

## *Thinking Intersubjectivity in Daniel N. Stern's work*

**Stathis Papastathopoulos<sup>2</sup>**

### **Abstract**

This paper pays witness to a modest attempt to discuss critically Daniel N. Stern's elaboration of the concept of intersubjectivity. Stern introduces this concept in the context of his theory for the development of the four senses of the self in infancy, and continues to rework it throughout his work, giving to it an ontological significance for the whole process of development and subjectification. Intersubjectivity is discussed by Stern intensively through the condition of affect attunement, which seems to be for him its prototypical form. During the discussion of affect attunement and the development of the concept of vitality affects, an attempt will be made to point to the vagueness and certain contradictions of their meaning. A few propositions will be presented, through the use of concepts from Gilbert Simondon, William James and others in order to clarify Stern's valuable ideas and to extend them speculatively in new directions.

**Keywords:** vitality affects, affect attunement, present moment, moving along, subjectivity, Intersubjectivity.

### **Introduction**

An attempt to discuss the concept of intersubjectivity in Daniel N. Stern's body of work, might be compared with an attempt to trace the entangled strands of a thick fabric. Intersubjectivity is a constantly recurring theme in almost all of his writing, alas every time with new variations, captivating thus the interest of the reader as the "theme-and variation format" of the motherese prosody holds babies attention (Stern, 2010). The use and meaning of intersubjectivity is varied according to the context in which it is placed. This paper will be

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<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor of Developmental Psychology, Department of Philosophy, Education, Psychology University of Ioannina. E-mail: [spapasta@cc.uoi.gr](mailto:spapasta@cc.uoi.gr)

an attempt to present various versions of the concept of intersubjectivity in Stern's development of the senses of self, with reference to the concepts of 'affect attunement', 'the present moment', and 'moving along' and finally by his elaboration of 'vitality forms'.

### **Weaving the Theory of Intersubjectivity**

In the preface of his groundbreaking book *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, Stern, points at three interwoven strands that formed its texture. The first pays attention to the psychodynamic imperative that every patient's case must be accounted in an "*explanatory historical*" manner, "*of how the patient became the person who walked into your office*" (Stern, 1985, p. vii). This task confronted him with a contradiction. On the one hand, psychodynamic theories offered accounts on how infancy influenced the present of the patient, but on the other hand it was extremely difficult to gather for each case enough secure facts in order to build a coherent developmental narrative. So, he admits that although every case was different, the "*formulations for all... began to sound alike*" (Stern, 1985, p. vii). Retrospective narratives are less faithful representations of past events, than ordering devices that evoke a past in order to meet present adaptive demands (Stern, 2010).

The second strand leads from experimental research on infant development that erupted in the 70's, and that challenged significantly the dominant psychological paradigms. Stern, seizes this opportunity as a critical moment to advance a dialogue and address the tensions between the reality of infancy as it is revealed through the accumulated research findings and the clinically reconstructed baby of psychoanalysis.

The last strand opens as a bifurcation, a splitting between the pre-verbal infant and the articulate adult. Stern narrates a personal incident: "*When I was seven or so, I remember watching an adult try to deal with an infant of one or two years. At that moment it seemed to*

*me so obvious what the infant was all about, but the adult seemed not to understand it at all. It occurred to me that I was at a pivotal age. I knew the infant's "language" but also knew the adult's. I was still "bilingual" and wondered if that facility had to be lost as I grew older"* (p. viii).

Through consideration of these paths to explanation we are presented with an attempt to think about, to bridge, or to transcend, three alternative accounts which could be perceived as consequences of a divide between the logocentric understanding of knowledge and experience, and all other forms of interaction and experience that are left aside. Infancy is the battleground where Stern will lament the lost preverbal unity of experience and attempt to forge a new alliance between the scattered parts of what, almost a century before, William James (1904) named "pure experience".

The first chapter of the book opens with a battery of questions concerning the subjective lives of infants: *"How do infants experience themselves and others? Is there a self to begin with, or another, or some amalgam of both? How do they bring together separate sounds, movements, touches, sights, and feelings to form a whole person? Or is the whole grasped immediately? How do infants experience the social events of "being with" another? How is "being with" someone remembered, or forgotten, or represented mentally? What might the experience of relatedness be like as development proceeds? In sum, what kind of interpersonal world or worlds does the infant create?"* (Stern, 1985, p. 3). These questions are posed from the adult standpoint, from the remote (in time) position of someone wandering about the creation, of the universe or the interpersonal worlds: *"Posing these questions is something like wondering what the universe might have been like the first few hours after the big bang. The universe was created only once, way out there, while interpersonal worlds are created, in here, every day in each new infant's mind. Yet both*

*events, at almost opposite frontiers, remain remote and inaccessible to our direct experience"* (Stern, 1985, p. 3-4).

