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For the love of experience: changing the experience economy discourse

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CHAPTER 3

Now experience is not a matter of having actually swum the Hellespont, or danced with the dervishes, or slept in an opium den. It is a matter of sensibility and intuition, of seeing and hearing the significant things, of paying attention at the right moments, of understanding and coordinating. Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him. It is a gift for dealing with the accidents of existence, not the accidents themselves.

ALDOUS HUXLEY,
TEXTS AND PRETEXTS,
1932, P.5

Experience concepts in an integrative theory

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will work towards solving the limitation of the environment-centred approach in business and marketing literature: the fact that scholars conceptualize experiences as products and focus mainly on the objective features of these products. They focus on what the organization can and should do to produce a successful experience and seem especially interested in the internal processes that are used for the production of a successful experience. By focusing primarily on what the organization can and should do internally, the viewpoint of the individual is neglected and experiences are being treated as commodities to be bought and sold. The environment-centred approach thus consists of a biased discourse of business and marketing scholars who focus primarily on the role of organizations in producing experiences as economic offerings with the 'right' objective features and neglect the variety of other conceptualizations of experience. In this chapter I will therefore give an answer to the question: "How can experiences be conceptualized from an individual's perspective?"

When one perspective is made dominant and other perspectives are neglected this can lead to problems. A focus or perspective highlights certain aspects of reality and downplays others (Dewey, 1958). One should thus be careful with claims concerning the truth of one's constructed meaning based on this perspective. The fact that individuals have an incomplete view of reality becomes even more problematic when they are 'autistic' in the Dutch philosopher Arnold Cornelis' (1995) words. The autistic individual knows that his area of expertise does not cover the whole reality, but pretends and claims that it does (Frankl, 1985; Cornelis, 1995). Lear (1998) calls this attitude 'knowingness': the individual decides upon a standard or definition and becomes uncritical towards it. MacCannell and MacCannell (1982, p. 58) speak of the "illusion of immanence", which refers to the individual's dogmatic belief in a meaning by promoting the individual subjectivity to a position of theoretical and/or practical centrality. Being able to deal with multiple viewpoints or perspectives enables one to

have a better and more complete view of reality. I will therefore discuss the concept of experience from various different perspectives, using literature on experience from diverse disciplines, ranging from psychology, to philosophy, anthropology, and so on.

I will draw heavily on Martin Jay's (2005) extensive study on the evolvement of interest in the concept of experience in many different schools of thought over time. The discussion of multiple different conceptualizations of experience is meant to show the reader that in fact the environment-centred approach of experiences in business and marketing literature is biased towards just one conceptualization of experience: experience as an economic offering of which the organization can control and optimize the objective features and which as I will argue should not be called an experience. The distinctions between different conceptualizations will lead to a spectrum of experience-concepts that will be presented at the end of this chapter. This spectrum is meant to offer conceptual clarity in the often-confusing discourse on experiences by showing that there are multiple perspectives on the subject. Whether one is discussing, studying, organizing for, or in some other way dealing with experiences, one should first reflect on these perspectives and understand their implications.

The inward focus of organizations on the objective features of experiences as defined in the environment-centred approach is thus one of the possible perspectives on experiences and hence provides limited knowledge about experiences. In the next paragraph I will draw on literature from various disciplines with different perspectives on experiences to find out which concepts of experiences can be distinguished, with the aim of attaining a more complete view on experiences.

3.2 Definitions of experience

As was presented in paragraph 2.3, an overview of definitions and descriptions of the term 'experience' shows that there are three ways in which experience can be approached. Based on these definitions and descriptions one could say that an individual gains experience (in the sense of certain effects, like emotions of skills) resulting from his experience (in the sense of encounter, personal observation or

contact) with an experience (in the sense of events, objects or activities in the environment). These are all aspects of an experience, and while one can try to distinguish between them, they cannot be separated for together they form what I will call experiences.

