SYSTEMS OF REFERENCE FOR PERSONALITY STRUCTURE: PESESCHKIAN & ZUBIRI ON SYSTEMS OF REFERENCE

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Abstract

The Spanish philosopher, Xavier Zubiri, wrote a major work titled Sentient Intelligence wherein he analyzes the human act of intellective knowing. In this work he delineates the importance of a system of reference (SoR) which serves two important functions: providing a direction for intellectual inquiry and providing an experience. The Iranian born psychiatrist, Nossrat Peseschkian, creator of Positive Psychotherapy, which originated in Germany in 1968, also mentions the importance of systems of reference (SsoR) for psychological knowing and personality structure. In this article, I expound upon and develop this construct, showing how humans have many SsoR which we use in interpreting psychological experience which form our unique personalities, based upon what we learn in our environments-of-origin. These SsoR become foundations for individual personality characteristics and provide insights into personality structure. I apply Zubiri's construct to Peseschkian's psychological system of reference, drawing out elements of Peseschkian's contribution to personality theory. SsoR which we learn as infants can be modified and differentiated to create healthier ones and knowing them are important for psychological understanding. Furthermore, all approaches to psychotherapy and theories of personality can benefit from knowing of these SsoR.

Introduction

Nossrat Peseschkian defined the process of Every psychological and psychotherapeutic theory has implicit or explicit philosophical underpinnings. Similarly, many philosophical approaches have implicit or explicit psychological implications. Some philosophical constructs can be more easily applied than others, and latent within them may be psychological aspects not yet developed. In a similar vein, theories of personality and philosophical ideas are based on a system of reference (SoR) or different systems of reference (SsoR). A SoR means that there is a previous body of knowledge that the creator of the philosophy or the theory refers to, uses, and builds upon, elaborates, modifies, or develops what is latent into something different. A SoR, psychologically speaking, is one's family or environment-of-origin, in as much as it is from our families and primary environments that we learn our psychological values and begin the process of developing a psychological sense of self, psychological capacities, personality structure, and are socialized. When we have an emotional response or make a value judgment, e.g., based upon what we learned in our families—in spite of, or to spite what we learned—we use some SoR to evaluate the

phenomenon and act. Evaluation is not always fully conscious and is often emotionally laden.

Methodology

Two thinkers still largely unknown in the US, though both influential in their respective fields in Europe, one a philosopher, the other a medical doctor, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, provide insights into the importance of a SoR for knowing and perceiving the world. In this article, I will illuminate this concept from these two SsoR and using Zubiri's philosophical system, apply it to psychological knowing and its importance for personality development. This is done to draw attention to these thinkers' contributions as well as to demonstrate how personality theory and research, as well as psychotherapy, as a field with its' various methodologies for understanding 'the human condition' can benefit from knowing them.

The late Xavier Zubiri (1898-1983), a Spanish philosopher who studied under José Ortega y Gassett, as well as completing a postdoctoral position with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger from 1928-1930, was a Catholic philosopher who took issue with the 'pure phenomenology' of Husserl and Heidegger and wrote his magnum opus on Sentient Intellection (1980). Earlier works include On Essence (1962) and Dynamic Structure of Reality (1968); the latter work was composed to develop the dynamic aspects of his thought when his work rethinking essence was criticized as being too static (Zubiri 2000, p. xii). The Iranian-born Nossrat Peseschkian (1933-2010) was a specialist in neurology, psychiatry, psychotherapy and psychosomatic medicine. He lived in Germany from 1954 until his death in 2010 and created a cross-cultural, integrative, psychodynamically-oriented therapeutic approach whicjh he termed Positive Psychotherapy (PPT). PPT has a body of literature consisting of 26 books written by Peseschkian, a well-developed training program accredited by the European Union, and over 30 local, regional and national centers worldwide. PPT is a new SoR for psychotherapy and his 'balance models' provide perspectives on personality structure; Peseschkian asserted that it is a metatheory.

I will explain Zubiri's philosophical thought primarily to assist in developing explicit and implicit perspectives within Peseschkian's PPT and to demonstrate the importance of realizing and comprehending one's SsoR for comprehending personality. In fact, one facet of Zubiri's

contribution is how it enables us to discern the creation and development of bodies of knowledge as intellective methods of understanding reality. What I find exciting about Positive Psychotherapy is that it is clearly an 'open system', meaning that as a metatheory it is a SoR open to other modes of therapy, personality theory, scientific discoveries, spiritual insights, and even cultural traditions. I assert that Peseschkian provided a sound theoretical foundation, solid therapeutic structure grounded in daily life-as-lived and experienced psychologically, within which others can work, develop, and contribute to constructing a more encompassing system of therapy and self-help by better understanding elements of personality structure not fully considered by other approaches. PPT is also a method of psychoeducation in which the therapist enables the client to modify or re-create his/her personality by equipping the client to learn new skills and differentiate existing skills and capacities for self-help and to assist the members of the client's family or social networks.

Discussion

3.1. Systems of reference

As stated above, a system of reference (SoR) is an existing body of knowledge upon which one builds further knowledge. Zubiri, in his analysis of the act of intellection, avers that a SoR is the first step in the method of intellective knowing. A method, methodos, is "the mode or way of approaching things…the road which brings us to things" (Zubiri 1981, p. 15). And, "Depending on whether one adopts one or another reference system, the road embarked upon, the meta of the methodos, will always be a 'way', an opening of a path, but of a different 'mode'. And this is essential. It is not the same to have 'things' as a system of reference as to have 'persons', or other types of field reality" (Zubiri 1999 IR, p. 244). Any method begins with an existing SoR which serves two specific intellective functions: 1) it provides a direction for inquiry, a sketch of what something 'could be' based upon the representations provided by the SoR, and 2) it provides an experience. Any SoR contains ideas—concepts or percepts that are taken by subsequent thinkers in different directions to build on, develop a refined approach, or become very different from the original SoR.