As the adult in Stern's personal recollection, we are positioned inside the biblical narrative of the fall and the wandering to gain access to the infant mind, to "crawl inside" where it's experience resides in a remote time-space (Stern, 1985, p. 4). Difference is portrayed in chronological terms, and imagination, in a formulation strikingly reminiscent of the Romantic writers (Coleridge, 1907), is presented as a bridge to cross that divide -- a divide that is also formulated as the distance between observable behavior and the hidden contents of a mind. Imagination takes the form of constructs, theories about infants that guide the clinical objectives about psychopathology, the questions that guide research, parent's treatment of infants, and our views about human nature. Stern (1985) declares that "*this book is such an invention. It is a working hypothesis about infant's subjective experience of their own social life*" (p. 4). The subjective life of the infant will be reconstructed or inferred from the observational and experimental data that are gathered from developmental research. It is a "journey to the center of the earth", that can be repeated, one that does recur every time a baby is born and confronted by a grown up.

Stern discusses his epistemological position in the second chapter of the book, through a juxtaposition of two infants, the observed and the clinical infant. The first one is the infant of developmental psychology, which informs us about the capacities of a behavioral infant for which only inferences can be made about its subjective experience from the developmental theories that those observational and experimental data inform. The clinical infant, on the other hand, is reconstructed through the psychoanalytic clinical practice, and "*is the joint creation of two people, the adult who grew up to become a psychiatric patient and the therapist, who has a theory about infant experience. This recreated infant is made up of*

*memories, present reenactments in the transference, and theoretically guided interpretations"* (Stern, 1985, p. 14). So, the clinical infant is a collaborative construction, made in the dialogues between the psychoanalyst and his adult patient, based on the latter's narratives about his early history. "*Historical truth is established by what gets told, not by what actually happened. This view opens the door for the possibility that any narrative about one's life (especially one's early life) may be just as valid as the next"* (Stern, 1985, p. 15). The experience of the clinical infant is a fiction that invents the past, not a reliable record of events.

But could we not assert the same interactive constructive process also for the observed infant? In a footnote, Stern (1985) writes that "*the two infants live at different levels of epistemological discourse*". If, as he claims, the revolution in infant research "*consisted of turning the situation on its head, by asking not, what is a good question to pose to an infant? but, what might an infant be able to do (like sucking) that would serve as an answer?"* (p. 38). We are presented with a different story of engagement with infants. And in a certain degree, that is what epistemology is about. Inventing new ways of relating and engaging with the world. According to Bruno Latour (2004) the revolution in the science of infant research was nothing less than a new way of articulating with the infant, leading to more articulate infant. "*The path to science requires [...] a passionately interested scientist who provides his or her object of study with as many occasions to show interest and to counter his or her questioning through the use of its own categories*" (Latour, 2004, p. 218). These new and risky opportunities for the infant to answer in its own ways as presented by Stern, led to the conception of a more interesting, rich, both more cognitive and more relational infant. I will claim that this new research ethos is a more egalitarian and symmetrical one that, while initially motivated by an adult-centric questioning, leads in to new infant-centered

questioning that creates the conditions for the emergence of what Stern describes as “relational senses of self”. In a way, in the above process, one can witness an interesting circularity. Relating with the infant as a coequal leads to the emergence of a more able and relational infancy. Intersubjectivity as I will try to show, for Stern is not just a domain of relatedness, or a capacity, but also an epistemological and ontological choice.

Stern's scientific questions stem from, and can be answered only within, relational fields. His original questions on infant's experience and subjectivity, can be answered only through elaborating on what in his work are variously termed as relatedness, communion, communication, intersubjectivity, affect attunement, pronarrative envelope, ways-of-being-with, moments of meeting, moving along and vitality forms. These relational terms, which are elaborated, interchanged, abandoned or aligned throughout his work, enable him to dynamically weave, without erasing the tensions, connections between the preverbal experience of relationships in infancy and the social world of an adulthood dominated by language.

### **The Senses of Self and Intersubjectivity**

In Stern's work, intersubjectivity is introduced through the elaboration of the notion of the "sense of self". This sense resides mostly out of declarative awareness, but becomes conscious and is composed by integrating a set of characteristics: "*There is the sense of a self that is a single, distinct, integrated body; there is the agent of actions, the experiencer of feelings, the maker of intentions, the architect of plans, the transposer of experience into language, the communicator and sharer of personal knowledge*" (Stern, 1985, p. 5). The sense of self, its subjective reality as distinct from what Stern names "nature of self", is "*the*

*way we experience ourselves in relation to others [and] provides a basic organizing perspective for all interpersonal events"* (p. 6). He differentiates between several existential senses of self, prior to language and self-reflexive awareness, on which the latter are based and developed. Language and self-reflection can reveal, through introspective accounts, the existence of those preverbal senses of self and even transform them and create new senses of the self by working on them.

Stern defines what he terms the sense of self of his proverbial infant as follows: "*By "sense" I mean simple (non-self-reflexive) awareness. We are speaking at the level of direct experience, not concept. By "of self" I mean an invariant pattern of awarenesses that arise only on the occasion of the infant's actions or mental processes. An invariant pattern of awareness is a form of organization. It is the organizing subjective experience of whatever it is that will later be verbally referenced as the "self," This organizing subjective experience is the preverbal, existential counterpart of the objectifiable, self-reflective, verbalizable self"* (p. 7).

