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# Integrating Experiences

Body and Mind Moving  
Between Contexts

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2015



INFORMATION AGE PUBLISHING, INC.  
Charlotte, NC • www.infoagepub.com

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## CHAPTER 14

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### ***"I AM NOT THAT KIND OF..."***

**Personal Relating With Social Borders**

**Jensine Ingerslev Nedergaard, Jaan Valsiner,  
and Giuseppina Marsico**

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*I don't know what is becoming of me. I wouldn't have dreamt of doing this  
sort of thing at home. I wouldn't have been allowed to for one thing.  
I don't know if the land is demoralising me. I sometimes think so!  
Or else the war. I know I should not have done it before the war.  
Oh well I shan't be young for ever & my looks won't last, so now or never*

—June, in Zittoun and Gillespie, this volume, p. 31)

Words are dangerous. We use them to create, maintain, deny, and overcome borders. They become affectively marked—and thus our feelings gain the power over that of the words themselves. We operate at the connection point—a border—of two dialogues. One is our internal dialogue about our Selves, the other—negotiation of the Self with Social Others. From this tripartition, two dialogues, and a border, we will show a theoretical explanation of what is at stake for a person within one's context—as June navigates herself through the times of war—when searching a particular and satisficing psychological life trajectory. Creating such trajectory is ambivalent—we realize that “tomorrow” brings with it the loss of “today”—the life *as it is lived* can happen only once.

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*Integrating Experiences*, pages 245–263  
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## WHO PLAYS THE MORALITY GAME—THE PERSON

All moral reasoning about one's own ways of being is centered on the person, and therefore can be generalized only through systemic analysis of the person's acting, feeling, and thinking. When making meaning out of situations, humans create a reality through their imagination. Through this imagination acting, feeling gives rise to thinking (Zittoun et al., 2013). This is the general feature of the human psyche—feeling something here-and-now leads to thinking of it for some time to come. Our lives are uniquely personal—while the ways we create them has generality for all humankind. June's worries about herself at wartime resonate with ours at times where war is not at our doorstep. We generalize the meanings we personally create across persons and time.

Generalization in the human sciences necessarily proceeds from single cases to generic models of processes (Salvatore and Valsiner, 2010; Valsiner, this volume). The wandering of psychologists' methodologies away from that line of generalization has had stagnating impacts on psychology as science (Toomela & Valsiner, 2010). Generalization is needed, and it happens in everyday life in most ordinary ways (Beckstead, Cabell, & Valsiner, 2009). In our coverage here we provide an example of how generalization is empirically possible, not only from a single person, but from a single phrase the person might utter, to oneself or also to others.

A modified scheme (Figure 14.1) of George Herbert Mead's dialogues through which the Self is constantly both "social" and "personal" is one of our points to make sense of the single case—such as June, as described

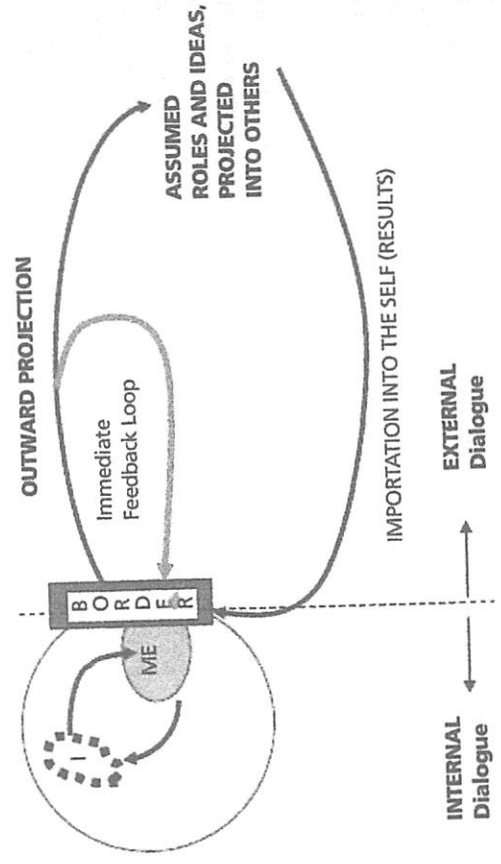


Figure 14.1 The dynamic border of two dialogues (after G. H. Mead).

## WHERE MORALITY PLAYS: ON THE BORDER

Human living entails constant border making, border maintenance, or border crossing—between past to the future, between the Self and the Other, or among different social settings. Borders are the product of the sophisticated and never-ending human psychological endeavor of decreasing the ambiguity of socio-cultural environment. Through a three-phase psychological process (meaning-making, distinction-making, and value-adding) the individuals try to lessen the ambiguity differentiating and hierarchically organizing the relationship with the others and the environments. One of us has specified that function of the human *psyche*.

