

Ever since I have been able to hear, people have told me I'm different, and I watched to see if what they said was true. And it is true, Father. I am different. People told me my kind have a certain way of moving, and I looked at myself in the mirror almost every evening. They were right. I do have a certain way of moving. I can't help it. And I watched to see whether it was true that I'm always thinking of money, when the Andorrans watched me and thought: now he's thinking of money – and they were right again. I am always thinking of money. It's true. And I have no backbone. I've tried, it's no use. I have no backbone, only fear. And people told me that my kind are cowards. I watched out for this too. Many of them are cowards, but I know when I'm being a coward. I didn't want to admit what they told me, but it's true. They kicked me with their boots, and it's true what they say. I don't feel like they do. And I have no country. You told me, Father, that one must accept that, and I have accepted it. Now it's up to you, Father, to accept your Jew. (Andri to Priest)

This quote is from the play “Andorra” by Max Frisch. For many years, Andri has been viewed and treated as a Jew by his fellow Andorrans. He fought against this identity for a long time. When the priest finally reveals to him that he actually does not come from a Jewish family, he realizes how much he has already internalised this identity. Now he self-confidently demands due recognition from the others.

Long before I consciously decided to study (social) psychology, this quote had inspired my interest in the question of **how the social gets into the individual and how the social unfolds through the individual**. The quote illustrates the power of social influences, especially self-stereotyping processes, but also the possibility of counter-power and individual as well as collective resistance.

It was and is my hope that social psychology can make an important enlightening contribution to the understanding of the fundamental sociality and sociability of humans. The social psychological approach is fundamentally **psychological** because it is based on the premise that the social operates through (the mind and heart of) the individual and not above people's heads (as quite a few sociologists assume). At the same time, the social psychological approach is fundamentally **social** because it seeks to understand the individual in the context of his or her social relations and interactions with other people and groups rather than investigating him or her as an abstract, isolated entity (as many psychologists do). In the division of labour among the different scientific disciplines, social psychology therefore plays a crucial mediating role between sociology's focus on macro processes and psychology's focus on micro processes.

The almost insoluble task is to let neither the power of others, nor our own powerlessness, stupefy us. (Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia)

Social psychology asks how people behave in social contexts and why they behave as they behave. In my view, however, social psychology not only asks questions about the status quo, it also questions the status quo. Social psychology is a **critical**, not an affirmative science. It always also asks what could be and how this could be attained. In accordance with Adorno's admonition, social psychology ought to work against stupefaction, especially because “the power” is typically suspicious of “the mind” and too often seeks to corrupt it.

On the basis of this self-understanding, my co-workers and I investigate the social psychological foundation of individual and collective identities and their role in intra- and

intergroup behaviour, with particular emphasis on minority-majority relations. Our research revolves around the phenomena of power, respect, and tolerance, as well as processes of politicization.

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