In 'Songs of Experience', the intellectual historian Martin Jay (2005) does not give an account of what experiences are or might be, but of the reasons "why so many thinkers in so many different traditions have felt compelled to do precisely that" (p. 1), why they have felt compelled to explain the concept of experience to the world. In this book, Jay has made a comparative analysis of the various discourses related to the term 'experience' though time. He has not chosen one specific perspective on the term experience but has explored many diverse contexts for understanding experience (like for example the epistemological, cultural, political, religious and aesthetic contexts) and combined insights from both European and American traditions and thinkers. This makes his work an essential source for explaining and understanding the many variations that exist in the conceptualization of experience. Within Jay's analysis of the extensive amount of literature on experiences certain developments can be recognized, related to how the concept of experience has been dealt with in the past. I will describe these developments and use them to make a distinction between various concepts of experiences.

3.2.1 From secondary to primary experience

To explore and discuss the different conceptual variations that exist for the term 'experience', one first has to find out where experience begins and what is the basis for distinguishing what is considered as experience and what is not. The way in which experiences are described by business and marketing scholars in the environment-centred approach, seems to indicate a separation of the individual from the world. The focus in this approach is on the objective features of experiences as objects in the environment (see paragraph 2.4.1), hereby creating an imaginary, although highly influential, boundary between the individual and those objects in the environment. The assumption that there exists a boundary, separation or chasm between the individual and the world surrounding him or her in experiences causes much

confusion about what can be called an experience and what not. By highlighting that in an experience an individual is 'in' the world and therefore necessarily in contact with the world he or she is in, several philosophy and psychology scholars have tried to separate experience from non-experience.

Reed (1996) for instance, distinguishes between primary and secondary experiences, the latter not being experiences according to him. Primary or ecological experience is defined as "the information (…) that all human beings acquire from their environment by looking, listening, feeling, sniffing, and tasting - the information, in other words, that allows us to *experience things for ourselves*" (Reed, 1996, pp. 1-2). Because of this experience, people can make sense of the world and their daily life. Secondary experience on the other hand, means that "information is processed - selected, modified, packaged, and presented" (Reed, 1996, p. 3), "externalized" in Sveiby's terms (1997, pp. 81-82), providing at best second-hand or indirect knowledge (Reed, 1996). The meaning this secondary experience has, is determined by and dependent on one's primary experience; it derives from the relation of the processed information with its sources. In other words, one needs firsthand experience with a subject, to be able to make sense of a story about that subject according to Reed (1996). Day expresses this thought as follows: "Information is pretty thin stuff, unless mixed with experience" (Day, 1921).

The difference between primary and secondary experience can also be found in the theories of John Dewey (1958), who claims that an important criterion of what may be called an experience is contact of the individual with the 'raw material'. To clarify the concept of raw material, he uses the metaphor of explorers of a territory, who produce a map of the territory and make it available to others. The explorers move through the uncharted terrain and record their movements. Reed (1996) would call this primary experience. The map that the explorers draw based on their experience of the terrain, consists of distilled information, not of the experience itself, and hence it would be called secondary experience by Reed (1996). As Dewey (1902) points out, the map only represents the information, not the experience. The experience, primary experience in Reed's (1996) terms, involves contact with the raw material from which the information, or secondary experience in Reed's (1996) terms, was distilled. In the case of the explorers, experience is represented by direct sensory contact and interaction with the area. The resulting map can never replace the experience of the

journey because it cannot represent this sensory contact and interaction and the meaning the experience had for those making the journey. The map is merely a reified expression of the experience.

Wenger (1998, p. 58) defines reification as "the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into "thingness."". However, by focusing mainly on certain aspects of the "thing" other possible meanings are neglected (Jay, 2005; Dewey, 1958). Although an advantage of secondary information like a map, would seem that it can be easily communicated to others who may acquire the information and then use it to have their own experiences, this loss of meaning may cause severe problems as has been discussed by many authors. A map, painting, book or other physical embodiment of information, can be handed over to someone else. Even non-material expressions can be presented to other people, for example by telling a story or singing a song. The actual experience and its meaning to the individual, the so-called raw material that was discussed above, however, is ineffable, which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to convey it verbally to others (James, 1902; Maslow, 1970; Saane, 1998). The meaning of the experience, the raw material, cannot be transferred in any direct way, since it is a personal construction. Telling someone about what one has experienced does not transfer the experience itself to the other person and can cause the loss of meaning. This problem has led for instance the Dutch Resistance Museum (Verzetsmuseum) in Amsterdam, to take a different approach in communicating the meaning of collaboration and resistance in the Second World War. Telling visitors of the museum about the choices people had to make during the war period would give them secondary experience, or information. But this museum "poses the same questions as those faced by people living in The Netherlands during the Nazi occupation: Adapt? Collaborate? Strike? Report? Go into hiding? By placing the visitor in the position of making choices, the complex issues of resistance and collaboration are brought home, and at the same time brought up to date. Similar choices are faced daily by those caught up in modern conflicts around the world. The material culture of the Second World War can in this way be more effectively brought to life" (Joke Bosch, 2000 in (Richards, 2001, p. 66)). By placing the visitors in a similar position, it is hoped that the raw material, or what it may have meant to people who were alive in that period and who were faced with this type of questions in their daily life, becomes