*The psyche is self-guiding through setting out limits for itself and then challenging these very same limits.* (Valsiner, 2014, p. 15–16)

The situation is dynamic—once the borders are constructed, they are projected onto events in the social settings guiding behavior and mental functioning (Valsiner, 1999,) and the same people who constructed the borders are engaged in a process of border-maintaining and the borders-regulating (Marsico, Cabell, Valsiner, Kharlamov, 2013). Establishing a border makes both opposite acts—attempting to cross the border and keeping the potential border-crosses within the borders, at the same time.

## The Importance of Stating "Who I Am Not"

Human beings seem strange. Not only are they involved in seemingly eternal dispute with themselves about their identity ("who am I?") but they also make dramatic statements about who they are not. What is the function of such negative statements? The extent of such statements is equal to infinity-1 (i.e., the infinite number of different non-identities in contrast to the one positively declared!). There is to be some identity-building function of the statements of non-identities.

Such duality of the human *psyche*—unity of opposites embedded in the same whole—is the core issue here and June's dialogue is a good exemplification of the open-endedness of the range of moral potential conduct. As we will show in the next pages, even a short utterance like "I'M NOT THAT KIND OF" in June's diary reveals all the complexity of the perpetual dialogue between "personal" and "social" allowing us to reach a general theoretical assumption about the process of the borders' negotiation in human experience.

in Zittoun and Gillespie (this volume). What emerges is a relationship between generalization around and through sets of others and in the internal dialogue. This reference can be illustrated by Mead's description of "generalized other" (Dodds et al., 1997). Although this concept does not enjoy special keen interest in contemporary sociological research, it turns out to be relevant to the current focus on the moral dimensions as "that kind of woman" is produced through June's diary. To identify how references to "the generalized other" are formulated, it helps to understand how the evaluation of and comparison between ourselves, and others, are produced.

As depicted in Figure 14.1., the process of generalization arises from one's ability to take the role of the other. In this process of relating with the social world, this ability arises from the individual's propensity to use and internalize thoughts and ideas from others. This happens through the intra-psychological processes (I<>ME) that rely upon imagination. In this sense the generalized other becomes a part of the internal dialogue (Mead, 1962/1934, p. 138). He also in a very simple way refers to generalized social attitudes which refer to overlapping meanings indicated by the concept (ibid, p. 260).

As mentioned above, Meads' description of the generalized other is not widely used in contemporary sociological research. A reason for this could might be because the inconstancy of the concept. As Baldwin (1986, p. 82) says, the concept of the generalized other is hard to operationalize. This inconstancy or fluidity of the generalized other, we argue is the exact necessity to deal with the "boundary problem" when referring to the process of the negotiation of birders in human experience. This will be further elaborated later in this chapter.

The second general starting point of our analysis of June's dialogues begins from the personalistic core (Cabell & Valsiner, 2011) of all meaning making in dialogical settings (Figure 14.2). It involves the creation of a constant dynamic self-maintenance loop (... I->AM->I->...) to which different predicates can be bound (Figure 14.2 center and upper half). Yet in our specific context here we look at the self-regulatory process of resistance to the binding of particular predicates to the stem cycle (Figure 14.2. lower half).

Through Figure 14.2 we set up the theoretical stage for the analysis of June's emphatic statements "I am NOT THAT KIND of a woman." What makes these (admittedly few) statements in June's diary important for generalization is the possibility that here we touch upon the very beginnings of any form of stigmatization—of oneself, or another—through affectively determined marking of a very specific part of the produced utterance. Thus in most general sense, we can look at the sequence:

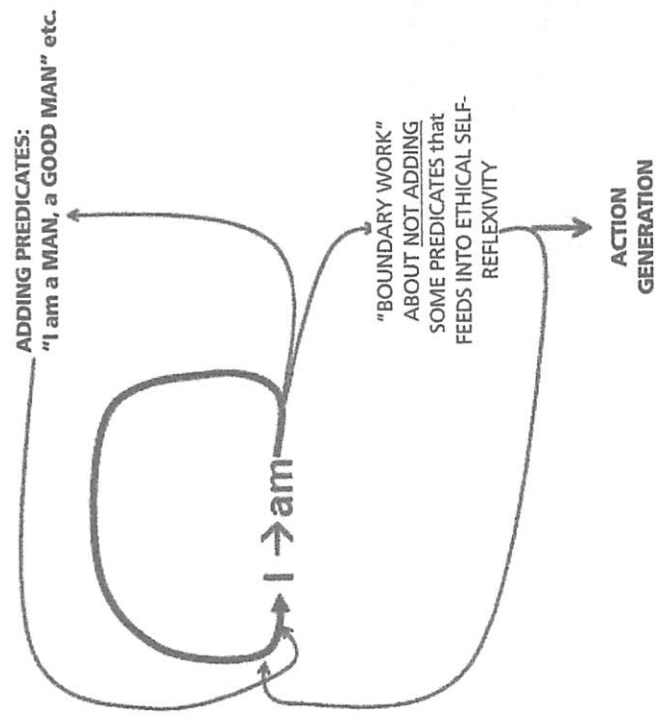


Figure 14.2 Stem core of the Self and its binding predicates.

