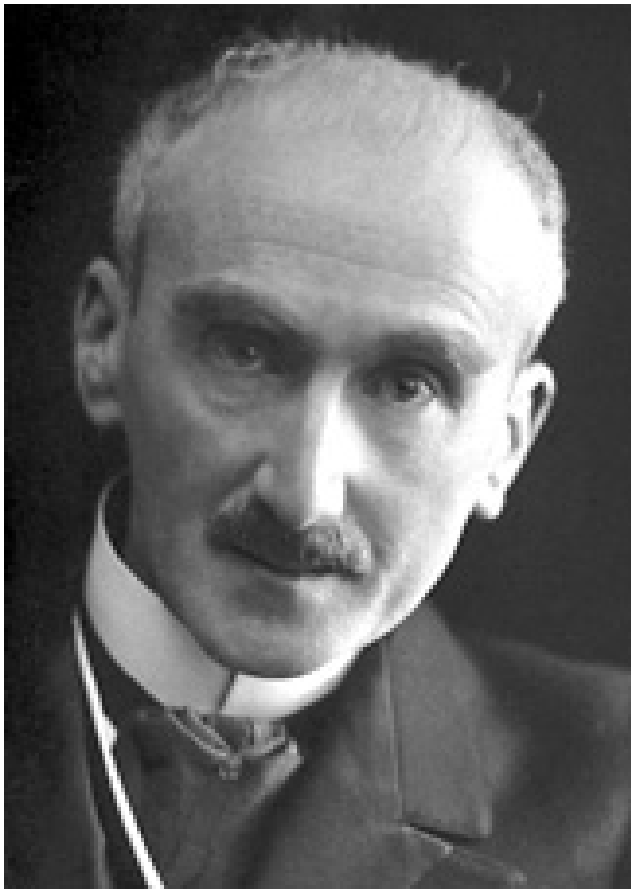


Nothing but time: Duration, systems theory and musical creativity

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“How are the production and appearance of something new possible?” (Deleuze 1986, 3).