more meaningful than if visitors would merely read facts about that period and information on the choices that other people in the past have made. Obviously the visitors of the museum are not living in a war situation and do not have to suffer the perhaps severe consequences of the choices they make, something people making choices during the war had to. In this sense one cannot say that they are in complete contact with the raw material. I will explore this point deeper in paragraph 3.2.2 where I discuss vicarious experiences.

The risks of communicating about experiences and their meaning have been explained by Maslow (1970) in the context of religion:

"Much theology, much verbal religion through history and throughout the world, can be considered to the more or less vain efforts to put into communicable words and formulae, and into symbolic rituals and ceremonies, the original mystical experience of the original prophets. In a word, organized religion can be thought of as an effort to communicate peak-experiences to non-peakers, to teach them, to apply them, etc.

Often, to make it more difficult, this job falls into the hands of non-peakers… The peak-experiences and their experiential reality ordinarily are not transmittable to non-peakers, at least not by words alone, and certainly not by non-peakers. What happens to many people, especially the ignorant, the uneducated, the naïve, is that they simply concretize all of the symbols, all of the words, all of the statues, all of the ceremonies… In idolatry the essential original meaning gets so lost in concretizations that these finally become hostile to the original mystical experiences… Most religions have wound up denying and being antagonistic to the very ground upon which they were originally based" (Maslow, 1970, pp. 24-25).

Not only are experiences not transmittable from people who have had the experience to others who have not had it, but often indeed communication involves two people who have not had the experience, as could for example be the case when a young guide in the abovementioned Dutch Resistance Museum tries to explain the dilemmas of people during the Second World War to visitors of the museum who haven't experienced the war personally either. Other examples would be lessons in which a teacher educates students on topics like the French Revolution or the lunar territory. The teacher will not have experienced the revolution, nor will he or she

have walked on the moon, so he or she will have to rely on the information that exists on these subjects.

This does not mean that having an experience is impossible in all situations in which secondary experience is involved. Reading a book about cycling gives one primary experience with books, not with bikes, just as looking at a map can never substitute for making the journey. The map, as all information, summarizes and distils previous individual experiences. It can serve as a guide for future experience, preventing useless mistakes and leading more efficiently to the desired goals. Reading a book about cycling will not be enough for learning how to ride a bike, but perhaps it can help in preparing the individual for the experience.

Information is thus not final. Its value is not intrinsic but it is a means to get from the more casual, tentative experiences of the past, to more controlled and orderly experiences in the future. The information should enable the individual to have better experiences in the future (Dewey, 1971), what Bacon (in Jay, 2005, p.31) referred to as experientia literata, informed or learned experiences.

Problems arise however when the process of experiencing is neglected in favour of the outcome; when the journey is neglected and maps become "fetishized as timeless entities indifferent to their effect on their beholders" (Jay, 2005, p. 165). Secondary experience is valuable if it helps the individual in having primary experiences, but the basis always has to be this primary experience in reality.

The main aspects of secondary and primary experiences that have been discussed in this paragraph are summarized in table 3.1.