"I am" = part of the stem cycle of the Self, as in the center of Figure 14.2

"I am X" (or "I am not X") = added (or declined) binding of predicates (Figure 14.2)

"I am that KIND" = class attribution of self ("I am a Martian," "I am introvert", i.e., I belong to the kind of "Martians" or "introvert persons").

"I am NOT that kind" = negation of belonging to a class, with affective marking by the very fact of opposition I <> THAT CLASS (e.g., "I am not a criminal")

"I am NOT that kind OF X" = hyper-negation (affective negation) that fortifies the border of I <BORDER> THAT CLASS

The most fascinating aspect of this affective escalation of one's internal dialogue is the possibility to arrive at affective escalation—both positive or negative in flavor—by minimal linguistic additions ("that... of"). Escalation in both affective directions can be achieved by further specification of the context:

“... lets others determine my fate”  
(e.g., Maria Pita, Margaret Thatcher)

“I am NOT THAT KIND OF A WOMAN” who

“... does THESE KINDS OF THINGS”

The negative evaluative escalation is brought into the scheme by vagueness of implication of “that kind of” ... “these kinds of.” The deictic THAT (THIS) acquires affectively triggered socio-moral illocutionary force. It becomes a quasi-zero-signifier (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1994)—a seductive phrase that reveals what it covers. It is a kind of verbal strip-tease—yet one with moralistic rather than hedonistic function. The recipient of such kind of a communicative message (“you are not that kind of a woman”) is expected to limit one’s being in whatever role s/he is at the given time. Use of such kinds of language forms, shown in June’s diaries, has also been present in Henrik Ibsen’s “A Doll’s House.”

### Generalized Public Exposure: Externalizing the Self

For whom the words are? When June is writing her diary she is not only writing for herself with the restriction not to cross the boundary of where others might be able to read her inner secrets. If her words were severe secrets (which might also be hidden even from her own self), she would not have written any of these down at all. Definitely she would not have agreed to contribute to a research project that explicitly indicated the possibility that her words may end up being published. With this in mind we believe that her words when reconstructing her memories through the diary are created from her imagination of her own self—yet according to her imagination of what she believes others imagine her to be. When she makes the crucial comment, “I am not that kind of a woman”—it can be considered as her process of dialoguing between her own self and the others’ anticipated view of her. She is *that* kind of woman (who enjoys her own youth through sensual experiencing at gloomy times of war) but she is not really *that* kind of a woman who might be reproached for “moral laxity” by others. Yet the possibility of the latter stance exists—so it is denied.

June’s writing is an act of constructive remembering of herself at the time of writing. Frederic Bartlett described remembering as a constructive activity where feelings and earlier experiences play an active role (Wagoner, 2012). This led to outlining four key features of constructive/re-constructive memory. First of all, memory is a constructive process where a person’s

past experiences become a part of retelling a story with the intention of creating meaning of the memory, to understand the present and predict the future. Secondly, memory is primarily declarative. This means that people, when they express a memory, do this by using words and symbols to articulate what they know. Thirdly, when memory is present in consciousness, it is in a continuous and uninterrupted form. And lastly, memory disintegrates in accuracy and becomes disorganized over time (Wagoner, 2012).

So for June to write her diary from imaginative reconstruction of her memory, with the knowledge and approval of publication, it takes the same expression as for Ibsen to write about Nora in “A Doll’s House.” June’s descriptions of herself and Nora’s words in Ibsen’s play are realistic—even if presented as those uttered by fictional characters.<sup>2</sup> Their words give us the opportunity to interpret and transfer knowledge from these two descriptions/genres to our worlds and lives (Valsiner, this volume). According to Brinkmann (2009) the boundary between fiction and fact is a social construction. When something is written it is being fashioned and thereby it is fiction (Brinkmann, 2009, p. 1388). Furthermore Brinkmann (2009) emphasizes that fiction and factual writings, only differs in what way the author expects the text to be received (p. 1388).

### The Importance of Being a Woman of Her Own Kind

June’s self-dialogues as presented in Zittoun and Gillespie (this volume) are not about the “effects” of the “war time” on the “changing morals” of a nice English girl. They entail the importance of a person’s (man’s or woman’s) self in the development of personally important autonomy of one’s own internal personal culture.

June has been preceded by Nora. In 1879 Henrik Ibsen’s play “A Doll’s House” was performed for the very first time at The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen. In this play we meet Nora, who is brought up by her father. She apparently lives in a happy marriage with Torvald Helmer, and their three children. Helmer is a lawyer and just about to assume the position of bank manager.

But Nora has a secret. In the beginning of their marriage Helmer became very ill and the doctors explained the necessity of a rest cure in the south if he should have a chance to survive. To be able to finance this trip, Nora took up a loan at Helmer’s friend from the university solicitor Krogstad. Nora forged the signature of her father as security of the loan. The years after this Nora has saved her housekeeping money and had smaller extra jobs to earn money to pay back the loan.