Thus, Eisner (2000) informs his readers that "the number of psychotherapies has more than likely surpassed the 500 mark" (p. 185), and each method has prior systems of reference (SsoR) they use and

often seek to establish a new SoR for the practitioner. Moreover, theories of personality have come from psychotherapeutic SsoR; thus students learn of Freud's, Jung's Adler's, Horney's, Fromm's, Sullivan's, etc. (Ewen, 2003). Personality is considered as deriving from developmental, biological, traits, cultural and emotional dimensions (Dumont 2010). Experienced therapists use many SsoR, depending on the clients' needs and personality aspects requiring attention. Someone consulting a therapist who uses 'past life regression' may indeed have an experience of their 'past lives' if they are inclined to believe in such; someone using 'inner child work' would experience their 'inner child' and learn ways to come to grips with this dimension. Hinduism and Buddhism, as religious SsoR espouse reincarnation; a psychological theorist, following these directions or those discerned in the SoR of Carl Jung and his archetype theory, may develop a therapeutic approach to help the client 'understand the influence of past lives on the present life' or archetypes operating as formative influences in personality.

An experience does not imply, empirically speaking, that what is apprehended is ontologically real—though we know the significance of imagination—thus psychological reality differs from ontological considerations. We see clearly, in many thought systems, how the originator's concepts are taken in directions never contemplated by her or him. It is quite easy to grasp how there are so many types of mathematical explanations, therapeutic systems, philosophical methods and even systems of logic that purport to explain facets of reality.

My purpose is not to explicate the systems of reference of any one of these systems, but to indicate the importance of a SoR for intellectual inquiry and for providing a direction for it as has been done in psychotherapy. This holds valid in any area of human inquiry, without which there would be no intellectual knowing. "The system of reference is for the construction of a system of possibilities. Each possibility is only making possible within a system together with the rest" (Zubiri 1999 IR, p. 222). Only because the psyche was imagined to have a dynamic structure was it possible to discuss the potential conflict between id, ego or superego of Freudian thought, the shadow, anima, animus, archetypes, etc. of Jungian psychoanalysis, the 'field' of relationships with its boundaries of Gestalt, or any other view of psychic structure,

personality, and psychological functioning. Moreover, because of the influence of the superego within the psychic hierarchy, the id was repressed in order for the individual to be psychologically healthy or ill (depending on the theorist) and successfully adapted to society. What was imagined to be unconscious, 'could be' how early psychological thinkers thought it was. It could be otherwise as well.

The very notion of an unconscious was made possible only because of prior SsoR that used this term, these systems being initially philosophical (Vial, 2009; MacIntyre, 2004; Hassin, Uleman & Bargh, 2005; Nicholls & Liebscher, 2010) and taken up by those attempting to create psychology. Moreover, based upon any given SoR, an individual was imagined to experience something that was previously unconscious, either personally unconscious or collectively unconscious as the case may be. Only because there was conceived to be an unconscious, was it possible that there could be unconscious processes, contents, or dynamics that could be brought to conscious awareness and experienced consciously. Ellenberger (1981) avers that the unconscious was 'discovered' by Europeans, while Waldron (2003) asserts that Buddhist thinkers demarcated a realm of unawareness of which they became aware, in the fifth century CE. On the other hand, deconstructionism affirms that the unconscious is merely a fiction constructed by language.

The role of the unconscious in contemporary personality theories demarcates ancient systems from ours—historically there was no unconscious, though there was some 'inner reality', however imagined. Psychic or mental illness was imagined to be the result of spiritual influences, breaking some social taboo, improper thinking, imbalanced humours, a curse, or other unseen forces which altered human personality, though not due to repressed unconscious processes.

As stated, Zubiri's philosophical use of the concept 'system of reference' was to affirm its importance for any intellective knowing and for the possibilities it provided and the direction further intellective inquiry might take into consideration realities that lie beyond our ability to apprehend with our senses.

With the concept of the unconscious, one could now imagine and 'experience' personality dynamics and development, how it functioned and perhaps interfered in healthy psychological growth, and how libido and drive energy affected

psychodynamics. Psychoanalytic thought followed this direction of inquiry and attempted to develop an understanding of psychological functioning, with contributions by later thinkers taking this approach in new directions: Jungian, Adlerian, object relations, Kleinian, ego-psychology and self-psychology, naming a few which influenced western theories. These and many other methods have developed comprehensive bodies of literature supporting and explicating their conception of the unconscious and proffering to those who accept it certain experiences, insights, concepts of personality and understandings. Personality profiles have been created based on these and other SsoR.

Surely, we have experiences we forget—most of us, anyhow—that become unconscious yet form important components of our personality. In fact, the first years of our lives, so formative of our personalities, are mostly unconscious to us. But what is this concept of experience, when attributed to something that is beyond our ability to perceive, to unconscious dynamics? What does it mean to experience id-ego or id-superego conflicts, for example or to experience the effect of anima within one's psyche? Experience is a term not easily defined, though used in its nominal sense similar to the early 14th century meaning, "actual observation; observation as a source of knowledge." This meaning derives from the Old French esperience (13c.) "experiment, proof, experience," from Latin experientia "knowledge gained by repeated trials." The entry in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Borchert 2006) indicates how fraught with difficulties this term is when used philosophically. And, while Zubiri took a philosophical approach, I need to explicate his notion of experience briefly and then will later apply it psychologically.

Basing oneself upon a SoR, one searches for what the in-depth reality of something might be. 'In-depth' reality is that dimension of reality beyond our unaided senses, be it an atom and the family of subatomic particles, the wave frequency of colors, certain neurophysiological responses that are defined as emotions, or unconscious mental processes or perceptions, even mental states of others and ourselves that go into making one's unique personality. In the first case, technology and theory have aided humanity to experience atomic reality; in the second, color is determined by a particular frequency of light; in the third instance, technology also allows us to observe brain functioning (with an MRI, fMRI, SPECT or EEG) and

define certain observations as indicative of an emotion. Masked stimuli are known to activate brain regions which an individual cannot consciously confirm, and arouses an emotion (Whalen, Rauch, Etcoff, McInemey, Lee & Jenike, 1998). Likewise, technical advances have contributed to broadening the concept of unconscious as Hassin, et. al. (2005) demonstrate.

Clearly, our sciences affirm that humans experience unconscious mental processes, processes that are in-depth and beyond our ability to directly apprehend; they are inferred, hypothesized to be, partially constructed, and based upon different SsoR, they have spurred many fields of knowledge and theories of personality. Theory of mind in psychology asserts that infants begins developing theories that others have intentions, beliefs, desires, and motives just as the infant does, though different from their own. Behaviors are observed, intentions are attributed based on experience.