Secondary experience		Primary experience
Objective, focus on features of objects in the environment		Subjective, focus on perception of subject of experience
Information, reification	→	Contact with the raw material
Dogmas and textual authority, knowledge is conceptual, borrowed		Sense data, knowledge by acquaintance
Transferable		Ineffable
Value is in the object itself		Value is in eye of beholder
Filtered and selected experience		Direct and immediate experience

Table 3.1 – Characteristics of the shift from secondary experiences to primary experiences

Although very different, primary and secondary experiences both have advantages and disadvantages and one cannot universally claim that one is always to be preferred over the other, although Reed (1996) and Dewey (1958) do exactly this by stating that primary experience is preferable over secondary experience. Over time, the acknowledgement and acceptance of secondary and primary experience as sources of knowledge have varied. Until the 17th century, primary experience was frowned upon, because of the rationalist tradition that held in esteem certainties and intellect, not the "messiness and uncertainty of everyday life" and "the imperfections of mere opinion" (Jay, 2005, p. 13) that were related to primary experience. Knowledge that was derived from primary experience, as it was conceptualized in those days, was seen as perspectivist and fallible knowledge, opposed to the objective and certain knowledge and the eternal and universal truths of science (Jay, 2005). Experience was mainly viewed as a merely subjective, partial reflection of the world, in which the individual sees the world not as it is, but as a source of possible gratifications for his specific personal needs and motives. Given the personal nature of the needs and motives, the perception of reality is highly subjective within this line of reasoning, and would not lead to truth. Therefore some argued that experiences should be dealt with as objects.

In this sense the experience of one person should be equal to that of another person (Jay, 2005). By using instruments like microscopes and telescopes for perceiving reality

to improve on or augment a person's own sensory perception, they hoped that (a part of) the uncertainty of sense-based perceptions could be diminished, and that the use of instruments would lead to more certain and more equal data (Jay, 2005). In the 18th century the focus shifted and sense-data that are derived from primary experience became seen as the real foundation of knowledge (Jay, 2005). Knowledge that was not based on primary experience, in other words secondary experience, was by some considered to be "borrowed" (Jay, 2005, p. 92), and not leading to true knowledge. The true foundation of knowledge was not to be found in dogmas or textual authority anymore, but in the sense data derived from primary experience (Jay, 2005, p. 43).

Even today, there is still discussion on what should be preferred: primary experience or secondary experience. Especially developments of technology and mass media cause a large increase in the amount of secondary experience that individuals are confronted with. On the one hand there are the critics of this development, who say that an excessive focus on secondary experience would lead to a 'Society of the Spectacle', in which, because of the loss of primary and direct experience, reality is a mere accumulation of images and representations (Debord, 1994) and individuals are mere spectators of pseudo-events (Jay, 2005; Boorstin, 1964). The selection and filtering of what happens in primary experience for creating secondary experience can of course pose a risk if one takes the secondary experience as an accurate representation of reality. The fact that secondary experience is a selected and filtered and therefore by definition a partial representation of reality, means that this representation can give a distorted view of reality. Information and images can be framed in many different ways that may influence the interpretation of what they mean. If one bases one's beliefs, views, and opinions on a distorted representation of reality, this may cause severe problems, ranging from irrational decision-making (e.g. Tversky and Kahneman's (1981) 'Asian disease problem') to severe consequences for democratic principles in society (Dewey, 2004; Boorstin, 1964).

On the other hand there are those who claim that secondary experience can be extremely useful in situations in which primary experience is risky or even impossible. The example given above of the Dutch Resistance Museum, is an example of a vicarious experience. Vicarious experience is sometimes the best available option that exists for approximating the primary experience. Primary experience would

necessitate going back in time to the war itself, which is impossible. Pure secondary experience, for example in the form of facts and figures on the war in history books would lie at the other extreme of the primary-secondary scale. The solution that the museum had chosen lies somewhere in between these two extremes. It is not primary experience of the war, since this is impossible, but being placed in the shoes of someone who has to make choices in a dilemma, it is likely that the vicarious experience helps visitors more in understanding what living with those dilemmas will have meant for people in that time than facts and figures in a book (Pugh & Bergin, 2005). Current technological developments make vicarious experiences more feasible and more pervasive, which is why I will pay specific attention to this type of experience in the following paragraph.