At the beginning of the play Nora’s old friend Fru Linde has come to town to seek for a job. Nora arranges that Helmer offers her a job at the

bank. This unfortunately causes the dismissal of Krogstad who goes to see Nora and threatens her to tell Helmer about the loan and the forged signature if he does not keep his position at the bank. Nora is in despair but is convinced that Helmer loves her that much that he will take the blame for her, if he hears the truth. She decides to ask an old friend of the house, doctor Rank, to give her the money. But he declares his love for her and she finds it impossible to ask for that kind of favor then.

However, when Helmer finds out what has happened and he reacts with anger and aversion and he shows no will to take the blame of the forgery. The objective danger resolves itself—Fru Linde who earlier has had a romantic affair with Krogstad makes him withdraw his threats. Even though the threats are withdrawn, Nora has come to think about her marriage as something very different than she thought it was. The trust in the understanding of the deep morality of her act is gone. She is left not with the revelation of her secret, but with the deep boundary of her and her husband's understandings of what mutual devotion is, undeclared and hidden.

During a dramatic conversation with Helmer, Nora arrives at the new synthesis for her personal life. After the turmoil of acting in best faith of love towards her husband, suffering from the impending threat of the forgery coming out in public, and finding the husband not understanding her—she reaches the understanding that her most important purpose in life is to set out in the world on her own to "find herself." So she leaves husband and children—a case of "high moral treason" for a European bourgeois woman of the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning of the play Nora and Helmer have mutual understanding of how their marriage should be. Nora lives with the social and moral expectations of her, from her contemporary environment and seems to enjoy life as it is with her husband and children.

Nora. Is it so long since we last saw each other? Yes, it must be. Oh, believe me these last eight years have been such a happy time. (Ibsen, 2008, p. 7)<sup>4</sup>

The dynamic border between the internal and the external dialogue is not in any way challenged at the moment. Nora finds herself happy with her life and seems not to conflict between the internal and external positions.

As Nora, June seemed content with the social norms and expectations of her in the beginning of the war, when she has to choose a kind of work. Her thoughts reflect the internalized social expectations of her.

Sunday March 16th. B & I went for a long walk & discussed Bevins [sic] broadcast. I appear to be in the first age group of woman conscripts to register on April 19th. *I am much against the thought of work in a factory as the dirt & noise would send me silly. Land work I dismiss as too hard (not to mention dull & demoralising) The womens [sic] forces appear to be as tempting as anything as nursing*

*would make me sick, as the work is so hard, messy & embarrassing [sic].* (Zittoun & Gillespie, p. 14)

June has no conflicts either between the internal and external positions at this moment. She lives with her mother's description of how "A good girl" should behave and choose to live her life. Although she shows the first signs of dialogical conflict when she rows with her mother.

Sunday March 16th. This evening Mother went clean off the deep end over the business & we had the biggest row ever. I am not surprised by the new order as the press has said it would come & I thought the 20's would be first, but *Mother has persisted that women were different from men & could not be conscripted. She seems to dread me going although in a way I do not mind. The war is pretty dull here. I should not join the services if it had not been for this because of the stigma of man-chasing attached [sic] to it if one volunteered, & because usually the sort of girl that goes in is what I consider rather brainless, & also Mother would not have let me if I had wanted to. (I never did. It did not occur to me.)*

June still wants to go so her life will not seem so dull, but only because she has to. Through the explanation of the mothers' attitude and her own use of the word "stigma" it shows the representation of the generalized other. The assumed ideas, of the difference between men and women, projected into June's mother are being imported back into her self. This external dialogue reaches the border and is from there internalized and becomes her own ideas of "*the sort of girls that goes in is what I consider rather brainless.*"

The border between the internal and the external dialogue seems to be slightly challenged here—what a person *wants* is coordinated with what the social context *guides her towards*. The "I WANT" <but> "YOU SHOULD" border is no longer oppositional—it becomes "I WANT" <as> "YOU SHOULD."

Over time both Nora and June changes the self-perception as "A good girl." June during the years of war, Nora during the three days the play lasts. They are both (still) the "good girls" according to the social constructions in their time and environment.

### *The Antecedents for Autonomy*

Nora lived with her father without her mother and June lived with her mother and sister and worked at their garage (a masculine job). Both of them had been brought up with a belief of more freedom than the social norms dictated in both their contemporary times.

Nora becomes "That kind of woman" when she lies to Helmer. Fru Linde points out for her, that she should have told her husband about the loan. Fru Linde represents the social norm of "the good girl." Nora explains away

her lie to Fru Linde and tries to make her understand (The part of interest in the following quotes is accentuated by italics).