Experience is a testing of the sketch, or outline, of what we think 'could be' the foundation and reason of the observed phenomena. We have a sketch, based upon the SoR used and following the direction given in this SoR, and we see if our sketch is realized by reality or not. It is indeed possible that the unconscious, as sketched by many thinkers, acts as they postulate that it does, and as evidence used to confirm it indicates. What is sketched are the possibilities of what something 'could be'. It is possible that there are processes referred to as id, ego and superego as sketched by Freudian psychoanalysis that are the sources of conflict within an individual. Any sketch 'could be' how the human mind functions and personality forms, or it 'could be' merely neurochemical functioning that gives rise to unconscious dynamics. Depending on the SoR used, the experience one has will be interpreted as either fulfilling the sketch, disconfirming it, partially confirming it, being in conformity with it, going beyond it, or obvious that this is how it is. One has an experience of something that they seek to understand: an overwhelming negative reaction to adult male figures with authority. Based on Freud's SoR, object relations theorists infer that the introjected object of the father or other important male figure and their abusive, demanding behaviors creates an internal object that is experienced as frightening and painful, and reactivated in relation to many elder male figures, e.g. Based on a Jungian SoR, on the other hand, one may affirm that the father

archetype is being experienced, as colored through the unique personal history of the individual.

To recapitulate and clarify: in order for us to know, we need a system of reference. This SoR provides us a method, a way to more fully access what we directly apprehend and what in-depth reality 'could be'. Based on this SoR, the possibilities of what 'could be,' of that which we cannot apprehend with our unaided senses and gives rise to what we do apprehend, is sketched. This sketch allows us to speculate what this in-depth reality could be and to design personal and scientific experiments as a way of testing if it is a viable explanation or not. If experiments confirm what we have sketched, we can then experience what the in-depth reality 'might be'. If experiments do not confirm what we have sketched, then another SoR may be of use to give another direction for search; in this case what we thought it 'could be' does not seem to be a viable explanation. Viability does not mean that this is ontologically how it is, but how it is intellectively comprehended by us and how the SoR allows us to understand it. New systems of reference enable us to intellectively apprehend other possibilities. What was latent and only inchoate in one SoR may be expanded by someone using a different SoR, leading to different directions of knowledge.

3.2. SsoR and the 'capacity to love'

Moving now to consider how Peseschkian uses the term system of reference (SoR) allows me to focus attention on the possibilities imagined by Positive Psychotherapy (PPT), develop what is latent in it, and show why it is important to become aware of the SoR an individual implicitly or explicitly adopts.

As a method of psychotherapy with a theory of personality structure. PPT provides a well thought-out structure and process for assisting individuals seeking balanced mental health. PPT explicitly adopts the construct of unconscious, and it is imagined to serve specific functions: "it is the locus of the as yet undeveloped, undifferentiated capacities and of human energy. Thus, in the unconscious rests everything which is latent in the person but not yet unfolded, because the time for maturation has not yet arrived" (Peseschkian 2000, p. 111). The unconscious is also the "locus of repressed and suppressed actual capacities and modes." The possibilities for human development may be unconscious and can be differentiated and enhanced.

As in any psychological SoR, it is clear that an individual's psychological health is in part determined by personal dispositions, environment, as well as the person's DNA, all dimensions influencing personality formation. Genetics is as influential as epigenetics, and both are dynamic processes dependent upon the environment and internalized by the infant. Peseschkian (2000) identified two basic capacities that influence development: one based on love (emotionality), and one based on knowing (cognition in a wide sense). From these basic capacities, actual capacities are manifested, inhibited, suppressed, or undeveloped dependent upon environmental conditions. Actual capacities are referred to as either primary capacities, capacities for bounding and forming relationships based on affectivity, and secondary capacities based on socialization processes and learned concepts that we use to organize relations. I will develop this more fully below.

The capacity to love has various dimensions: emotional relationships with significant others, affective reactions as to how self and others are treated in the family system (if there are siblings); one's 'internal working model' (as attachment theory of John Bowlby calls it) of parent-parent interaction; demands for environment-family interaction (socialization pressures) as well as social norms; and one's worldview. I assert that these are different emotionally-toned SsoR that impact personality formation and development. The acquisition of knowledge comes to us through four modalities: the body and senses, through reason (logic and rationality), via tradition, and our imagination/fantasy and upon these we construct SsoR as well. The SoR for Peseschkian's use of these four modalities is derived from the Baha'i religion of which he was a member. What may not be widely known is that this delineation of the 'four modes of knowing' were first presented in Islamic culture in the 9th century CE by a Jewish philosopher. More will be said about this later.

Often an individual has one dominant mode of knowing with someone being more rational, another more imaginative, etc., though we can use all four to better ascertain reality. The two basic capacities of emotionality and learning are dynamic interacting structures of psychological functioning. The essential relationships with significant others for personal development is well-known in psychological theory and a foundation of most approaches of therapy; the founding relations

between parents, siblings and significant others form the matrices for neurophysiological, emotional, mental, and psychological growth. These founding or bonding relations are integrated with organizing relationships; emotional development occurs with social development and learned behaviors. The emotional relations with significant others become vital experiences of personality that are often transferred to other people to whom we relate.

Transference is defined as a "shift onto another person—usually the psychoanalyst—of feelings, desires, and modes of relating formerly organized or experienced in connection with persons in the subjects past whom the subject was highly invested in" (Mijolla. A. 2005, p. 1776). Transference happens with others whom an individual establishes emotional bonds; this definition highlights the therapeutic dimension acknowledging that it happens 'usually [with] the psychoanalyst'. It also happens with others who resemble, in some fashion, significant others with whom the individual has had a relationship. Therapeutically it becomes an important aspect of psychological healing and personality change; working with the transference and countertransference dynamics allows both parties to gain insight into the SsoR which the client implicitly uses, which may have been adaptive but may no longer be so.