So, the preverbal sense of self, is a non-reflexive invariant pattern of awareness that organizes the subjective experience of the actions and mental processes of the infant, and is "*essential to daily social interactions"* (Stern, 1985, p. 7). He places these senses of the self at the center of "normal interpersonal development", which, he states, "*if [they are] severely impaired would disrupt normal social functioning and likely lead to madness or great social deficit"* (Stern, 1985, p. 7). The senses of the self include the sense of agency, of physical cohesion, of continuity, of affectivity, of a subjective life that can achieve intersubjectivity with another, create organization, and transmit meaning. The formation of those senses of the self starts from birth, and emerge in "quantum leaps" during the first year of life, causing the infant to gain "*an additional "presence" and a different social "feel" that is more than the*

*sum of the many newly acquired behaviors and capacities"* (Stern, 1985, p. 8), so parents perceive, evaluate and act differently towards her. Stern claims that these changes "*come about partly by virtue of the adult interpreting the infant differently and acting accordingly*", as the adult interacts within the infant's zone of proximal development, "*in an area appropriate to infant capacities not yet present but very soon to emerge*" (Stern, 1985, p. 9). Every different sense of self (and other) enables the infant to participate "*in the social world with a different organizing subjective perspective about it*" (Stern, 1985, p. 9).

Four different senses of the self are described, three preverbal, an emergent self (birth to two months of age), a core self (two to six months), a subjective self (from the sixth month onwards), and a verbal self. Stern does not conceive the development of these senses of self as successive stages, where the one replaces the other in a linear progressive order. As long as each one is formed, it continues to be active throughout life, coextensively with the rest. That is the major reason for attributing to them a central value for normal and abnormal development (Stern, 2000).

Intersubjectivity is product and a condition of the third sense of self, termed as the subjective self. Before discussing the development of this sense of self and relationality, we should remember that the notion of intersubjectivity is, after the explosion of research in infant interaction from the middle of the 60's and onward, one of the seminal terrains where the concept of development is theorized. Intersubjectivity has a long history in 20th century's philosophy, through the work of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Schutz (Duranti, 2010), and its introduction in the field of infant development is done at the end of 70s by Colwyn Trevarthen (Trevarthen, 1979; Trevarthen and Hubley, 1978). In his work, intersubjectivity is mainly used descriptively, to define the ways through which interaction and communication of the infant with her caregivers is developed during the first year of life (primary and



secondary intersubjectivity). At the same time, using a psychobiological approach to the development of the human organism as an agent in social collaborations, he attributes to intersubjectivity an ontological value for the constitution of the person. Mind is considered as innately endowed with motives for communication and sharing with other persons. In other words, the infant is considered as ready, at least from birth, to get involved in interactions and relations with the vitality of significant others in his environment. Trevarthen and Delafield-Butt (2013, p.189) present rich evidence that the human body and its organs, are adapted for participation in rich interactions with other persons, *"that human beings are born with subjectivity, or coherent self-awareness in movement, and a drive for intersubjectivity, or cooperation in intimate coordination with other persons"*.

Additionally, innate, built-in, motives guide the course of development itself, and the infants entry in the cultural world. For Trevarthen, human development is inconceivable outside intersubjective interaction.

Stern (1985, p.135) uses selectively, in his model for the successive development of the senses of self, only Trevarthen's concept of secondary intersubjectivity, which he defines in a footnote of his book, as the *"true intersubjectivity"*, that is shared except from humans and by other social animals. Secondary intersubjectivity is defined by Trevarthen (1998, p. 31), as *"the systematic combining of purposes directed to objects with those that invoked interest and interaction from a companion"*. The distinctive characteristic of secondary intersubjectivity is that the infant has become able to understand that she and someone else may have different perspectives on reality, which they may share. This is exactly the criterion according to which Stern names the domain or relatedness of the subjective sense of self, intersubjectivity.

One of the ideas that could not be stressed more in *The Interpersonal World of The Infant* is that the infant never experiences a confounding, undifferentiating merging or

symbiosis with other persons in their environment. Proprioception, amodal perception, and the organization of affective experience, enable the infant to experience the coherence and separateness of herself from others. This experiential sense of the self, is named as sense of a core self, and is composed from the integration of four invariants: self-agency, self-coherence, self-affectivity and self-history. *"Intersubjective relatedness is built on the foundation of core-relatedness. Core-relatedness, with its establishment of the physical and sensory distinctions of self and other, is the necessary precondition, since the possibility of sharing subjective experiences has no meaning unless it is a transaction that occurs against the surety of a physically distinct and separate self and other"* (Stern, 1985, p.125).

If the distinctiveness and coherence of the self is the precondition for the emergence of the sense of the subjective self and of intersubjectivity, then what is now added is a "discovery" by the infant of the *"subjective mental states -feelings, motives, intentions- that lie behind the physical happenings in the domain of core-relatedness"* (Stern, 1985, p.27). Stern writes about a "quantum leap", that enables the "reading", matching and attunement with the subjective mental states of other people. At the same time, the socialization of infant's subjective experience is the task that is foregrounded for the parents. What is at stake is the degree, the kinds, the tropes and the consequences of sharing the private worlds of subjective experience, *"what part of the private world of inner experience is shareable and what part falls outside the pale of commonly recognized human experiences"* (Stern, 1985, p.126).