**Nora:** But the whole point was that he mustn't know anything. Good heavens, can't you see! He wasn't even supposed to know how desperately ill he was. It was me the doctors came and told his life was in danger, that the only way to save him was to go south for a while. Do you think I didn't try talking him into it first? I began dropping hints about how nice it would be if I could be taken on a little trip abroad, like other young wives. I wept, I pleaded. I told him he ought to show some consideration for my condition, and let me have a bit of my own way. And then I suggested he might take out a loan. But at that he nearly lost his temper. Kristine. He said I was being frivolous, that it was his duty as a husband not to give in to all these whims and fancies of mine—as I do believe he called them. All right, I thought, somehow you've got to be saved. And it was then I found a way . . .

**Mrs. Linde:** Did your husband never find out from your father that the money hadn't come from him?

**Nora:** No, never. It was just about the time Daddy died. I'd intended letting him into the secret and asking him not to give me away. But when he was so ill . . . I'm sorry to say it never became necessary.

**Mrs. Linde:** And you never confided in your husband?

**Nora:** Good heavens, how could you ever imagine such a thing! When he is so strict about such matters! Besides, Torvald is a man with a good deal of pride—it would be terribly embarrassing and humiliating for him if he thought he owed anything to me. It would spoil everything between us; this happy home of ours would never be the same again. (Ibsen, 2008, pp. 14f)<sup>5</sup>

The contrast "BEING FRIVOLOUS" ⇔ SAVING THE LIFE is the arena where morality plays are being enacted. Nora's violation of the law, when she signs the loan without her husband's knowing, is the basis of the theme in "A Doll's House." Her conception of what is "moral" is against the written law as she puts humanity above the law. Hereby she shows a different view of right and wrong compared to the social norm which points out the entire discussion about moral.

June becomes "That kind of woman" when she works as a gardener and dates men—even more than one at the same time. She explains this by the fact that she is only young once—and because of the war.

*Saturday June 28th.* the dance there. I thoroughly enjoyed it. My airmen of last night was there & persisted in making a date for Sun night. I did not have to dance with him half the time as all his pals asked me to annoy him & he had to catch 10:15 train. After he had gone I had a good change round & in last dance made another date for Tues night with another airman from a different aerodrome. We were cycling home & 2 boys caught us up & cycled with us. We had danced with them during the evening. They also were trying to make a date. **I thought by this time in any case I was going to get in a hell of a mess so left them without any promises.** *I shall keep the 2 dates as they seem both nice fellows providing my soldier doesn't turn up on either of these nights!* **I don't know what is becoming of me.** *I wouldn't have dreamt [sic] of doing this sort of thing at home. I wouldn't have been allowed to for one thing.* **I don't know if the land is demoralising me. I sometimes think so! Or else the war.** *I know I should not have done it before the war.* **Oh well I shan't be young for ever & my looks won't last, so now or never.**

June has become "That kind of woman" who does "these kinds of things." At this junction it is important to remind ourselves about the specific features of the *public* diary (used by Zittoun & Gillespie, this volume)—the very private ruminations about oneself that June had encoded into a written diary that was to be public. In some sense June emulates Henrik Ibsen (or any other writer) in this act of crossing the private ⇔ public border.

Throughout the entire play, Nora shows that she is proud of her actions and she defends her moral soundness. Even though her husband's view of moral is a diametrically different one than hers, for her *it is her own understanding of what morality is* that matters.

As a consequence of this Nora ends up leaving Helmer to be able to live a life that contains her personal beliefs of what kind of a person she is. She has become "That kind of woman" but she is NOT that kind of woman who lets others determine her faith, and fate.

**Helmer:** The end—Nora, will you never think of me?

**Nora:** I dare say I'll often think about you and the children and this house.

**Helmer:** May I write to you, Nora?

**Nora:** No, never. I won't let you.

**Helmer:** But surely I can send you . . .

**Nora:** Nothing, nothing.

**Helmer:** Can't I help you if ever you need it?

**Nora:** I said "no." I don't accept things from strangers.

**Helmer:** Nora, can I never be anything more to you than a stranger?

**Nora:** (*takes her bag*). Ah, Torvald, only by a miracle of miracles . . . (Ibsen, 2008, p. 86)<sup>6</sup>

Both women—Nora and June—are tight up by the social norms and the internal understanding of "The good girl." In the beginning of their stories they live with the norms as internalized self-perceptions. But during their development through time they have an inner conflict in the dialogue between their personal will and understanding of freedom and the outer conception of "The good girl" versus "That kind of woman."

As June develops from being "the good girl" to becoming "this kind of woman," it happens with taking off in a change of context. She reaches the limit, which she passes when she actually becomes "this kind of woman." This can only occur if there is an external trigger mediating this. Something in the living conditions must therefore occur to change an already ongoing direction. June selects in the first instance to think herself as a teacher but changes this perception over time. The triggering factor to look at their lives and themselves in a different way, is (as June herself describes) the war and that she moved from one region to another. For Nora it is the experience of her husband's completely different reaction than she had expected, that triggered her crossing the border from being the reputed wife in relation to contemporary standards, and to oppose this role and focus on her liberty and development through which she can create a new identity.