A diagram will illustrate four SsoR, four modes of the capacity to love that are psycho-emotional systems; later I will expound on the capacities of knowing and the actual capacities as other SsoR:
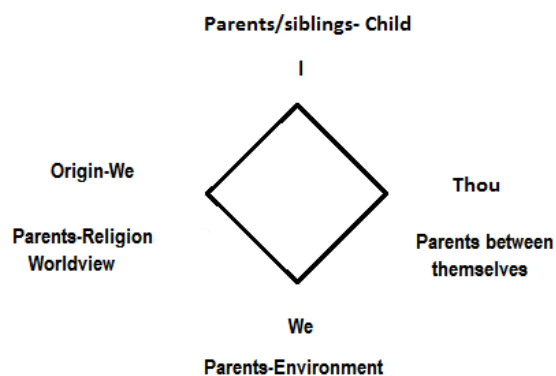

Parents/siblings- Child

I

Origin-We

Parents-Religion Worldview

Thou

Parents between themselves

We

Parents-Environment

Figure 1. Psycho-emotional systems of reference (based on Peseschkian, 2000)

This model dimension created by Peseschkian and used in PPT illustrates the relations which one has learned, those which one currently may have, and those that one may have in the future. Past, present, and future, the temporal modes in which

humans exist and imagine, provide the foundation as well as the possibilities for experience. In explicating this model dimension, I am merely drawing out one possibility and application of Peseschkian's SoR and following one direction intimated by it. In discussing this, I will begin at the top of the diagram above (Fig. 1) and proceed clockwise.

In the past, the infant learned how significant others related to him/her: was the child loved, conditionally accepted, nurtured, treated differently from other siblings, despised, abused, neglected, abandoned, etc.? "The basic question, 'Am I accepted or rejected?' is decisive…In the process a first discovery is made, which, to a certain degree, can become a system of reference for later developments. It may be presumed that this initial discovery influences the later development of self-worth" (Peseschkian 2000, p. 116). The parent-sibling relationship is crucial to psychological functioning, personality formation and self-definition. These are aspects of the "I" dimension: this becomes a SoR in relating to the self, parents, and siblings. How many adults have unresolved sibling rivalry issues? How many adults have experiences any or all the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) identified by the US study conducted in 1995-1997?

Formative experiences will significantly influence the later parenting of children as well, in that, as a SoR, many often repeat what they experienced from parents or change it. Next, the "Thou"; a child develops an internal working model of the parents in relation to each other: do the parents argue often and do so loudly or violently; do they never argue in front of the children; do they show and express affection or ignore and mistreat the other; do they praise or belittle the other; is there faithfulness and fidelity to one another or do jealousy and infidelity mark the marriage, etc.? This forms a SoR for self-in-intimate relation and through this, "behavioral forms of tenderness are imprinted" (Peseschkian 2000, p. 117) which shape personality for being-in-relation.

Likewise, one experiences how significant others related to other people, "We": friends, relatives, neighbors, colleagues, community members, those of different social or ethnic groups, social institutions, professional associations, 'foreigners', etc. Was the family open and inviting to others; did they often have guests over or was the comment of Benjamin Franklin used explicitly or implicitly, to wit, "Guests and fish stink after three days"; were the others trusted, feared,

respected; were they of the same or different belief system, thereby influencing interaction; was socializing regulated by many norms or proscribed patterns and traditions that carry emotive contents, etc.? This provides a SoR for contact and social interaction.

Finally, what did the significant others teach the child about life, the "Origin-We", one's Weltanschauung: does life have any meaning; is this a purely material world; is every event guided by some creator-deity; does one believe in 'original sin', or the inherent nobility and dignity of people; is humanity an evolved primate or is there an essential difference based upon genetics or spiritual reality, etc.? Here is the SoR for one's worldview and Peseschkian avers that, "Even if religion is rejected, the Origin-We remains the basis for other systems of orientation which are expected to provide meaning contents" (2000, p. 121).

Though I have presented these individually, one can discern that they exist in a dynamic matrix of mind-psyche and neurophysiological functioning. One example will suffice: "I feel noble and respect myself, my partner, and others as I do because my parents modeled this. They showed great kindness and warmth to others, and besides, it's an important tenet of the religious tradition I grew up with, though I no longer adhere to it."

These learned emotional and psychosocial interactions are passively inherited and taken for granted by infants and influenced greatly by one's social and cultural background. PPT is an inherently integrative, cross-cultural approach to understanding psychological dynamics (Cope 2010). These past experiences become different unconscious SsoR until one questions or differentiates them and intentionally adopts different SsoR. Personality can change and there are many methods designed to do so, psychotherapies being some.

We must embrace the present: what was learned passively becomes a matter of conscious choice if one so desires: "I have learned from my family that girls are not as important as boys, therefore I felt inferior, but no longer do I accept that!" a young woman may assert. "My father told me boys are superior and my mother and sister treat me as such. I expect this from them", a young man believes and acts. There are myriad permutations to the SoR of the "I" dimension one can decide to have or become aware that they have.

As well, the "Thou" dimension is open for modification in the present: "My parents often fought and since being in relationship with my partner, we argue often. I am learning to change this pattern." "I never saw my parents fight in front of us children, but I realized that I didn't have the skill to effectively negotiate differences with my partner, thus I learned ways of communicating my disagreements in a healthy manner to give my children a different pattern. We do at times argue when our children are around but do so constructively and respectfully."

When considering the dimension of the "We", the parents-environment dynamic, if one has learned that the family of origin does not invite guests over, this pattern may persist unless consciously changed: one brother to another asks, "Is it ok if I bring my best friend along, you know, Jack, who has been my best friend for over 35 years, who was with us last time we went golfing?" The other brother replies, "No, I really don't like strangers coming over, you know, I'm a rather private person." After a few minutes, he says, "Well, I know mom and dad didn't invite people over, but I guess it's time to change this." In another family, one has learned that it is normal and expected to entertain others, to provide food and hospitality to strangers and painfully endures it when guests come over unexpectedly, but prefers to be notified in advance. One's personality may be more introverted, timid and insecure with others, or extroverted, sure, and confident due to one's personal dispositions as well as family influence.

Finally in considering the "Origin-We", one may consciously accept, modify, or reject what was learned: "My parents were Catholics, and I feel guilty much of the time for what I do or don't do. How would I act if I did not feel so guilty?" "Everyone around us was of another religion, thus my parents taught us we should never talk about our different beliefs. However, I realized there is no need to do so anymore since I live in a different, more tolerant environment. I feel and act so much differently now."