So, Stern finds the potential for intersubjective interaction on the discovery and separation of mental, psychological, subjective, internal domain alongside the field of bodily action and visible behavior. This is a distinctive domain, in which the infant and her companion do not only share their intentions about the world, but also share and

communicate exclusively about them as states of mind. Accordingly, Stern (1985), describes the sharing of attention, of intentions, and affects, with the terms inter-attentionality, inter-intentionality and inter-affectivity.

In sum, Stern discusses intersubjectivity through a series of distinctions, which can be summarized in a juxtaposition between a field of perceptually available bodily behaviors for an observer who relates them to shared circumstances, and a subjective, internal and so private, mental field of experience and meaning that is not objectively perceivable, in the common outside world, but can be shared by means of expressive actions. Intersubjectivity takes place in the second field through the mediation of the first. At this point some questions emerge: Which processes, formations or spacings enable the distinction between an objectively observable behavior and the subjective and private experience? Is this distinction ontological or epistemological? If it is ontological, how then can it be used as a stable base for study of (infant) development? If it is epistemological, how is the subjective, private world of experience constructed and under what conditions can an intersubjectively negotiated domain be abstracted as an internal, private space? Is the concept of intersubjectivity defined solely by the sharing of common mental states, or can its meaning be extended? Reversely, is intersubjectivity only one of the potential modalities of forging relations? In that case, could we bridge the "quantum leap" of intersubjectivity, by incorporating the latter in an analogic continuity of multiple strands of sensitization and relationality with and in the world?

### **Enacting Intersubjectivity: Affect Attunement**

We can accept Stern's emphasis of the sharing of affective states as the terrain to discuss the former questions. By the term 'affect attunement', Stern, describes the cross-modal matching of the felt quality of the behavior of a person, her feeling state instead of the external behavior. So, affect attunement's scope is the sharing of an internal affective quality (which lies behind the describable behavior), through an analogical or metaphoric imitation, as one member of the interacting couple matches the feeling state of the other's behavior through a different perceptual modality. In the original formulation of affect attunement, three dimensions of behavior are matched: intensity of movement, temporality and shape. Its major function is interpersonal communion, the sharing of another's experience and not the altering of the other's belief or action as is the case in communication where parties exchange information in order to influence a change in the other (Stern, 1985; Stern et al., 1984).

In effect, affect attunement has two more important functions. First, the socialization of infant's personal experience. *"It is clear that interpersonal communion, as created by attunement, will play an important role in the infant's coming to recognize that internal feeling states are forms of human experience that are shareable with other humans. The converse is also true: feeling states that are never attuned to will be experienced only alone, isolated from the interpersonal context of shareable experience. What is at stake here is nothing less than the shape of and extent of the shareable inner universe"* (Stern, 1985, p.151-2). The divide between social and personal experience, between the common and the private is movable and is positively produced through actual experiences of sharing or exclusion (what is selected or not for attunement). The shared space of affects is where, according to the new introduction in the second edition of *The Interpersonal World of the*

Infant, the "*human alphabet for the cultural contextualization*" of the infant is formed (Stern, 2000, p. xxvii).

Affect attunement has a decisive impact on the formation of the self. What is not considered sharable, is not only deemed private and idiosyncratic, but may also not be able to become linguistically encoded and consequently be unavailable for verbal articulation. The infant's internal representations, formed by the interpersonal relations with others, will grow according to the influence of parents or others' selective attunements. These will have a profound importance for the development of a reflexive self, since what will be available for reflection will depend on "*the history of past and present attunements and misattunements*" (Stern et al. 1984, p.266).

Second, affect attunement paves the way for the infant's entrance to language. "*An attunement is a recasting, a restatement of a subjective state. It treats the subjective state as the referent and the overt behavior as one of several possible manifestations or expressions of the referent. For example, a level and quality of exuberance can be expressed as a unique vocalization, as a unique gesture, or as a unique facial display. Each manifestation has some degree of substitutability as a recognizable signifier of the same inner state. And thus attunement recasting behaviors by way of nonverbal metaphor and analogue. If one imagines a developmental progression from imitation through analogue and metaphor to symbols, this period of the formation of the sense of a subjective self provides the experience with analogue in the form of attunements, an essential step toward the use of symbols...*" (Stern, 1985, p.161).

What is rather confusing in Stern's theory of intersubjectivity by attunement is the way he describes the sharing of states or feelings, which oscillate between being directly observable to inner, private and derived, between being there ready to be shared and created

by that sharing. Affect attunement as a prototype of the mode of engagement called intersubjectivity, is happening between two core-subjects, i.e. two sensibly discrete embodied selves, that share/commune, through an analogic act of matching observable behaviors, some hidden/unobservable feeling states. One can readily discern in this description a transcription of the theological doctrine of the eucharist, as the sharing/incorporation/communion by the congregation of a third part, Jesus body, an invisible substance that is transubstantiated in the host, and unites its receivers in one body, the body of the church, a communion of thankfulness (Bossy, 1983; Levy, Macy, and van Ausdall, 2012; Rubin, 1991). A sacramental world view is a prototype for Stern's description of intersubjectivity and attunement, where the former's separation between a visible and an invisible world, by a prioritization of the invisible, the signification of the invisible through a sign and the revelation of the invisible through a relationship, are enacted. As I will present in the rest of this paper, feeling states are not a third (hidden) party that is shared (and revealed) between two individuals, but are what is created as a third part through the attunement of two persons that simultaneously evolve as individuals.