These defining moments are needed for the two women to reach the limit above which both June and Nora moves. Before the boundary, moments are described where they both are in an inner dialogue concerning the social constructions, and both internalize them and make them their own (as shown possible in Figure 14.1). But in the same process there are described moments in which both women find themselves incompatible with those standards. Over time, they experience something in the social context that makes them understand/discover that it becomes necessary for them to change. If these defining moments do not occur, it will become impossible to detect the demand for change. When the internal stress becomes large enough both women exceed the boundary between being "the nice girl," accepted and defined by the culture in which social structures have become part of their own identity foundations, and to become "this kind of woman." "This kind of woman" thus, for both women, becomes a defining of the identity formation they both experience.

When June and Nora stands on the other side of the border between "the nice girl" and "this kind of woman" it becomes essential how they are able to accommodate the description/understanding of "this kind of woman" and make it their own meaningful creation of identity, to be able to continue to function within this role. On the border between being "the nice girl" and "this kind of woman" both June and Nora experience, that despite the society's attitude to not having to be "this kind of woman"—with which they both actually agree with—they both desire to move towards the goal of being exactly "this kind of woman." When this happens, it may be an indication that these two women are both able to identify with and accommodate

the description of "this kind of woman" as the description of "this kind of woman" contains the target of meaning-making they both seek.

### The Generalized Microgenetic Process: Negotiating Boundaries

We have elaborated the ways in which seemingly simple episodic social imperatives—such as "that kind of a woman"—lead to very complex structures of affectively based meaning making about the Self, and others. The process is that of an opposition between an actor in relation to the border, and the resistance of the border to the actor (in German—*Gegenstand*). However we here have not merely an actor acting upon the border, but one who co-creates the border, as well as reflects upon the co-created border—in a way we can say we operate with *triple Gegenstand* (Figure 14.3).

In the very same moment in which we built up a border we also create the conditions to overcome it. Here how Moscovici specifies that:

Our society is an institution which inhibits what it stimulates. It both tempers and excites aggressive, epistemic, and sexual tendencies, increases or reduces the chances of satisfying them according to class distinctions, and invents pro-

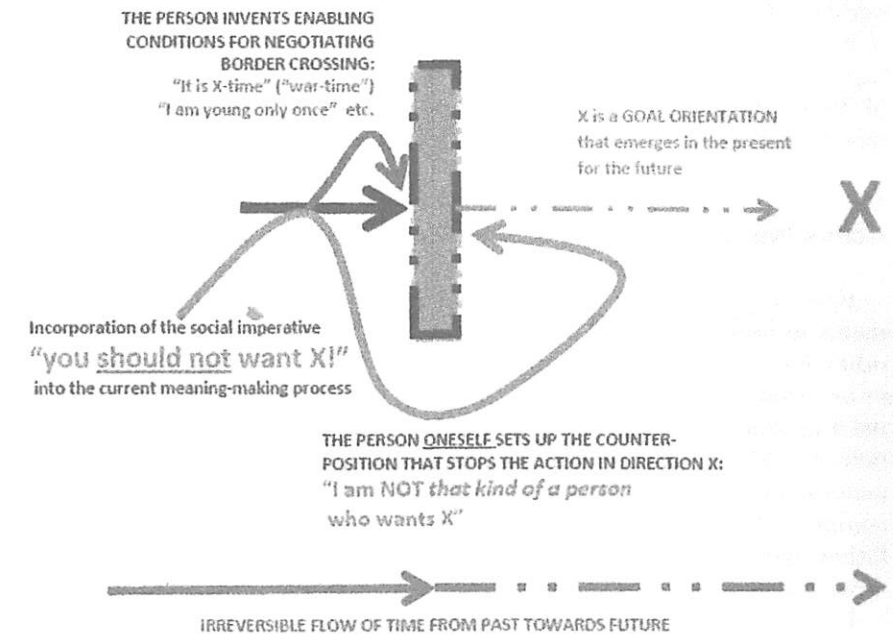


Figure 14.3 Generic model of "triple *Gegenstand*."

hibitions together with the means of transgressing them. Its sole purpose, to date, is self-preservation, and it opposes change by means of laws and regulations. It functions on the basic assumption that it is unique, has nothing to learn, and cannot be improved. Hence its unambiguous dismissal of all that is foreign to it. (Moscovici, 1976, p. 149)

The border is a structured zone with potential trajectories of passing through that can force the movement of the border to a new location.

Starting from June's statement "I am NOT *THAT KIND* of a woman," Figure 14.3 presents a theoretical model for understanding how people operate on the borders settling, at the same time, the conditions for overcoming them.

While the social imperative ("you should not want X") is integrated into the meaning-making process, the individuals built up their own counter position ("I'm NOT that kind of a person who want X") that block the "natural" action in a specific direction.