Thus, we passively learn these model dimensions when young in the environments where our personality develops. We can choose to alter our thinking about these, which affects our present. Likewise, we can choose to create different patterns in the future in each of these dimensions. In all temporal respects, these patterns become one's SsoR for interaction. "I treat myself like I was treated" and yet, "I can treat myself very

differently than I was treated" is a possibility. Based upon the SsoR one has learned, one acts or reacts accordingly. These SsoR provide, as Zubiri affirmed, a direction for inquiry, a sketch of what 'could be' based upon the psycho-emotional representations one has. We have an implicit sketch of how to respond and deal with the self, with another in relationship, with those in societies and for one's imagined place in the world and in the cosmos. These implicit sketches can be considered cognitive-emotional schemas that have neurophysiological implications and become patterns of interpretation of observed behaviors, filtered through the unique structure of our personalities.

Based on how she was treated when young, she treats herself with great respect and love, kindness and patience, with disdain, neglect or self-abuse and deprecation, in the present. Mentioning the "Big Five" personality characteristics, openness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness (or their opposites), each develops based on our response to self, parents, others, and imagination. Each unconscious choice and adaptation has neurophysiological implications, and psychopharmaceutical theory attempts to help change the chemical effects of negative emotional patterns on the neurotransmitter level, thereby hoping to alter personality functioning.

Based on this "I" SoR, the possibilities for further development stand open, are inhibited, defended against, or closed off: "That's how I am, I'm depressed but what can I do about it?" "That's how I was treated, but there's no reason I should continue to do so, is there?" "I can understand now why I act and feel this way and why I treat myself like I do and want to change it for my future." In each dimension of the model dimension of PPT we can think of examples, both positively and negatively, psychologically healthy and unhealthy, to consider how the SsoR a person has learned and uses, enables them to discover and create what they and others 'could be'. As stated, the SoR used may inhibit such realizations as well, and patterns learned become limitations and firmly entrenched defense mechanisms which keep these SsoR fixed and personality stable. One may have a fixed or growth mindset.

Peseschkian has developed many questions that can be asked in each domain to explore and differentiate the underlying, learned SsoR. Psychotherapy is a useful method when needed to clarify and then help clients to differentiate their SsoR, creating new ones for themselves, altering aspects of one's personality and thereby open the possibility for different experiences.

3.3. Experience and SsoR

As stated above, Zubiri affirmed that the SoR one uses provides an experience. I need to expound a bit more on a psychological application of this in order to consider the importance of knowing one's SsoR and their influence in personality. Recalling the model dimension and the four aspects, I shall indicate how each dimension provides an experience of something based on these SsoR. As above, there are myriad examples that could be provided for each dimension, and those given serve to merely to indicate a few possibilities, not to assert any judgment but to demonstrate the depth and import of psychological SsoR.

Regarding the "I" dimension, if a child had a positive, nurturing, supportive and encouraging relationship with caretakers and siblings (if there were any) when and if there is a failure when attempting a new undertaking, it is likely to be experienced as a temporary setback and just something one needs time to master. Though there may be frustration, it passes quickly. They have a growth mindset. On the other hand, if the childhood environment was threatening, punitive, abusive (verbally and physically), deriding, etc., any failure might be experienced as a personal weakness, character flaw, source of shame, or personal deficit. Failure may lead to depression, anxiety, self-harm, isolation, or other unhealthy behavior. A fixed mindset dominates the interpretive structures.

The particular event which just occurred is neutral, though it is interpreted based on one's SsoR, can be described by personally meaningful concepts and actual capacities involved, based on previous experiences. One person, who is physically an endomorph, was made fun of by his siblings and protected by parents who tried to assuage sadness by comforting with food. In another family the child was not treated thusly. Further incidents or comments based on physical weight and self-identity, self-image and self-evaluation will be experienced differently, with different emotions, imaginations, behaviors, thoughts, and neurophysiological reactions. These can be changed.

Considering the "Thou" dimension, if one's parents frequently fought or one partner was a substance abuser contributing to physical violence in the family, the child would assume that this is 'normal' and likely to recreate this pattern when choosing a partner, or consciously choose to be

different. Alcoholic children are prone to experience and develop co-dependent behavior and may assume that physical abuse was somehow 'deserved' by them. Whereas in another case, the same parental dynamics contributed to the child's intentionally avoiding any such substances and potential partners who use them and may experience disdain or anxiety for anyone they care about who uses these substances even moderately. Similarly, a child growing up with a positive model of parent-parent interaction as a SoR may find it easier to create a healthy relationship for themselves and better able to choose a partner who also had a healthier background, and can resolve problems better when they inevitably arise.

Thinking about the "We" dimension, the parents-environment dynamic, it can be easily seen that the parents' interaction with others impacts the child's experience of others. Growing up in a multicultural city such as New York, in a neighborhood highly integrated with much daily interaction with different racial groups, provides different experiences than one growing up in the same city in an area with great social tension, fear and interracial fighting. One's parents may have been social activists intentionally nurturing interracial harmony and frequent interracial gatherings, and therefore when one encounters a person from a different social or ethnic group one experiences interest and not fear or anxiety. Contrarily, one growing up in a small rural area in China that is exclusively composed of a Uighur ethnic group of N.W. China that avoids interaction with those from the dominant Han ethnicity; if such a child goes to Beijing, for example, he/she may experience feelings of being unsafe, anxiety, and distrust.

Finally, the worldview that one was taught as a child, the "Origin-We", serves as an important SoR. One who was born in India and educated as a Hindu believing in reincarnation or transmigration of the soul depending on one's action in this life and one's past karma will likely experience death of a significant other and shape one's personal identity differently than one who was reared elsewhere in a different religious system premised upon a heaven and hell, or one without any faith who was taught that life comes to an end upon death. Both may weep and mourn, but the meaning of such experience of death may differ—as one believes in the continuation of personality beyond death in a future new life on earth, while another believes

personality continues in another world, or death terminates personality as well.