3.2.2 Vicarious experience

What distinguishes vicarious experiences is that a) the individual is not directly in contact with the raw material of the experience (is not having a primary experience) and b) although there is no direct contact of the individual with the raw material and the experience can therefore be considered to be secondary, something is done to create the illusion of contact with the raw material in a less filtered and framed way than there would be in a pure secondary experience.
Based on the degree to which the primary experience is filtered and framed and based on the proximity of the actual raw material to the individual having the vicarious experience, I want to argue that vicarious experiences can be seen as an in-between type of experience, between primary and secondary experiences (see figure 3.1).

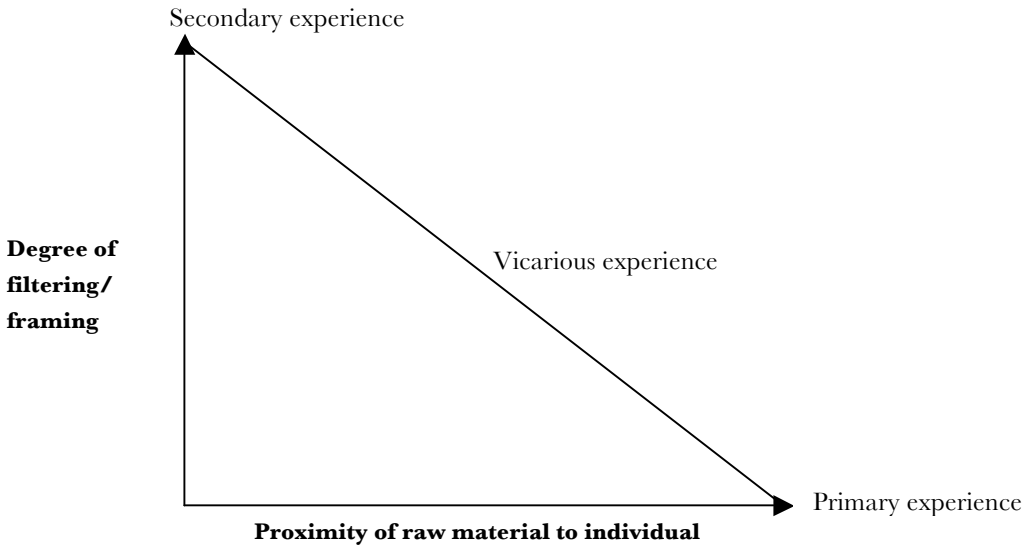


Figure 3.1 – Vicarious experiences are an in-between type of experiences, between primary and secondary experiences.

As can be seen in figure 3.1 I consider secondary experience and primary experience as two extremes on the axes of framing and filtering and proximity of raw material to the individual. Secondary experience according to Reed (1996, p.93) has been modified, selected, or produced by another person, like a map, text and images in books, a movie, etc. I have therefore placed it at the top of the framing and filtering axis. The fact that the information has been framed and filtered by someone else, means that there is an "externally imposed limit to one's scrutiny of it" (Reed, 1996, p.94). Primary experience consists of direct contact with one's surroundings by the senses; there is no other person who selects or filters what the individual will be able to see, hear, smell, taste or feel. The degree of filtering and framing is minimal. Primary experience also has a very high proximity of the raw material to the individual who has the experience. He or she is the one who experiences the raw material firsthand by using the senses and the experience has or could have direct consequences for him- or herself (Simonsohn, Karlsson, Loewenstein & Ariely, 2008). Secondary experience means that there is a large distance between the raw material and the individual and his senses and there are no direct consequences for the individual. For instance, in

principle everything can be written down, but for the text to have meaning for the individual, he or she has to make sense of it based on primary experience. In themselves the data have no intrinsic meaning. Symbols on a map for example may mean anything, this is why there usually is a legend accompanying the map, although the individual also has to know how to read a legend in this case. Vicarious experience, I argue, lies somewhere between these two extremes. It is often not as filtered and framed as secondary experience and there is no direct contact of the individual and his or her senses with the raw material.

Vicarious experience: when primary experience is impossible or undesirable.

One can imagine that the use of vicarious experience does not merely exist in situations where primary experience is impossible because the raw material takes place in the past like in the example of the Dutch Resistance Museum described in the former paragraph. It may be that one wants to have someone experience raw material that hypothetically takes place in the future, or raw material that takes place in a place or space where physical presence is impossible (e.g. the sun or inside a bacteria). With the rise of e-commerce and online shopping it also becomes more and more useful to offer opportunities to vicariously experience products because of the lack of opportunities for the physical evaluation of products beforehand. Also in these cases it may be useful to apply technologies that help the individual with having a vicarious experience because it makes the process more comfortable and easier (Smith, 2006).