The central and lower arrows in the Figure 14.3 express the complementarity of borders and counter-borders' actions while the conditions for the border's negotiation and border's crossing (see upper arrow) are contemporaneously settled ("It Is X time ("war time"); "I'm young only once" etc). As in June's case, people create the conditions for regulating moral borders (I'm not X) that go along with the flux of social guidance. The Generic model of "triple *Gegenstand*" supports our theoretical understanding of how the morality works on the borders between the inner and outer dialogue along the irreversibility of the time that makes evident the asymmetry of the borders which are closed to the past and open to the future and to new different developmental trajectories.

### Active Work on the Border: The Power of June and Nora

Reading June's diary and the presentation of Nora in "A Doll's House" seems to be different but overlapping representations of the generalized other. Firstly, we are talking about possibly generalization of social processes or social trends. The reference points to something outside the individual and which appears to provide a certain influence on the thoughts and behavior. The next level of generalization refer to more specific, albeit, in general unidentified others. The third level is both more specific and more complex. This refers directly to a named person (June's mother, Nora's father and husband) who is alleged to have had a direct impact and are described as "Significant others."

In June's and Nora's development, decisions and choices are not made in isolation from others, such as family members and friends. The development occurs as a process, which is embedded reflection from the

generalized other and through the triple *Gegenstand* the moral border becomes regulated. What is relevant in this process is that the generalized other embody normalized practices and behavior. It is through these references that standards are not being treated as abstract entities, but are associated to what people actually do and say. Furthermore, the different ways the generalized other is used exactly informative for identifying "who" comparisons are made with—who can judge June and Nora and who can they judge themselves.

### The Generalized Other: A Process, Not a Thing

The generalized other in some cases becomes embodied and more accurately localized in space and time and still retain the generalized quality. This generalization of judgement through a phrase like "that kind of woman" is not only internalized from an external dialogue to an internal. It is also internalized by the psyches self-guiding through the limits June and Nora sets out for themselves. These limits can be seen as the borders described and shown in Figure 14.3, and thus shown that when the border is constructed and thereby guiding behavior and mental functioning, it is also challenged by border-maintaining and border-regulation.

Through integrating assumptions from the generalized other and challenge of the border between the external and internal assumptions of "that kind of woman" both June and Nora pushes the border and hereby creates a new generalization in their development of Self. In the development of Self the words (as "that kind of woman") are the exact mediators that create, maintain, deny and overcome the borders. "That kind of woman" thus becomes the focal of generalization in specific contexts in meaning-making. Generalization IS empirically possible from a single phrase.

### GENERAL CONCLUSION: WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Very much. June's struggles with finding her own particular and satisfying psychological life trajectory is a universal course of human lives anywhere in the World (Valsiner. this volume). Confronting her husband Helmer, Nora insisted upon "becoming that kind of a woman" for her own sake:

**Nora:** And what do you consider to be my most sacred duty?

**Helmer:** Does it take me to tell you that? Isn't it your duty to your husband and your children?

**Nora:** I have another duty equally sacred.

**Helmer:** You have not. What duty might that be?



**Nora:** My duty to myself.

**Helmer:** First and foremost, you are a wife and mother.

**Nora:** That I don't believe any more. I believe the first and foremost I am an individual, just as much as you are—or at least I am going to try to be. I know most people agree with you, Torvald, and that's also what it says in books. But *I'm not content any more with what most people say*, or what it says in books. I have to think out for myself, and get things clear. (Ibsen, 2008, p. 82, added emphases)<sup>7</sup>

The move from Nora in the *Doll House* to June in the War Garden indicates the eternal fight for personal autonomy under the implicit social guidance of "what most people say." They do not say but imply—"you are not that kind of a woman (or man)." June needed elaborate meaning construction process to counter her own dialogical opposition about the opposing social direction. Social guidance is, first and foremost, an inhibitory device that becomes particularly totalitarian when internalized by the person him- or herself. This is the vicissitude for any person of being social while trying to be true to oneself.

### "Being Social"—With the Whole of the Body (and *psyche*)

When we generalize expression as "this kind of woman" we do this out of the inner—and social influences we encounter throughout our lives. That "inner" and "outer" meet on our bodies—both literally on the skin, and in the intercourse between the subjective and external worlds. Zittoun and Gillespie (this volume) emphasize that it is through the body we experience temporally and thus irreversibly. When we move through time and are influenced by social constructs that are fixed in the culture and thus internalized in our individual identity, then we are challenged if verbal expression as "this kind of woman" works against a position in which we experience ourselves as precisely this woman. Social suggestions for personal morality operate through actions on, with, and about the body. Through that, the access to the *psyche* can be possible.

As human beings, we create meaning in life by imagination and its reconstruction into our ongoing memories. Regardless of the genre of texts in which this imagination and reconstruction is revealed, fiction or fact, it is possible for readers to understand their world and themselves better than before (Brinkmann, 2009, p. 1392). This understanding is profound—an actor on a stage asking the simple existential question—"to be or not to be"—furnishes lifelong dialogues on that topic, through war and peace. It is not only possible to generalize from a single written phrase, no matter

from where it is conceived, and it is not only legitimate. It is in exact this way we function and thereby leads to our meaning-making in everyday life. We need fictions of not being in order to be, and of being so as not to be. This is the special cruelty of living—tormentingly delicious in its horrors.