It can be seen how the SsoR we learn as children, the experiences we have based on these systems, and the diversity of human experience are important to consider as personal psychological realities. Zubiri's philosophical explication of a system of reference for knowledge and my application of it to the SoR of Positive Psychotherapy contributed by Peseschkian may enable us to see more clearly the significance of understanding how our psychological experiences and assumptions impacted our personality in the past, influence our present and unless changed, shape our future. In order to understand any observed phenomena or experience, we refer the phenomena encountered to some previously held SoR so as to better comprehend it.

Neuropsychological and neurophysiological studies indicate strongly that these implicit, unconscious patterns instantaneously activate brain regions and neurotransmitter systems, as well as emotional imagery and one's behavior. Indeed, they are forceful psychological SsoR shaping who we are.

3.4. Basic and actual capacities as SsoR

Peseschkian derived his view of human capacities from various psychological theories and Bahá'í religious thought. "There is hardly a book on psychotherapy, psychosomatic medicine, social psychology, psychiatry, or pedagogy which does not refer, implicitly or explicitly, and in one way or another, to the actual capacities" (Peseschkian 2000, p. 86). PPT makes a distinction between actual capacities and basic capacities, as mentioned. The basic capacities identified in PPT are the capacity to love and the capacity to know. These basic capacities are comprehensive categories underpinning primary and secondary capacities. They are concrete contents of psychosocial interactions as well as psychodynamic processes.

Primary and secondary capacities are the actual capacities; actual because they are actualized in daily life in myriad forms, and actually affect an individuals' life and personality. They are no mere abstractions, but dynamic interacting psychoneurological realities that often cause conflicts for and within people. The basic capacity of love is manifest in the primary capacities, referring to the fact that these are emotional and form the foundation to the secondary capacities;

the basic capacity to know manifests in secondary capacities. Suppressed, undeveloped, or one-sided development of these capacities cause challenges and difficulties in inter- and intrapersonal relationships. One learned through experience, e.g., that there is a specific time for eating, for sleeping, for playing, for relating with parents or siblings, etc. As an infant, one does not know that this (knowledge of the reality of time is secondary), one experiences it as primary needs — psycho-emotional, physiological or social, are either met or unmet in a timely manner, based upon one's own needs or upon those determined by others in one's environment. One's responses influence personality formation, development, and maintenance.

Peseschkian (2000) asserts that these actual capacities manifest as: social norms; family norms; patterns of behavior; value systems; conflict sources (internal and external); causes and triggers of illness; socialization variables; signs of group membership; masks of behavior; weapons and shields in relationships; expectations of others behaviors; personality attributes; justifications of behavior; capacities for development; criteria/standards of judgment; they also have flexibility-fixation and active-passive dimensions. These capacities actualize as potential sources of conflict between any two parties who value them differently. They also can be actualized as possibilities for one's psychosocial development. These capacities are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Actual capacities (based on Peseschkian, 2000)

PRIMARY CAPACITIES	SECONDARY CAPACITIES
Love/acceptance	Punctuality
Modeling	Cleanliness
Patience	Orderliness
Time	Obedience
Contact	Courtesy
Sexuality	Honesty/Candor
Trust	Faithfulness
Confidence	Justice
Hope	Diligence/Achievement
Faith	Thrift
Doubt	Reliability
Certitude	Precision
Unity	Conscientiousness

The name of this psychotherapeutic approach derives from Peseschkian's use of the Latin word positum, given by him as: factual, real, and 'given'. In any relationship what is given and factual are not just conflicts, but possibilities that can be developed. The capacities and possibilities may need to be differentiated to be developed, however.

However, when I have looked to find a source for Peseschkian's defining positum as above, definitions supporting his usage have not been forthcoming. The etymology of this Latin term refers to "something that is posited or laid down". I admit there might be sources I don't know about and trust someone will illuminate me who does know that he derived his usage from. But it is true that not all facts are given and not all that is given are factual. The capacities are actualized in an individual's life through their personality and become important for the formations of their systems of reference for interaction.

These primary and secondary capacities become different SsoR for what is considered 'normal' or 'expected' behavior from self and others. Based upon what is known as obedience, e.g., one is observed as fulfilling or not fulfilling the standards of obedience, since one has a direction given in this SoR to look for it: "obedience is shown thusly." Taking two other capacities: one's standard of cleanliness just doesn't quite match that of another, which may exist as a function of orderliness; something isn't really clean unless it has a proper order, as tidy encapsulates clearly. Cleanliness must be done in a proper order as well: dusting before sweeping, sweeping before mopping, e.g. Hands must be washed before eating or after going to the bathroom, etc.

Other capacities serve as SsoR as well in our experience and judgment of what is acceptable and tolerable in our interactions with others and ourselves. One example may be valuable: Though one has learned that being punctual is very important and the consequences of being late unpleasant, as it was enforced through punishment, cleanliness is also highly valued and likewise imposed through strict discipline. One becomes compulsive about obedience and anxious over being clean. In a situation when something must be cleaned—because someone is coming over, or to avoid the anger of a parent or spouse—but taking the time in doing so may result in one being late for an important meeting, ambivalence or anxiety, stress or even a psychological malaise may develop. Obsessive-compulsive behaviors can also be attributed, in part, to such internal conflicts over mundane, daily needs.

By differentiating these actual capacities, individuals are able to comprehend how they

experienced these capacities as children and how their personalities were formed and influenced by these same capacities, how they affect them now, and thus how they can be developed into new possible ways of being and as SsoR, broadened. As Peseschkian discovered and researched, these capacities and the conflicts one experiences based on them, have profound psychological, psychosomatic, psychosocial and even cognitive repercussions. Scientific studies have confirmed their importance (e.g. Tritt, Loew, Meyer, Werner & Peseschkian 1999; Peseschkian 2009).

A person may anxiously avoid another, may harshly threaten another if their clothes or house are not 'just right', clean and tidy. Something may be clean and tidy even if it does not sparkle, smell like bleach, has a slight stain, or be in an exact spot, e.g., though someone may feel it must satisfy exact requirements. Thus, considering these capacities as well as modes of interaction, one becomes fastidious.