Henri Bergson

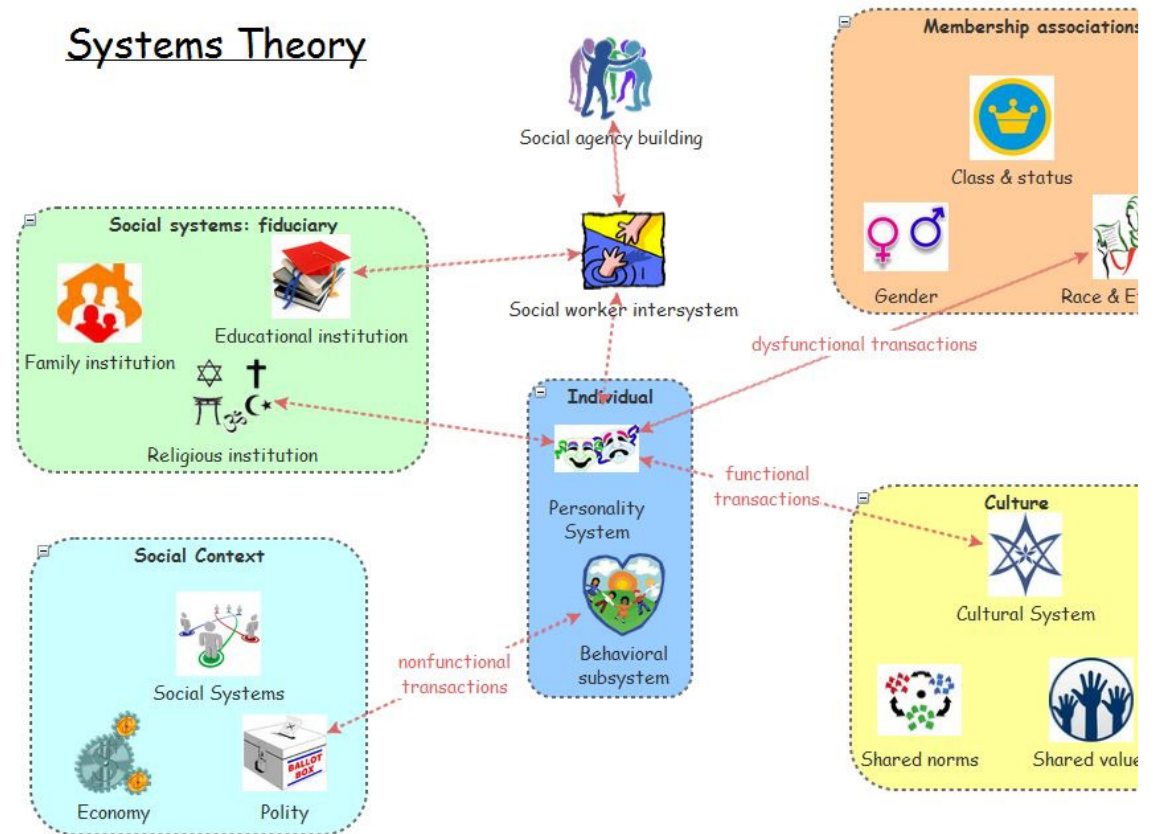


Gilles Deleuze

Two views of creativity



Romantic inspiration (finalism)



Systems theory (mechanism)

Bergson's critique

- “All is given”
- These models don't include TIME
- Thesis: Creativity is movement in time.
- Time (duration) is difference (change)
- Difference is a creative force operating in time to produce newness
- Life is the interval that introduces indeterminacy and creativity (time) into mechanical systems

Time as duration

- Clock time – quantitative, divisible, measurable, linear, spatial – char of matter
- Duration – qualitative, continuous, indivisible change – characteristic of **life**



Time flies when you're having fun!



Stay bored and live forever

Paradox

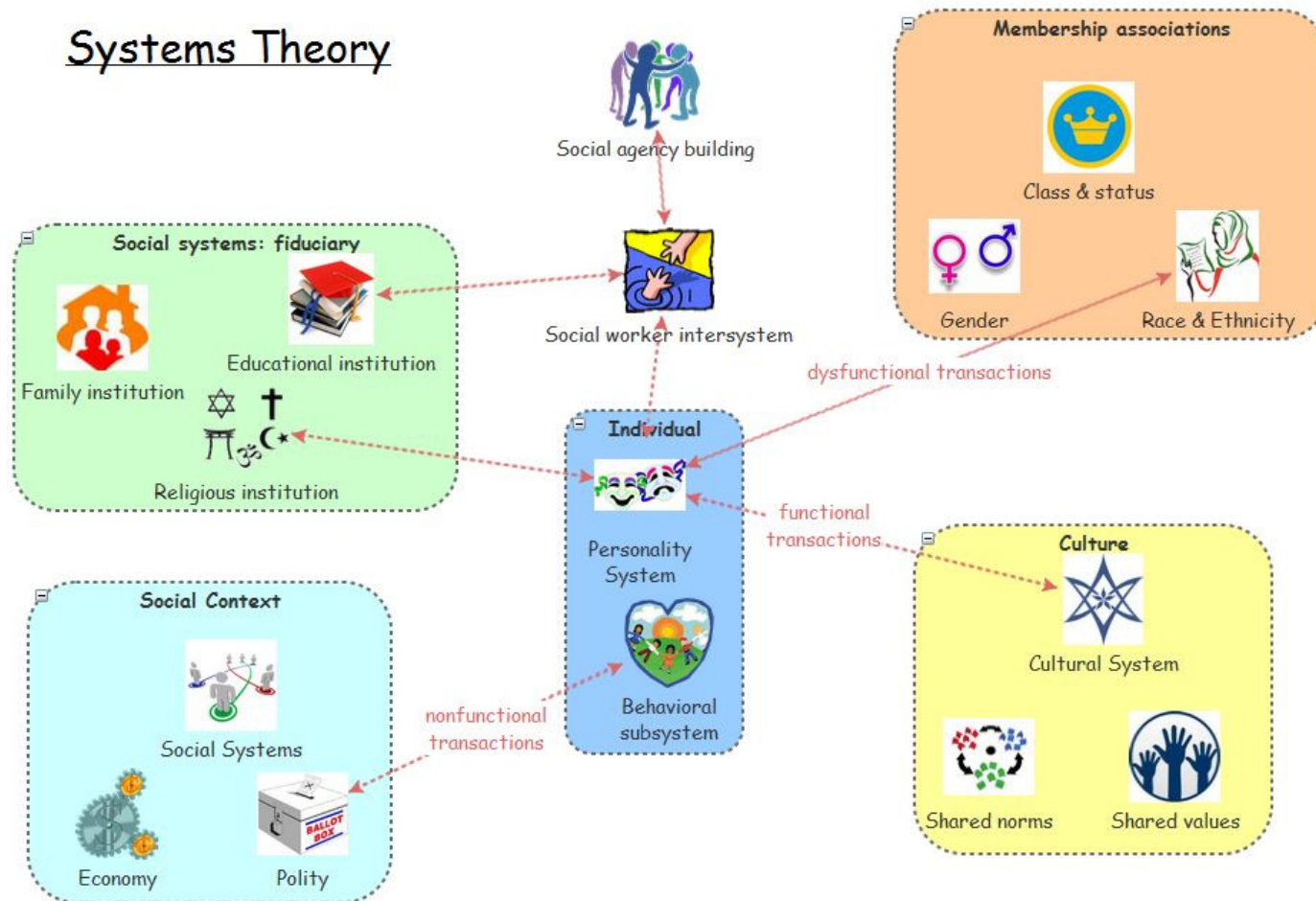
- Where logic collides with lived experience
- Bergson's philosophy of time produces paradoxes eg:
- change/difference is fundamental
- nothing is more than something (eg in music "there is no such thing as silence") (Cage)
- a work of art precedes its own possibility
- creativity, far from being a kind of optional add-on or culmination of experience, is a fundamental generative principle

