read off from people's actions or behaviors, but is a (value—and often valuable) perspective used to make sense of changes and constancies, the perspective that I bring to the notion of 'person' and 'personhood' is the derivation from Stern of the dyadic and communicative orientation that bases subjectivity and individuality in language and language practices. Having said this, I would even go one step further and argue that changes and constancies cannot be read from people's actions or behaviors without a socio-historical center within which communication and language practices 'deliver' the categories that form figures and grounds so that changes can emerge against something that remains constant (and vice versa). Sameness and difference are not parts *of* or entities *in* the Person, but emerge in situations, where sense and value always already are in place.

In rather general terms, then, I see the perspective I am putting forth as contributing to the notions of development, *Ganzheit* (wholeness) and language practices in the following ways: First, I am redefining the boundaries between language and communication. Rather than exploring both in terms of systems that are explorable in themselves, where one figures as the potential resource for the other, I have suggested fusing them in terms of language/communicative *practices*. This fusion bypasses the trichotomy among *the* Person, *a* language and *a* world (that is external to language), where words or sentences refer to objects or events in the world, and where language is the tool to (socially) connect people. Rather, I am suggesting viewing language as a mode—possibly the central mode—of engagement *with*, but always *in*, the world. World- and person-making take place in language practices. To put it more radically, without language, there is no world (aboutness) and there is no person (author/constructor) (see contributions in Budwig, Užgiris, & Wertsch, 2000).

Second, I am making the point, following Kaplan's (1983) insightful comment, that not only is it impossible to read off *development* directly from the phenomena in the world, but that it is equally impossible to see or read off *changes* and *permanence* directly in the world. What we, as humans, consider stable and what we consider mutable requires a position from which a figure and a ground can come to existence, so that time can be infused therein as a meaningful entity and serve as the *tertium comparationis*, the common third, from which a comparison of 'constancies and changes over time' is possible. This position is not a priori 'in' the author, and neither is it 'in' the world. It emerges in and through language practices.

A third contribution of this perspective, although not as central as the previous two, lies in the attempt to converge and bring back (more strongly) the issue of emotion, value and moral stance into the domain of language

practices. Although I only have dealt with talk that *topicalizes* emotions (more specifically: anger), in the sense that the talk I have analyzed is *about* 'anger', positions are choices with which the person is always situationally confronted, even at an early age. Emotionality and morality as central components of meaning-making do not temporally kick in at a later point in ontogenesis, but are part and parcel of language and socialization practices that are ongoing as long as there is humankind.

Let me conclude these considerations on a note that can be taken as self-reflective, if not self-critical: of course, the way I have interpreted and appropriated Stern's approach into what I see as central to developmental research and developmental methodology is itself not 'perspectiveless'. It requires a value orientation, which is expressed in the privileging of language and communication. They have been given central status in human action (and interaction), as well as the instrumentality for us to make sense of self and other, to have intentions, to feel and to become self-reflective, critical and even subversive. This privileging of language often has been characterized (and ridiculed) in terms of a '*language über alles*' (language above all) position, and has been criticized by the statement '*but not everything is language*'. Although I typically agree with these charges, because '*nothing is everything*', I nevertheless feel that the anxieties behind these rhetorical stances are overdrawn and exaggerated. Admittedly, the declaration of the centrality of discourse to human action and of language to discourse are value-laden statements. However, we have to see how this way of approaching 'traditional' phenomena within the discipline of psychology such as planned behavior, emotions or self and identity will eventually fractionate out.

#### Notes

1. 'Die Sprache wird zum Werkzeug einer gewaltigen Entwicklung seines Vorstellungs-, Gefühls- und Willenslebens; sie macht endlich alle selbständige Denktätigkeit . . . erst recht eigentlich möglich.'—This position is clearly reflected in the way the organization and contents of the chapters of *Psychologie der frühen Kindheit* are laid out. Central is the 'development of speech' chapter, and the organization of other activities, such as memory, thought and intelligence, effort, emotion and will, all follow Stern's method of analysis of '*Kundgebungen*', that is, how the child in her development accounts for phenomena that are characteristic of acts and dispositions.
2. The dilemma for this type of approach for empirically documenting development is that often it is not clear whether the task is really the same from different participants' points of view. This issue became apparent in our cross-linguistic developmental study of wordless story-book narration (Berman & Slobin, 1994): To tell a story from a wordless picture-book might mean something quite different for 4-year-olds than for 12-year-olds. Although the task is exactly the same, younger children might interpret the set-up as a picture description situation, while older children are more likely to take this as a story-telling

- situation. To consider this difference in task interpretation as a developmental difference might be highly problematic.
3. The term 'perspective' for this type of orientation toward an event type is chosen to resemble 'perspectivity' as used by Berman and Slobin (1994).
  4. The term 'genre' is being appropriated to differentiate between these types of talk without specifying what particular genre is at work (a recount, anecdote, exemplum, explanation or narrative).
  5. Maintaining that such verbal expressions lead us to 'emotion *concepts*' does not contribute to further clarification. We still are in need of an account of how '*concepts*' are distilled out of language, and what their role is in 'regulating' human actions and interactions.
  6. It is interesting to observe this difference and how a temporal constellation, or better, a differential temporal stance, is involved in what we call *perspective taking*: '*Bill's kissing of Monica*' implies not only a different point of view than '*Monica's kissing of Bill*', but, much more so, a different temporal ordering of the sequence that led up to 'the situation'. We will get to the different implications regarding the actors' involvement (the agency constellation) in due course.
  7. Boys were asked to imagine *Paul*, and girls were asked to imagine *Paula*.
  8. '... alle Teilentwicklungen einzelner Funktionen sind stets getragen von der persönlichen Gesamtentwicklung. . . ., daß die Person eine Ganzheit ist und bleibt; sie ist nicht zerrissen in eine Mehrheit, sondern gerade das lebendige Verhältnis der Schichten zueinander, ihr strukturelles Gefüge und ihr lebendiger Kräteaustausch macht das Wesen der Person aus.'

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