Remember, a system of reference (SoR) is an existing body of knowledge upon which one builds further knowledge; knowledge is not just intellectual but also cognitive-emotional and behavioral. A SoR is the first step in the method of intellective knowing, a method, being "the mode or way of approaching things…the road which brings us to things" (Zubiri 1981, p. 15). One approaches real things: others, situations, objects, and events, based on different methods. There is a method, a way of being reliable, being courteous, orderly, punctual, or being patient, trusting, confident and hopeful that are unique to each individual, based on their past ways of emotionally knowing and experiencing reality. A person who is leery of a situation, and does not trust others, or feels unaccepted in such a setting, may approach cautiously or avoid approaching. These capacities give us a direction of what the apprehended real thing 'could be'. Recall that a SoR provides a direction for inquiry, a sketch of what something 'could be', based upon the representations provided by the SoR, and an experience.

Someone is seen on a street corner holding a hand out, holding a cup. Based on past knowledge, this is interpreted as a beggar; it could be a poor person begging for money. Another person, based on a different past, interprets this to be a monk begging for donations. The first has learned the importance of thrift and reliability and imagines the person to have been unreliable in handling money—"why else would they be begging now", is contemplated. They experience sadness and/or anger at seeing what 'could be' a beggar. One wants to help, but feels conflicted based on their SsoR. The second knows it is common for monks to beg and out of courtesy and acceptance (love), gladly offers funds, knowing obedience to vows prohibits this monk from having any money for himself. This person experiences gladness and gratitude at an opportunity to be conscientious here.

I hope this suffices and provides a sketch that can be further developed to grasp how these capacities function as psycho-emotional SsoR for daily interactions depending on the unique structure of one's personality. I affirm that these are systems of reference valuable for psychological and psychotherapeutic knowing. PPT provides therapists and clients with specific therapeutic and psychoeducational tools for altering personality characteristics which are problematic and unhealthy, some deriving from a cognitive-behavioral approach, similar to a 'Dysfunctional Thought Form', or psychoanalysis and psychosomatics. As a cross-cultural approach, PPT uses stories from different cultures as a means of by-passing psychological defenses and encouraging a client to talk about something not directly, though implicitly related to his/her own life. Stories serve many functions in PPT and illuminating their SsoR regarding these capacities is one.

Another important contribution of PPT created by Peseschkian is not just a consideration of major traumatic events, but what he called microtrauma: the daily minor conflicts that arise in our interactions with others, in our inner conflicts over which capacity takes precedence, and which over the passage of time build up and can become highly caustic in relationships as well as within oneself. As an example: one values precision but a co-worker just doesn't quite meet the standard you have set. Their work satisfies the boss, but not you. It annoys you and though you have tried to 'educate' the person 'the right way to do it', he/she just doesn't care to satisfy your higher demands. You want to be polite, so kindly mention it only infrequently. Over time, this annoyance builds, angers you and may erupt and affect the relation with the co-worker or others. When any event, mostly neutral in reality itself, arouses our attention and stimulates us significantly enough to provoke a conflict or emotional reaction, the microtrauma-as-such, provides clues where one can develop and further differentiate the actual capacities. These little events happen so regularly that they need to be

acknowledged as real phenomena of psychological life and personality demanding explication.

The primary and secondary capacities, deriving from the basic capacities, are aspects of the 'in-depth' psychological functioning which we humans endure and maintain. We observe many behaviors and interpret others doings based on these SsoR and our own theory of mind. Let me now present and consider the SsoR based on the capacity of knowing to complete this article.

3.5. SsoR and the 'capacity to know'

Peseschkian (2000, p. 99) distinguishes four modes of this capacity to know, based upon his Baha'í religious affiliation and an Islamic-Baha'í epistemological framework. In PPT, this is diagrammed in Figure 2 and which I am terming cognitive SsoR to indicate that these are not just about 'knowing' in an intellective sense, but 'cognitive' as used currently referring to memory, attention, decision-making, problem solving and language use; they are also criteria or standards of judgment. Any of these styles of knowing can be developed one-sidedly and contribute to dogmatic assertions of correctness and evaluation, and are also dynamic interacting phenomena representing our personality. Of course, the possibility of using more than one mode remains open.
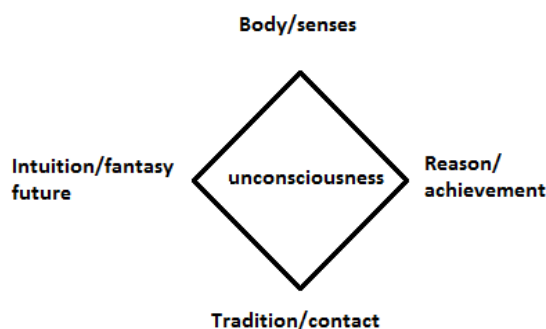

Figure 2. Cognitive systems of reference

As done previously, I will explicate this model dimension beginning at the top and proceeding clockwise. "Every human being first experiences himself and the world around him directly through his senses. He touches, he sees, he hears, he smells, he tastes, etc. Likewise, he has senses which transmit to him information about the condition of the body and of the individual organs" (Peseschkian 2000, p. 100). A newborn experiences the sensations and develops an emotional response to them. It is, I concur, as Greenspan and Shanker express in their book The First Idea: "each sensation, as it is registered by the child, also gives

rise…to an affect or emotion; that is to say, the infant responds to it according to its emotional as well as physical effect on her" (2004, p. 56). This becomes one foundation of cognitive-emotional knowing. If one has learned, for example, that one's body odor is bad and 'unclean' and contact has been rejected by others due to this, one may use antiperspirants, perfumes, colognes or other such products to prevent or cover the odor, may change clothing and shower frequently and feel uncomfortable, angry, or even anxious if this cannot happen. It is easy to see how one's relation to and processing of information from the body becomes a critical SoR for personality and social interaction. A scent stimulates our nostrils, evokes a memory and/or physiological response that become a basis upon which we react to self and judge others. Different races have different body odors, quite natural and neutral in reality, though problematic if undifferentiated. Similarly, examples can be thought about for each sense modality within the complex of daily life experiences: "I just cannot sleep if there is the slightest noise around me and become quite irritated if there is not complete silence. If it's not very quiet, I can't even really concentrate when working. When I was a child, I had to creep around the house on my tiptoes so as to not wake my father who worked nights."

