

What is the Bridge Between Social-Emotional and Cognitive Capability?

Otto Laske 2019

Anybody who knows the works of classical German Idealism, especially those by Kant, will, when embracing CDF, the *Constructive Developmental Framework*, ask the question stated in the title. S(he) will wonder how what is decidedly different empirically forms, in the totality of consciousness, a seamless unity, and a transformational one at that. In practical terms, how precisely are ED (social-emotional capability) and CD (cognitive ability) intrinsically relate, given especially that ED itself is, as Kegan has maintained, is a kind of 'cognitive' ability as well (although human cognition cannot be reduced to it as he falsely asserts without wiping out 2,500 years of Western philosophy which is directed to thought and its relationship to the real world, not just the social world).

In my view, the question asked in the title is not essentially different from the question Kant must have asked himself after writing, first, the *Critique of Theoretical Reason* (1781) and then the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) which correspond in their intention to CD and ED, respectively. Kant found the answer in his *Critique of Reflective Judgment* (*Urteilkraft*, 1790). Kant lived in a time where the term "Reason" was still unquestioned as the overarching totality of theory and practice.

What form would a "third critique" take in the context of CDF?

I formerly thought that King and Kitchener's research on reflective judgment (1994; chapter 5 of my volume 2, on DTF) could point to the missing link between ED and CD. I saw reflective judgment (RJ) as the 'epistemic bridge' that, together with ED, formed what I called 'Stance' in contrast to 'Tools' (CD) in human development (mental growth). What I didn't sufficiently appreciate is that King and Kitchener's RJ is not powerful enough a link between ED and CD since the meaning they give this term, and consequently their research based on it, is grounded in purely formal logical, rather than transformational, thinking.

Why is formal logic not a strong enough bridge between ED and CD? For the simple reason that CD transcends formal logic thinking via systems thinking, which means that any 'epistemic' bridge between the two parts of CDF must be a transformational one in the sense of DTF.

In more concrete terms this seems to mean that the relationship between ED and CD is an 'overarching' one in the sense that CD integrates ED as a moment of its dialectic, and that therefore 'thinking' is always based on (and reflects), but not exhausted by or reducible to, meaning making.

Could Bhaskar's 1993 on Dialectic be of assistance in this context?

Here is why not. Bhaskar's dialectic ontology contains only a weak epistemology (theory of knowledge), essentially a negative one, namely a "theory of fallacies of thinking". Secondly, while his ontology contains a theory of thinking, it does not also contain a theory of language, or gives no clues to it, without which a theory of human thinking remains incomplete.

Here is what I mean.

If we postulate, as I do (following B. Liebrucks, https://www.amazon.com/Bruno-Liebrucks/e/B001JXQZRE%3Fref=db_s_a_mng_rwt_scns_share), that verbal language does not just 'describe' but 'creates' reality, then dialectical thinking must be seen as in essence DIALOGICAL, meaning that **humans create 'world' by speaking to each other about what only seems to be 'out there'** but is equally 'in here' (in their internal workplace and dialogue).

It is this *dialogicality* of complex thought that not only Kant but also Bhaskar (but not Hegel) missed. Their conception of human thinking is a strictly monological one. Their thinkers speak only to themselves; they are unaware that they always already refer to an Other, human or not, thus containing a Not-Me. Their notion of thinking is not powerful enough to inform a theory of dialogicality based on verbal language as a vehicle to create World.

I know these are big abstractions. But they are needed to see the whole picture of what we are talking about here: the intrinsic relationship between ED and CD, both in theory and in practice.

In my view, any App that tries to link social-emotional and cognitive data will need to be designed based on this big picture, and thus must transcend purely logical thinking. It will need a meta-level that is the source of the Apps' ability to be *dialogically savvy*.

It would be ironic if building such Apps would achieve what pure theorizing has not even begun to envision. In research in adult development, ED and CD have been held separate for nearly 50 years now. It is hard to fathom why it has occurred to nobody in that research community that they are part and parcel of the same consciousness individuals experience daily.

This de-totalization of human consciousness shows us the stark limits of adult developmental inquiry to this very day.