So, we can ask firstly: why is the shared feeling state inner, or private, or invisible? Second, how is it that the shared feeling state preexists its matching and become manifest through it? Through affect attunement what are matched are vitality affects. They are defined as *"those dynamic, kinetic qualities of feeling that distinguish animate from inanimate and that correspond to the momentary changes in feeling states involved in the organic processes of being alive. We experience vitality affects as dynamic shifts or patterned changes within ourselves or others"* (Stern, 1985, p.156). *"They concern **how** a behavior, **any** behavior, **all** behavior is performed, not **what** behavior is performed"* (Stern, 1985, p.157). Stern defines vitality affects, or vitality contours, or vitality forms, as virtual, as a translation from behavior

to feeling, as a correspondence of an inner quality to a behavioral display, as a complement to temporal contours and as mental creation of an integrating mind (Stern, 1985, 1993, 1999, 2004, 2010). Vitality affects correspond to what Stern defines as feeling, "*the subjective quality of the experience*" (Stern, 1993, p.206). Stern in his last book on *Forms of Vitality*, considers them as a "*natural gestalt*", a "*holistic experience*", an "*emergent property*", as part of a "*phenomenal reality*", that "*are immediately grasped from the fundamental dynamic pentad*" of movement, time, force, space and intention/directionality (Stern, 2010, p. 4-6). He states that forms of vitality correspond to "*the way the mind was designed to grasp dynamic happenings*" (Stern, 2010, p.7). They "*are the most fundamental of all felt experience when dealing with other humans in motion*" (Stern, 2010, p. 8). And that because "*the experience of vitality is inherent in the art of movement. Movement, and its proprioception, is the primary manifestation of being animate and provides the primary sense of aliveness*" (Stern, 2010, p. 9).

Stern in the development of his work, reworks constantly the concept of vitality affects, but does not clarify or explain it in a coherent way. So, although they are described as subjective qualities, they are positioned as emanating from the brain, or the mind, perceived directly and at the same time translated or expressive, private and so on. Returning to our former question, if vitality affects, or contours, or forms, are inherent in movement, and correspond to the way the person relates to that, why should they be inner, or private, or invisible?

I think that the ambivalence lies in Stern's prioritization of a differentiated sense of self. In order to emphasize that, Stern, confounds the sense of self with subjectivity. The latter is defined by Stern (1985) as totality of certain attributes: agency, physical cohesion, continuity, affectivity, intersubjectivity, organization, and production of meaning. This description is

strikingly similar to the way Nicolas Rose (1998, p. 3-4) presents the modern mainstream narrative about subjectivity:

*"The self: coherent, bounded, individualized, intentional, the locus of thought, action, and belief, the origin of its own actions, the beneficiary of a unique biography. As such selves we possessed an identity, which constituted our deepest, most profound reality, which was the repository of our familial heritage and our particular experience as individuals, which animated our thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and values. As selves, we were characterized by a profound inwardness: conduct, belief value, and speech were to be interrogated and rendered explicable in terms of an understanding of an inner space that gave them form, within which they were, literally, embodied within us as corporeal beings. This internal universe of the self, this profound psychology', lay at the core of those ways of conducting ourselves that are considered normal and provided the norm for thinking and judging the abnormal - whether in the realm of gender, sexuality, vice, illegality, or insanity. And our lives were meaningful, to the extent that we could discover our self be our self express our self love our self and be loved for the self we really were".*

Turning away from what Bruno Latour calls the ugly face of constructivism, my intention is not to claim that Stern's theory of the senses of the self is culturally bounded. He has already answered that kind of criticism, by making a distinction between the culture as viewed from the outside and as it is enacted in order that the child can be influenced by that. Stern makes clear that what interested him was the study of the few variables that form the *"human alphabet for sociocultural contextualization"* (Stern 2000, p. xxvii). So, he discerns two domains on which culture is enacted, the implicit, affective, preverbal and the explicit, conscious, verbal domain. The grasping by the infant of how the implicit domain works is vital for his entrance in the explicit verbal domain which we in most of the cases define as



cultural. Stern is very careful on that, he does not consider the implicit domain as pre-cultural, but as a differing from the explicit in "*depth, breadth, and nature*" (Stern, 2000, p.xxvii). The implicit domain is relational too.