Martin Jay (in Goodman, 2003) explains in an interview that by creating a distance between the individual and the raw material, vicarious experiences are often sought for because of their safety and lack of risk. The distance between the individual and the raw material makes experiences virtual, which according to Jay go together with the commodification of experiences: "The 'theme-parkization' of history, the commodification of tourist experiences and such thrill-seeking activities as bungee jumping and extreme sports are all examples of the way that we now purchase experiences. It should be noted, however, that for the most part these experiences are vicarious. Obviously the experience of jumping off a bridge with a bungee is not the

same as jumping without one. But this is even truer of the intense experience of horror when we watch a movie or the thrill we get from an amusement park ride. We experience these emotions second hand, knowing that we are safe even as we scream. In the horror movie, for example, we self-consciously watch a virtual horror and can hide our eyes while we sit in our seats rather than run away. The virtualization and the commodification of experience seem to go together" (p. 117). In fact, also Boorstin (1964), in his critique on commercialized experiences, makes the connection between commodification and virtualization. He claims that democratic revolutions have caused people to expect access to art and literature. But to make art and literature accessible to all, "they had to be made intelligible (and inoffensive) to all… garbled, emended, watered down, and taken out of context – all in order to make them bland and digestible to uncultivated palates" (Boorstin, 1964, pp. 119-120). It shouldn't be too difficult for people to understand, it shouldn't be risky or offensive, in other words, it should be safe and comfortable for everyone. Because of the distance between the individual and the raw material (see figure 3.2) these vicarious experiences are safer than primary experiences. One does not have to be in the middle of a war but one can read about it, watch it or play it out on the computer, safely in the comfort of one's own home. One does not have to struggle through complex literature, as is shown in the following fictional passage of a conversation between two young ladies: "First young lady: "Have you seen Omnibook? It takes five or six books and boils them down. That way you can read them all in one evening." Second young lady: "I wouldn't like it. Seems to me it would just spoil the movie for you."" (Boorstin, 1964, p. 118).

Lee (2002) describes a different situation in which primary experience is not impossible, but in which it is considered as unacceptable and politically as well as culturally undesirable. He explains how vicarious experiences can be used in sexual education in Hong Kong. There still lies a taboo on this topic and many teachers therefore refer students to images of birth control devices and the human reproductive system in books. This secondary experience may lead to the accumulation of factual knowledge but the intention of sexual education is of course not just to prepare students for an exam where they can reproduce book-knowledge, but rather to influence the actions of students outside of the classroom and "allow

them to make sensible and informed decisions in their future sexual lives" (Lee, 2002, p. 189).

There are many examples of how vicarious experience can be used to substitute for primary and secondary experience, for example by using models or virtual simulations, showing movies, telling stories, showing other people's behaviour etc., to influence things as diverse as individuals' attitude towards the police (Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins & Ring, 2005), behavioural reactions to pain (Turkat & Guise, 1983), teachers' practice (Conle, Li & Tan, 2002), cardiac surgery patients' recovery (Parent & Fontin, 2000) and individuals' self-efficacy in general (Bandura, 1986).

As was discussed above, vicarious experiences may take many different forms and to my knowledge there exists no clear overview of these different forms. I will therefore construct a model that clarifies which types of vicarious experiences can be distinguished on what grounds.

Mediated vicarious experiences

If one takes into account that the individual's senses and various perceptual processes mediate all experience, one can distinguish between first-order and second-order mediated experiences (ISPR, 2000). First-order mediated experience then actually refers to primary experience as discussed above, since it is the natural way of experiencing reality, by perceiving the environment via the senses. Second-order mediated experience according to the International Society for Presence Research, refers to experience which has not only been mediated by the human senses but also by human-made technology. Human-made technology can refer to electronic media (e.g. television, HDTV, radio, film, telephone, computers, virtual reality, simulation rides, videogames, videoconferencing systems, text- and graphic-based instant messaging systems), traditional print media (e.g. newspapers, books, magazines), traditional arts (e.g. paintings and sculptures) or technologies that correct or enhance human perception (e.g. visual aids and hearing-aids) (ISPR, 2000; Lombard & Campanella Bracken, 2003).