Movement

- Zeno's paradoxes of motion
- Achilles and the tortoise
- Space is divisible, but movement is indivisible
- Movement occurs in time
- "If I consider parts, abstractly, I cannot understand the movement which goes from one to the other" (Deleuze, 1986, 8)

Systems theories

- McIntyre (2006, 2008), Csikszentmihalyi (1988), and Toynbee (2000)



Systems theories - mechanistic

- Set out agents and possibilities in various fields, structures or domains
- creativity arises from interactions between them
- Social process, not just about author
- Newness as a recombination of existing parts
- Problems - how novelty is possible in a field where everything is already given?
- How agents “choose possibilities”?

- McIntyre, Toynbee and Csikszentmihalyi propose that creativity is an “activity whereby products, processes and ideas are generated from antecedent conditions by the agency of someone ... and the resultant novel variation is seen as a valued addition to the store of human knowledge” (McIntyre 2006, 202).

No two blades of grass are the same



Problems with systems theories...

- How do we know something is novel? Because the field tells us so – circular argument
- “the information that goes into the creative idea existed long before the creative person arrived on the scene” (McIntyre, 2008, 41).
- The idea of “choosing” between possibilities
- Systems theories spatialise – logical
- Field (spatial metaphor)

The possible and the real

- Conventionally the possible comes before the real, and is less than the real
- for Bergson it is the opposite way round – the reality of a creative work precedes its possibility
- It creates possibility
- Analogy - creative process of evolution

McIntyre (2006) on “Yesterday”

- It’s always possible to explain something in retrospect, but this is to look for the mirage of the past in the present, ie to relocate the possibility before the act



The evolution of music scenes – eg The Dunedin Sound

- “If the event can always be explained afterwards by an arbitrary choice of antecedent events, a completely different event could have been equally well explained in the same circumstances by another choice of antecedent – nay, by the same antecedents ... otherwise perceived” (Bergson 1965, 122).



The Clean

Music creates people, not the other way round

- Rather than identities creating music, music creates identities. It's "not that social groups agree on values which are then expressed in cultural activities ... but that they only get to know themselves as a group *through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement. Music is a living of ideas" (Frith 1996, 111).

Why recreating that “cool” demo never works...

- What appear as choices retrospectively are not primarily experienced as choices at the time. Would the same choices lead to the same work? No, because time has moved on – the choices could not be the same because they would carry the weight of experience (having previously made these choices)
- Creativity is not a repeatable process, or rather it can be repeated – but it will be different.)

Waiting...

- “It quite frequently happens that you’re just treading water for quite a long time. Nothing dramatic really seems to be happening... And then suddenly everything seems to lock together in a different way. It’s like a crystallization point where you can’t detect any single element having changed. There’s a proverb that says that the fruit takes long time to ripen but it falls suddenly” (Eno, quoted in Tamm, 2006 p. 76).

Time and creativity

- When a child makes a picture puzzle ... “The operation does not require a definite time... theoretically, it does not require any time... because the result is given... but to the artist, time is ... not an interval that can be changed without the content being altered. The duration of the work is part and parcel of the work.... the time taken up by the invention is one with the invention itself ... Time is invention or it is nothing at all” (Bergson 1944, 359-61).

Conclusion

- Time as duration is difference - creative
- You can't take time out of the creative process without losing what is creative about it
- If we see creativity only in term of its parts, we lose the movement that unites them
- The movement connects the parts to the Whole, but it is an open Whole
- Like a melody – which is a movement in time, is not reducible to a series of notes

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