When we consider the dimension of reason, it "functions as an active mediator between inner needs and motives and the physical and social environment. Through speech, it becomes the vehicle of interpersonal relationships" (Peseschkian 2000, pp. 102-3). Considered in a psychological sense, we use our reason to solve problems, test reality, judge situations we find ourselves in, and even determine what we desire to achieve. Based upon the apprehension of the same phenomena, people judge it differently depending upon experience, presuppositions, and motives, each contributing to the SoR reason provides. Through our reason we achieve understanding and control over facets of life. In some instances, reason becomes a useful measure and standard assisting psychological growth: "I know that someone with white skin isn't inherently threatening, but when I was young my parents taught me to never trust someone white. Now, when I meet a European who is white, I notice discomfort initially, but have learned to override my initial response by applying logic." Statements made by individuals reflect their reasoning, often colored by affective reaction. Daily decisions are made regarding who deserves our justice; with whom we spend our time; what sort of

behavior is or is not acceptable; when we go to sleep or arise; and with whom and when it is best to be honest or best to be polite, etc.

Traditions are powerful forces shaping personality, behavior, and cognition, regulating what one thinks and even what types of questions are acceptable to ask. We learn social traditions, communicated through education, stories, fairy tales, or myths, as well as family traditions which have been handed down, perhaps through generations. There are traditions regarding acceptably prepared and consumed food, physical markings, or adornment; what sort of job is approved or disregarded; with whom one can interact or marry; and even ancient traditions regarding the future. Some traditions inhibit development, "We've always done things this way and it's worked just fine. There's no need to change!" Others restrict social interaction, "The people in the neighboring village fought against our ancestors, therefore we never have had any dealing with them since. It is forbidden for you to go there." Traditions become fixed, perhaps stagnant and regressive to social advancement but can be relativized and contribute to development. A person may judge others through their traditional mores and decide what goals are worthy to pursue based on them as well. As a SoR, tradition has kept people separated due to different belief systems that were created to bring unity, shaped and twisted personalities, as well as hindered healthy personality formation.

This brings me to the final dimension, that of fantasy and future, also concerning intuition. One need only have read the works of mystics, poets, or philosophers such as the Sufi Ibn `Arabi, Arthur Schopenhauer, William Blake, or Henri Bergson, to name a few, to grasp the power of this dimension as a SoR. Anything coming through imagination or intuition is regarded as correct and firmly adhered to in spite of reason or sense perception. Fantasies find an outlet through works of fiction, art, and dreams, among other means. Delusions or hallucinations are not uncommon, visionary experiences happen through the faculty of imagination, and their powerful influence and emotional impression are hard to disabuse in the one who experiences them. Though we rely upon our senses or reason, imagination accompanies what we apprehend: we apprehend a stick-like figure on the ground and the image of a snake arises automatically. One apprehends a person of a different colored skin or different speech and may

imagine all sorts of things depending on what was learned and experienced with another similar person. These imaginings could be positive: "First time I met an Indian, she was so nice and hospitable. Now when I see a person from India, her face comes to my imagination and I greet the stranger warmly, thinking of her."

Considered therapeutically, to understand these dynamic modes of the capacity to know helps one to be empathetic to how a person processes information and the strength of any mode as a SoR. While one mode may dominate, others can be enhanced through education, differentiation, and training. Dominant personality patterns form based upon one mode, but can be broadened. A wide range of psychological disorders can be understood and attributed to these modes of knowing, developing into unhealthy SsoR, and a few are shown in Figure 3.
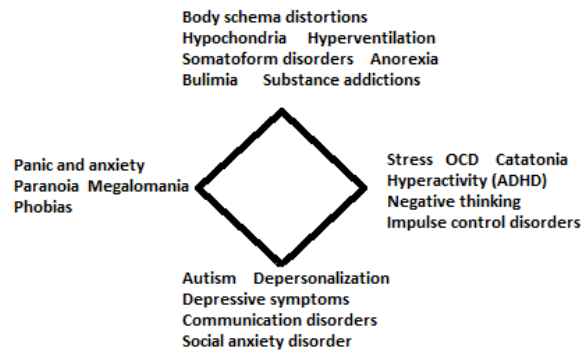
Figure 3. Four dimensions of symptoms

Conclusions

I have attempted to demonstrate and illuminate the importance of a system of reference using the philosophical system of Zubiri. His magnum opus, Sentient Intellection (1999) is a philosophical explication of intellection as an act of knowing reality. Our intellection is sentient, and our sensation is intellective, he states. Through our senses and brain we actively construct our reality and interact emotionally with these realities, thereby becoming individuals with unique personalities. Zubiri avers that he has merely `analyzed this structure, not erected concepts upon concepts, but analyzed the act of knowing. He provided a SoR that I have used here and in other works to reconsider some thoughts in psychology and psychotherapy.

Likewise, the SoR known as Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy created by Peseschkian was presented in many countries in the 1980's and is well-established in Europe. He

provided a method of understanding psychological functioning, personality structure and psychodynamic processes grounded in daily life. The basic capacity of loving along with the basic capacity of knowing manifest in the actual capacities. These capacities are fundamental structures of psychological life; they are modes of learning and making sense of reality (self and other) as well as modes of approaching what we apprehend in reality. The more we comprehend the SsoR we have learned and experienced, the more they are differentiated and clarified, perhaps therapeutically if needed, the more possibilities we can develop for healthier psychological functioning. Learned passively, these capacities affect today and tomorrow, and can be changed to create different tomorrows.

Understood in a psychological sense, these SsoR function implicitly and largely unconsciously. They are beneficial to understand for all approaches to psychotherapeutic knowing, contribute to personality theory and need to be further explicated. I am merely drawing attention to them here. They are valuable for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches to understanding personality differences and therapeutic metatheory.

The conflicts of daily life, the macro- and microtrauma experienced can be changed only if we understand how we learned them. This is one thrust of PPT. Understanding is not just intellectual, it is also emotional and social, and based on the SsoR we have learned, many of which have served to divide rather than unite us—within our own psyche and collectively. As dynamic psychological realities, these capacities influence our interpretations of and responses to others and our own reality. Differentiating these capacities assists healthy psychosocial dynamics and cross-cultural understanding. Explicating these as systems of reference, as Peseschkian asserted, draws out a feature of his contribution that remains latent and offers a dynamic systems approach to psychotherapeutic discourse

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