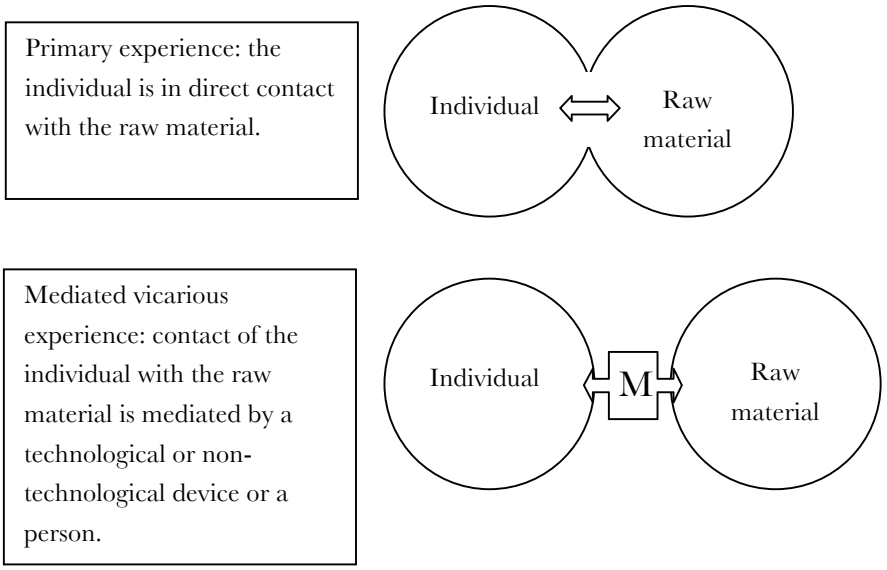


Figure 3.2 – Primary experience versus mediated vicarious experience

I see mediated vicarious experiences as a broader concept than just the technologically mediated experience. A vicarious experience may be technologically mediated, in the sense that there is a technological device that separates the individual from the raw material, or non-technologically mediated. Examples of a technologically mediated vicarious experience could be watching webcam-images of wildlife or watching an event via the Internet. In these mediated vicarious experiences, the individual has sensory contact with the technological device separating him from the raw material. In the examples mentioned the device can be a computer screen, a mobile phone screen or a TV screen, depending on where the individual has access to the Internet. A non-technologically mediated vicarious experience would be hearing a friend tell a story about his holidays, reading a book about Harry Potter or seeing a play in the theatre. In these examples there is no technological device that separates the individual from the raw material, but there none the less is distance between the individual and the raw material. The person telling the story, the author who has written the story and the director of the play filter the information.

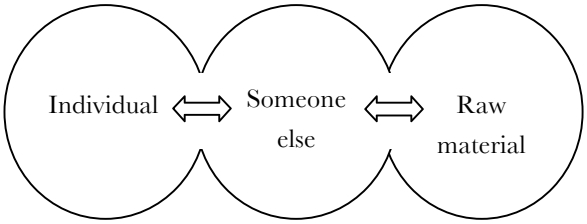
Obviously, there are more variations within this category of mediated vicarious experiences, besides whether they are technologically or non-technologically mediated. A well-known difference between reading a book and watching a movie, is for example that a book allows for more imagination on the part of the reader (Boorstin, 1964). In movies one can see and hear many things that one has to imagine when reading a book, for example what the main characters look like, their tone of voice, the environment in which he story unfolds itself, etc. This aspect becomes especially clear when one watches a movie that has been based on a book that one has read. On the other hand, because the creator of the movie has filled in these aspects and because watching a movie is a very visual and auditory experience, more senses are directly involved than in reading a book (Boorstin, 1964). However, it should be clear that reading about or watching something on screen, is a very different experience than being physically present in the events themselves, although efforts are made to decrease this difference (see the discussion of presence under 'simulated and immersive vicarious experiences').