What I claim is that we should insist to unravel the blackboxing (Latour, 1999) of its development, to keep visible the relations, the 'technologies and assemblages' that endow the infant with the rich inner life that Stern describes. The infant during affect attunement, or generally in its intersubjective engagements, is not sharing his inner or private feelings. On the contrary, during the attunement, the mother, or anyone else who matches through her or his action the feeling of the baby's behavior, abstracts from the flow of interaction one certain element *as subjective*, and by so enables, at that very instant, the infant to acquire or sense that it can have a private, hidden self. Stern, as was presented above, does actually understand affect attunement as a terrain where what is sharable/social/common and what is unsharable/isolate/private is negotiated. But since what is deemed private or isolate is produced through interactive engagement, then it must be stressed that privacy or isolation is equally a relational/social condition, and not just what belongs to the self without being shared. What is produced as private is not what remains hidden in the depths of a subject, but what through certain relational arrangement is performed as hidden, or inarticulate.

The modern psychology of a coherent, bounded, individualized, intentional, and agentive self, is a narrative, a collection of sentences that are build, embodied and sustained, from the "alphabet" that Stern (2000, p. xxvii) magisterially delineates in his work. But we should abstain from defining this alphabet as subjective. Actually this alphabet is the condition of possibility for different modes of subjectivity. Using Gilbert Simondon's concepts we could compare the processes that give rise to the three first senses of the self, to the preindividual being that is "*more-than-unity*" and "*more-that-identity*", which "*exists with*

*a reverse of becoming*", constantly *"in excess over itself"*, from and through which individuation arises (Combes, 2013, p. 3). Stern's theory of the development of the senses of the self, is a description of individuation. But, Stern while presenting how the individual emerges through individuation, seeks at the same time to understand individuation through the individual (Combes, 2013), so he views for example affect attunement as the sharing of private feelings, i.e. as if feelings were subjective before the process of their individualization through their selective matching.

I think that we can make a further comparison of Simondon's *"preindividual share"* which he equates with affectivity (Combes, 2013, p. 31), with William James (1904) concept of *"pure experience"*, in order to redescribe how vitality affects are individualized or subjectified through affect attunement. James (1912) defines pure experience as follows:

*"Pure experience' is the name which I gave to the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material to our later reflection with its conceptual categories. Only new-born babes, or men in semi-coma from sleep, drugs, illnesses, or blows, may be assumed to have an experience pure in the literal sense of a **that** which is not yet any definite **what**, tho' ready to be all sorts of whats; full both of oneness and of manyness, but in respects that don't appear; changing throughout, yet so confusedly that its phases interpenetrate and no points, either of distinction or of identity, can be caught. Pure experience in this state is but another name for feeling or sensation. But the flux of it no sooner comes than it tends to fill itself with emphases, and these salient parts become identified and fixed and abstracted; so that experience now flows as if shot through with adjectives and nouns and prepositions and conjunctions. Its purity is only a relative term, meaning the proportional amount of unverballed sensation which it still embodies"* (p. 93-4).

*"The instant field of the present is always experience in its 'pure' state, plain unqualified actuality, a simple that, as yet undifferentiated into thing and thought, and only virtually classifiable as objective fact or as some one's opinion about fact. This is as true when the field is conceptual as when it is perceptual" (p.74).*

For James, divisions like subject and object, internal and external, are not part of pure experience but secondary divisions and conceptual classification. The description is very close to the holistic amodal quality of perception that Stern emphasizes. Furthermore, both James and Stern equate experience with feeling or vitality that are produced by its endless flow, movement and change. Stern in his last book on *Vitality Forms* (2010), claims that we experience people and inanimate relations in terms of their vitality. Forms of vitality arise from five dynamic events: movement, time, force, space and intention directionality. Stern (2010, p. 4), considers the last four as "*daughters of movement*", as arising or produced from movement: "*Movement brings with it the perception or attribution of force(s) 'behind' or 'within' the movement. In addition, movement has to happen in space, so a sense of space is defined by the movement. Finally, a movement has directionality. It seems to be going somewhere. A sense of intentionality is also inevitably added*". But, while by this move Stern seems to come close to how pure experience in itself produces emphases or salient part, he soon turns around and insists that "*the dynamic forms of vitality are [...] psychological, subjective, phenomena that emerge from the encounter with dynamic events*" as the mind integrates these external and other internal events (Stern, 2010, p.7). Here we witness the return of the old distinction between primary and secondary qualities. James (1912, p.147), notes that in our everyday life we hardly make such distinctions -- a distinction that was introduced in modern thought by thinkers like Galileo, or Descartes -- but on the contrary, "*by engendering and translocating just these qualities, actively efficacious as they seem to be,*

*we ourselves succeed in altering nature so as to suit us".* Latour (2004) points that the distinction between primary and secondary qualities enacts Whitehead's "bifurcation of nature", into observable, natural, objective things, and a phenomenal, subjective, inner reality.

