

Styles of Thinking

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According to the general scheme of development from syncretism, through analysis, to synthesis, one could consider three types of reasoning as both the aspects of any thought and the possible personal attitudes.

Syncretic thinking is the earliest in history; this is the first integral mode of mental activity. It does not explicitly separate one thought from another, and the grounds for one way of thinking can as well be valid for another. The external world is perceived by syncretic thinking as a static whole (a momentary picture, a snapshot), with no attempts to draw any inner distinctions, everything being of equal importance. The results of such reasoning are rather vague and inconsistent; they can lead to quite different (and sometimes even opposite) actions. There are no well determinable rules in combining ideas—simply because they are no separate entities to combine. Still, syncretic thinking is already a kind of reasoning, and it is definite enough to support activity and communication, provided the partners can share its syncretism. That is, the communicative focus is on co-involvement in anything, rather than on transmitting or receiving any messages. The commonality of activity results in commonality of thought.

Analytical reasoning could be called reasoning in the proper sense since it involves sequences of distinct mental operations obeying some pre-established rules, a discourse. This is what most people do. The world is treated as a collection of distinct things and relations, and the person's behavior is accordingly structured. There are innumerable many kinds of analytical reasoning, since its formal organization is not yet inherent to it, and one mentality is no worse than another; here, logic is nothing but the rules of the game. This may hinder communication between the analytically thinking people, when they differently see the logic of a common activity; however, even with logical discrepancies, one analytical thought is much closer to another analytical thought than to any manifestation of the syncretic or synthetic style; the adepts of analytical reasoning often refuse to understand such "illogical" thinking, or even treat it as a kind of thought at all.

The *synthetic style of thought* is characterized by integrity resembling that of syncretic thinking—however, different ideas do not merge within the synthesis, and it is their interaction and development that binds them together and makes the aspects of the same. Synthetic reasoning is focused on bringing things together, demonstrating their commonality despite all the differences, so that the very their distinction gets explained by the possibility of associating them with the same domain. The behavior of a synthetically minded person may well seem too inefficient, since such people rarely concentrate their efforts to complete a special task; they always encounter all kinds of objective and subjective difficulties. However, synthetic thought can equally communicate with both syncretic and analytical reasoning, providing a kind of link between them; this drastically improves collective performance. Personally, synthetically minded people will hardly be content with such inter-level communication, even considering its usefulness and practical importance that bring the feeling of self-respect; the others will seem too "primitive" to a synthesizer. But, in fact, it is the synthetic thinkers who need that type of communication most of all, while the two earlier styles are basically self-oriented and self-contained.

In hierarchical development, a higher level contains the traces of the lower levels in a reflected form; the topmost level of a hierarchy will reproduce certain features of the lowest level. In further development, with the formation of a new level on top of the hierarchy, the former topmost level gets folded and thus assimilated to the lower levels. For instance, synthetic reasoning is folded in a syncretic thought of a higher level, along with the former syncretism and analyticity; their distinction is thus lifted up (*aufgehoben*). This can manifest itself in apparently abrupt transitions from one truth

to another; the underlying reasoning is no longer evident. The different levels of *intuition* are formed in this way.

To certain extent, the three levels of reasoning are present in the behavior of higher animals, and they can also be identified with the stages of the development of human intellect. Thus, the early thinking in complexes is related to the syncretic style, while the formation of concepts after the age of 6–7 years marks the transition to the analytical level, which dominates in most humans for a major part of their lives. Mass transition to the synthetic style would require specific social conditions, overcoming the division of labor that has objectively formed on the stage of civilization, next to the primitive communal system. However, isolated individuals may develop synthetic thinking even within the dominating analytical tradition; since no real thought is possible without bringing different things together, most people experience mental synthesis once in a while. Inability to have such an experience would cause a severe mental disorder manifesting itself in abnormal behavior, low socialization and lack of purposefulness and responsibility.

In a well-organized society, education system must train people to combine different styles of reasoning, depending on the task. Adequate thinking is to reproduce the objective hierarchy of the cultural context, and hence it will be hierarchical itself. A conscious being can universally employ any style of reasoning and action, freely refolding the hierarchy whenever necessary. The division of labor limits individual development, restricting one's thought to a number of standard patterns, the preferable styles of reasoning forming the core of personality. Such preferences, reflecting the position of the person within the culture, influence the choice of activities, and, eventually, different activities become traditionally coupled with definite styles of thinking. Thus, art is often associated with syncretism, science with analyticity, and philosophy is thought of as being an essentially synthetic activity. This division reflects the distinction of the primary forms of ideas (products) of the respective level of spirituality: art is working with *images*, science is *concept*-based, philosophy produces *categories*. However, such an attribution can only be relative to a specific culture, and there are numerous hierarchical combinations, like philosophical art, syncretic science *etc.* Moreover, every single act of thought involves all the three levels as its indispensable aspects, which is related to the hierarchy of activity, and the very idea of consciousness as a link between its levels.

Of course, human activity cannot never be reduced to mere thinking, or to reflection in general. There is a hierarchy of behavioral patterns resembling the hierarchy of reasoning. One could also consider a similar hierarchy of communication styles. All these hierarchies become institutionalized in various cultural formations, built upon the same economical basis, the current mode of production.

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