

# Emergence of Variation, Individuality and Individuation

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Dear colleagues,

Unlike some of the contributors to the Conference on “Problems of Individual Emergence”, I wish to avoid ideological biases, humanism and other value laden and often quite romantic approaches to the topic. Rather I would like to consider emergence of individuality and as well as on occasional instances of ontogenetic individuation that are culturally valued or glorified in the light of what we all seem to have learned from physics, biology, anthropology and communication/control theory.

Woman, the naked ape, by herself, is nothing, although — shall I admit— on occasions she can be quite interesting. As *Animal Symbolicum*, thus called by Ernst Cassirer, she, at this point in her brief history, competes with viruses, bacteria and insects for local supremacy in the cosmic panspermia.

Woman’s biological and psychological phenotype is the product of **mating**, *i.e.*, sexual assortment of genes to produce living matter, and **culturing**, *i.e.*, subsequent cultivation of the living material in prepared nutrient media, be they physical, chemical, physiological, psychological, social or cultural. One could say, that Woman is therefore a product **genetic programming** through her biological parents and **didactic programming** primarily through her family and educational institutions. These are variously distributed through time and space and thus transmit various packages of genes and memes to different specimen at different times in their histories.

The sexual and social **assortment** of genes and memes is the first and second major sources of variation. Such a conception of human development would account for the some of the considerable phenotypic variety that is evident, and perhaps for some individuality.

However, the greatest and most significant departures from the usual are caused by the third source of perturbation, **error**, *i.e.*, un-received, faulty, mistimed, unintended, misinterpreted, rejected and spurious transmissions, and transmissions, real or mistaken messages from accidentally encountered or imagined sources.

The fourth major source of variety of human organisms is the universal **historicity** of matter, which in complex matter is of paramount importance. Reactions to stimuli not only provoke external responses, but also produce internal changes in structure. Thus identical subsequent stimuli operating through the historically modified structure now provoke different responses. A species as well as a specimen at different times in its history, has different receptivity and different responses (internal and external) to objectively identical stimuli. We thus have the emergence of not only inter-individual, but also intra-individual variety.

These increases in variety one can observe both in phyllogeny as well as in ontogeny. In human ontogenetic development, that is the development of individual organisms, there are, coinciding with the emergence of *Homo sapiens sapiens*, two other major sources of variety. From certain point in his phyllogeny on, Woman, as Gordon Child should have put it, “makes herself”.

Generally emphasized is Woman’s ability to make tools. What is relevant in this context is more specifically Woman’s ability to **prostithenai**, to add to herself – I neither mean a mate nor do I mean children – I mean perfume, flowers, pelts, caves, automobile caves, aphrodisiacs, uppers and downers, artificial limbs (first archeological evidence 45,000 years ago), tooth fillings (8,000 years ago). There are endless other portables, insert and implants: drugs, chips, pacemakers, umbrellas, tents and satellite x-ray telescopes, musical instruments, and language encryption media (artificial memories), milestones and directional signs in space and clocks. We construct and frequent mind-altering habitats and ingest

mind-altering drugs. We take immunological modifications (inoculations) for granted and are opening ourselves to genetic modifications and cloning.

Another source of variety for the individual are the social networks in which he participate. Karl Otto Appel (and after him Habermas) has called it *die Kommunikations-Gesellschaft der Kommunikanten*. An image is of the individual as a computer on a net receiving and sending variation, due to distributed hardware and information differences, communication imperfections, error and heat generation.

The content of all that incessant communication, or its scripts, we call **culture**. For Womankind, it is the last and supreme source of variation and potentially individual emergence. Having been thrown into the world as it then was (including the culture), Woman uses culture as a bootstrap to stand out of the world and to become authentic. At the same time, without perhaps yet having a regulator physically implanted in her limb, heart or brain, and thus becoming a cyborg, she is equally a robot of her abstractions, a **cultorg**. Abstract ideas, not part of her biological nature, have been implanted in her: endoskeletons like time, space, information, money, language, grammar, logic, symbols, math, operations (*e.g.*, multiplication table), polysemy and the *tabula oppositorum*, concepts, rhetoric and literary devices, style, scales rhythm, comic and tragic structures and endless other algorithms, programs, paradigms.

All these additions: physical, chemical, social and cultural prosthetic devices constrain and at the same time give autonomy, liberate and empower. They amplify Woman's stubbornness to stand out from the word as it first presented itself to her, to become authentic, by becoming something different from it. The variation she becomes can be random and yet conscious. Or she may strive for individuation by imitating a model that a culture offers her. Every culture has a panopticum of gods, devils, saints and villains, heroes and creeps, idealized ghosts, *eidelons* offered to entertain, to be enacted, or be embodied. Occasionally, in a demonic act of individuation, as Kierkegaard called it, a woman or a man may succeed in his or her own horrible and splendid deformations by force or deviousness to establish itself amongst the stars on the firmament of culture and assert "*Ecce Homo!*" or "*Ecce Femina!*" — here am I, having emerged unique.

To invent a new prosthetic device on the cyber-cultural level is to become a modern Lucifer or a modern Prometheus: depending on your temperament and/or your values, a bringer of enlightenment or of evil, a donator of warmth and energy or an incendiary and an initiator of the apocalypse. Like them or not, physical, biological, chemical, social and cultural inventors emerge too as products of variability and individuation.