If forms of vitality are primary, they cannot arise *"from how the mind processes dynamic experience from any source ('real' or imagined)"*, (Stern, 2010, p.22). If they are a "natural gestalt", a "holistic experience" and an "emergent property", then they cannot arise solely from the mind, or brain processes, because this would go counter to dynamic systems theory, to which Stern frequently refers and borrows terms. According to Smith and Thelen (2003, p. 343-4): *"The first assumption of the dynamic approach is that developing organisms are complex systems composed of very many individual elements embedded within, and open to, a complex environment. As in many other complex systems in nature, such systems can exhibit coherent behaviour: the parts are coordinated without an executive agent or a programme that produces the organized pattern. Rather, the coherence is generated solely in the relationships between the organic components and the constraints and opportunities of the environment. This self-organization means that no single element has causal priority"*. So, forms of vitality, if they are considered through the dynamic approach, cannot be the product of mind or brain alone, but of its fleshy relation with the body in the environment. That is very close to the way that Rodolfo Llinás understands emotions, as premotor *"fixed action patterns"* that prepare for movement (Goodrich, 2010, p. 339). They evolve in the tight distance between a highly coupled dynamic system of the brain, the body and the environment (Goodrich, 2010, p. 345). In a similar way, Brown and Stenner (2001, p. 89) conceptualize Spinoza's theory of affect as *"an ordering of the relations between bodies and between ideas that shows forth as a decision or a determination for action"*. Affects are

conceived as "*ways of being*", that empower a subject to proceed, to act, in a certain way towards his environment (Brown and Stenner, 2001, p. 96).

In fact, forms of vitality, are exactly that. They are the relation of the organism to its environment, much like affordances in Gibson's theory of ecological perception. James Gibson (1979, p.129) wrote this cryptic passage: "*An important fact about the affordances of the environment is that they are in a sense objective, real, and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are often supposed to be subjective, phenomenal, and mental. But, actually, an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behavior. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer*". Anthony Chemero (2009, p. 201) reformulates, explicating, Gibson's oracle in a way very near to W. James radical pragmatism: "*What we perceive, which is to say what we experience, are relations between ourselves and our environments. Our perception of affordances, which is to say our perceptual experience, is also a relation, this time between ourselves and our affordances. The upshot of this is that our experiences are not things that happen in our heads; they happen in animal– environment systems. Conscious experiences, that is, are what happen when animals pick up information about affordances*". If we wish to get rid of bifurcations between nature and culture, objective and subjective, the road leads back to relation, the primordially of relation (of transitions and connections too), which is integral to experience, from which the subject and the object can be abstracted.

James (1904, p. 480) explains eloquently how this abstraction is performed: "*experience, I believe, has no such inner duplicity; and the separation of it into consciousness and content comes, not by way of subtraction, but by way of addition -- the*

*addition, to a given concrete piece of it, of other sets of experiences, in connection with which severally its use or function may be of two different kinds". Subjectivity, the subjective sense of self arises through additions. Affect attunement, which according to Stern negotiates the divide between the common and the private, works through an addition. The infant's partner when matching the intensity or temporality of the infant's movement, enacting it through a different tropicality or in different metaphors or modalities of expression, adds the specific vitality form of his body motion to the motion of the baby's body and so renders it subjective too. Two different lines (the trajectories of two moving bodies) cross and make a point, which, when seen from the historicity/continuity of each line, marks the emergence of an individuality. When the partner matches the contour of the infant's action through his own moving body, foregrounds the infants kinesthetic feeling: I move like (not as) you and therefore I feel like you, so if by my body I am separate from you then you are a feeling specificity, an animated feeling flesh marked by its subjectivity. Here, we can recall Alfred Schutz (1976, p. 23): *"I experience a fellow-man directly if and when he shares with me a common sector of time and space. The sharing of a common sector of time implies a genuine simultaneity of our two streams of consciousness: my fellow-man and I grow older together. The sharing of a common sector of space implies that my fellow-man appears to me in person as he himself and none other. His body appears to me as a unified field of expressions, that is, of concrete symptoms through which his conscious life manifests itself to me vividly. This temporal and spatial immediacy are essential characteristics of the face-to-face situation"*. Growing old together, a powerful phrase that echoes strikingly Stern's (2004) term *"moving along together"*, by sharing a *"vivid present"* (Schutz, 1976), or a *"present moment"* (Stern, 2004), marks subjectivity by sharing.*

Here we arrive at a turning point in Stern's understanding of intersubjectivity. From the earliest conceptualizations of affect attunement, Stern seems to understand it as a continuous process. In his study with Hofer, Haft and Dore (1984, p. 263) we read that, although attunements were not as frequent ("*we only found one attunement per minute*"), "*attunement as a form of feeling-connectedness to another is mostly experienced as a process unbroken in time*". Vitality affects are considered as more ideal from categorical affects to understand connectedness, because they reside in every behavior and they are continuous in time, with peaks that rise in an observable matching and troughs we could add. "*In this way, affective tracking or attunement with another can occur as a continuous process. [...] It feels like an unbroken process. It seeks out the form of vitality momentarily ongoing in any and every behavior (including affect displays) and uses that to keep the thread of connectedness unbroken*" (Stern et al. 1984, p.265). So, the affective attunement does not have to imply only matching in the form of similarity (Beebe et al., 2003), but correspondence, or what in his later work, Stern (2004) named "shared feeling voyages". They "*refer to the joint experience of a moment of meeting. It emphasizes that the two people travel together during a present moment through a similar landscape of feelings where shifts in feeling serve as landmarks. It is thus a voyage of feelings. Further, there is a mutual recognition of making this voyage together - in other words, it is shared. It is an intersubjective phenomenon*" (Stern, 2004, p.246).