### NOTES

1. Even this need not be taken for granted. The South-American Bororo surprised the German traveller Karl von den Steinen in the 1880s by claiming they are simultaneously human beings and red parrots.
2. We consider both June and Nora fictional characters who are, at the same time, real. June is fictional as she creates her diary for possible public use—she creates a presentation of herself, first to herself, and then to the public. June is, thus, an "Ibsen in herself"—a writer whose writings would never reach the public fame, but are important nevertheless. The playwright—the real Ibsen—borrows features of his fictional character (Nora) from a real woman he knew. Fiction and reality meet in the arena of presentations, whether these involve a century or more of theater audiences, or a publicly meant diary in an archive from where researchers rescue it and use in public discourse in cultural psychology.
3. In fact, because of the insistence of a German actress who was supposed to play the role of Nora in a German production, Ibsen was forced to create an alternative ending for the play (where Nora would be re-united with her children). That ending has not survived the 20th century productions.
4. In the original:  
**Nora:** Er det så længe siden vi sås? Ja, det er det jo også. Å, de siste åtte år har været en lykkelig tid, kan du tro (Ibsen, 1952, p. 125)
5. In the original:  
**Nora:** Men han måtte jo nettopp ikke vite noe! Herregud, kan du ikke forstå det? Han måtte ikke engang vite hvor farlig det sto til med ham. Det var til meg lægene kom og sa hans liv sto i fare; at intet annet kunne redde ham enn et opphold i syden. Tror du ikke jeg først forsøkte å lirke meg frem? Jeg talte til ham om hvor deilig det ville være for meg å få reise til utlandet liksom andre unge koner; jeg både gråt og jeg ba; jeg sa at han vær's god skulle huske på de omstendigheter jeg var i, og han måtte være snill og føye meg; og så slo jeg på at han gjerne kunne oppta et lån. Men da blev han nesten vred, Kristine. Han sa at jeg var lettsindig, og at det var hans plikt som ektemann ikke å føye meg i nykker og luner—som jeg tror han kalte det. Ja ja, tenkte jeg, reddes må du nu; og så var det jeg gjorde utvei.  
**Fru Linde:** Og fik din mann ikke vite av din far at pengene ikke kom fra ham?  
**Nora:** Nei aldri. Pappa døde nettopp i de same dage. Jeg hadde tenkt å innvie ham i saken og be ham ikke røbe noe. Men da han lå så syk. Dessverre. Det ble ikke nødvendig.

**Fru Linde:** Og har du aldri siden betrodd deg til din mann?

**Nora:** Nei, for himmelens skyld, hvor kan du tenke det? Han som er så streng I det stykke! Og dessuten—Torvald med sin mannlige følelse,—hvor pinlig og ydmykende ville det ikke være for ham å vite at han skyldte meg noe. Det ville Ganske forrykke forholdet imellem oss; vårt skjønne lykkelige hjem ville ikke lenger bli hva det nu er. (Ibsen, 1952, pp. 132f)

6. In the original:

**Helmer:** Forbi; forbi! Nora, vil du aldri mer tenke på meg?

**Nora:** Jeg kommer visst ofte til at tenke på deg og på barnene og på huset her.

**Helmer:** Må jeg skrive deg til, Nora?

**Nora:** Nei, - aldri. Det får du ikke lov til.

**Helmer:** Åh men sende deg må jeg dog -

**Nora:** Intet; intet.

**Helmer:** —hjelp deg hvis du skulle behøve det.

**Nora:** Nei, sier jeg. Jeg mottar ingen ting av fremmede.

**Helmer:** Nora, kan jeg aldri bli mer enn en fremmed for deg?

**Nora:** (tar sin vadsekk). Akk. Torvald, da måtte det vidunderligste skje. (Ibsen, 1952, pp. 204f)

7. In the original:

**Nora:** Hva regner du da for mine helligste plikter?

**Helmer:** Og det skal jeg behøve å si deg? Er det ikke pliktene imot din mann og dine barn?

**Nora:** Jeg har andre liksom hellige plikter.

**Helmer:** Det har du ikke. Hvilke plikter skulle det være?

**Nora:** Pliktene imot meg selv.

**Helmer:** Du er først og fremst hustru og mor.

**Nora:** Det tror jeg ikke lenger på. Jeg tror at jeg er først og fremst et menneske, jeg, liksom vel som du, - eller iallfall at jeg skal forsøke på å bli det. Jeg vet nok at de fleste gir deg rett, Torvald, og at der står noe slikt i bøkene. Men jeg kan ikke lenger la meg nøye med hva de fleste sier, og hva der står i bøkene. Jeg må selv tenke over de ting og se å få rede på dem. (Ibsen, 1952, p. 201)

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