This shared feeling voyage, seems to be exclusively mental. Stern actually describes it twice like that (pp. 75 and 103). That is because the situation that Stern uses as his prototype to develop his theory about intersubjectivity, is the face-to-face condition, between a mother and an infant, or in the psychotherapy. But if we do not confine ourselves to the face-to-face prototype, and take shared feeling voyages for a real trip outside, then we can give a different

meaning to them. Taking a shared voyage outside the experimental or the psychoanalytic room means that the landscape ceases to be just mental, and takes back its materiality. The flows that meet out there are not (only) subjective feelings abstracted from the observable behavior. The flows of vitality also come from the movement of the heterogeneous materials from which the landscape is composed. Stern acknowledges that in *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life* (2004), where, for example, he writes that "*experiences in the present can be polyphonic or polytemporal*" (p. 25), and a few pages later he states that "*Everything we do, feel, and hear from people has a temporal contour. We also attribute contours to many events in nature. We are immersed in a "music" of the world at the local level - a complex polyphonic, polyrhythmic surround where different temporal contours are moving back and forth between the psychological foreground and background*" (p. 64). But if the landscapes outside the psychological room are constantly changing and transforming, then their contours are not attributed by us, nor are they psychological (although they can be made to be). Moving, walking inside a "real" landscape means to "*experience of vitality is inherent in the art of movement. Movement, and its proprioception, is the primary manifestation of being animate and provides the primary sense of aliveness*" (Stern, 2010, p. 9). So, moving along together in a landscape can mean more than sharing subjective feelings, in fact it amounts to being immersed in assemblages of "*polyphonic, polyrhythmic*" affects, that only rarely match, but vary constantly, into which you must try to correspond with your sentient movement, because "*the lines of correspondence are lines of feeling*" (Ingold, 2013, p. 105), or forms of compatibility between a perceiving organism and its milieu in Simondon's terminology (Combes, 2013), or relations that afford opportunities for someone somewhere (in Chemero's recasting of Gibson), and may lead to change or transformations through present moments, from which we can upload the emphasis in the mental, and give



them back the original meaning of the word *kairos*, which Stern chooses to use, as the critical time to act not just in the face of another, but in the world.

That way around, intersubjectivity as "*the capacity to share, know, understand, empathize with, feel, participate in, resonate with, and enter into the lived subjective experience of another*" (Stern, 2005, p.78), is or can be one or several moments in the wider flow of moving along together inside shared experience. In the same sense, subjectivity can be viewed as an emergent property of the moving along together. Let's use as a coda, a phrase from Stern's last book, which we presented before: "*a movement has directionality. It seems to be going somewhere. A sense of intentionality is also inevitably added*" (2010, p. 4). If directionality is inherent in our relation with movement, then following James we can make subjectivity appear if we tie this directionality to a personal historicity. With that addition, a movement can become subjective, or purposeful. To meet it you don't have to access a private mental plain, but only to correspond with, or use, it.

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## ***Σκέψεις πάνω στη Διωκοκειμενικότητα στο έργο του Daniel N. Stern***

**Στάθης Παπασταθόπουλος**

### **Περίληψη**

Στόχος του κειμένου αυτού είναι η κριτική διαπραγμάτευση της έννοιας της διωκοκειμενικότητας στο έργο του Daniel N. Stern. Ο Stern εισάγει την έννοια της διωκοκειμενικότητας στο πλαίσιο της αναπτυξιακής του θεωρίας για την ανάπτυξη των αισθήσεων του εαυτού στην βρεφική ηλικία και συνεχίζει να την επεξεργάζεται σε όλη την πορεία του έργου του, προσδίδοντάς της μια οντολογική βαρύτητα για την ίδια την δυνατότητα της ανάπτυξης και της υποκειμενο-ποίησης. Μέσα από την παρουσίαση και ανάλυση του έργου του Daniel Stern διαφαίνεται ότι η έννοια της διωκοκειμενικότητας μεταβάλλεται σημαντικά, από ένα τρόπο οργάνωσης των σχέσεων, στο πλαίσιο της ανάπτυξης του υποκειμενικού εαυτού, σε ένα εγγενές κατηγορημα της ανθρώπινης υπόστασης που διαπερνά κάθε πλευρά της ζωής του και μεταβάλλεται ανάλογα. Ιδιαίτερη έμφαση δίνεται στην διαπραγμάτευση της διωκοκειμενικότητας στο πλαίσιο της συγκινησιακής εναρμόνισης, η οποία αποτελεί για τον Stern την πρωτογενή μορφή διωκοκειμενικής σχέσης. Στο κεφάλαιο της Συζήτησης επισημαίνονται ορισμένες ασάφειες και αντιφάσεις στον τρόπο που ο Stern αντιλαμβάνεται την έννοια της υποκειμενικότητας και διατυπώνονται προτάσεις επίλυσής τους μέσα από τη συγκριτική αντιπαράθεση με τις θεωρίες των Gilbert Simondon και William James.

**Λέξεις Κλειδιά:** αισθήματα ζωτικότητας, συγκινησιακή εναρμόνιση, στιγμές παρόντος, προχωρώντας από κοινού, υποκειμενικότητα, Διωκοκειμενικότητα.