Observational vicarious experiences

When one observes someone else having a primary experience, I call this an observational vicarious experience. A primary experience has or could have consequences for the individual himself, while observing someone else having a primary experience, means that that individual suffers or enjoys the consequences, not the observing individual (Simonsohn, Karlsson, Loewenstein & Ariely, 2008). According to Bandura (1986) this is exactly what observational learning or modelling consists of. An individual pays attention to someone else doing something and is able to remember it and later on reproduce the action. Attention, retention and reproduction are three of the four conditions for modelling or observational learning, the fourth is motivation; in other words, the individual needs a reason for repeating the action or for not repeating it. Whether the individual will be able to remember and reproduce the actions (the second and third criteria) depends on his abilities. Whether the individual will pay attention to the model and feel motivated to act on the observational learning in his real life (the first and fourth criteria), depends partly on the context. If one is in a very busy environment with many distractions for example, it will be more difficult to pay attention to the model. If there is very little

opportunity in the life of the individual to be involved in the actions of the model, there will be little reproduction. However, attention and motivation are also said to depend for a large part on the relationship with the model. Individuals will for example pay more attention to models who are seen as prestigious, attractive, dramatic or similar to oneself (Bandura, 1986).

Direct observational vicarious experience: the individual is in direct contact with another individual who has a primary experience.



Mediated observational vicarious experience: contact of the individual with another individual having a primary experience is mediated by a technological or non-technological device.

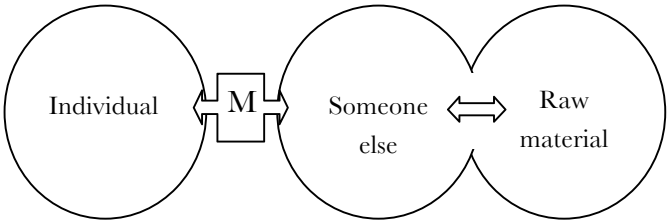


Figure 3.3 – Observational vicarious experiences

The individual does not necessarily have to be in the physical presence of the model to have a vicarious experience and to feel related to the model. The model may also be a persona in the media. In fact, much research has been done in the relationships that individuals may develop with these personas, so-called 'para-social relationships'. Horton and Wohl (1956) define this type of relationship as the "seeming face-to-face relationship between spectator and performer" (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Para-social interaction "occurs when individuals interact with a mediated representation of a person as if the person were actually present. That is, individuals behave as if they are having an interaction with a *source* when in fact they are *only* relating to the *medium*" (Nass & Sundar, 1994, p. 1). The difference between a face-to-face relationship with a 'real' person and a para-social relationship is that there is a lack of reciprocity. "The

interaction, characteristically, is one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the performer and not susceptible of mutual development" (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 215). The individual, who can be seen as a member of the audience of the performer, does not necessarily have to repeat or avoid the actions of the performer later on, but he can choose to respond to the actions of the performer in many ways (e.g. by talking back to the television or by becoming emotional). Responses like for example empathy and other vicarious emotions will be discussed in the next paragraph. According to Bandura (1986) it would be impossible for an individual to learn everything firsthand via primary experience and continuous processes of trial and error. Also, there are certain skills, like for example language-skills, which would be near impossible to learn if not via this type of observational vicarious experience. This makes this type of vicarious experience not only very frequent but also very important in an individual's life.

SIMULATED AND IMMERSIVE VICARIOUS EXPERIENCES

Where in primary experiences the individual is in direct contact with the raw material, in a simulated vicarious experience he or she is in contact, directly or via a medium, with a simulation or account of the raw material. A part of the raw material is selected by an external party and made into a physical or virtual simulation or an account for individuals to experience. In the example of the Dutch Resistance Museum, the individual was not brought into contact with the whole raw material of the Second World War experience, but one part of this had been selected out by the organizers, namely: how to deal with dilemmas. By playing this scenario out, visitors were intended to understand the raw material. In simulated vicarious experiences the individual is actively taking part in the experience and the interaction is reciprocal.

The difference can be clarified by juxtaposing two examples of vicarious experiences. When watching a movie, an individual cannot change the course of events in the movie, while when playing a computer game he can. Especially in virtual reality the individual can explore the world on his own and even create new parts of the virtual world if he desires to do so. This is something that can't be done in a movie. The movie is what it is and in this sense it is just as one-sided, nondialectical, controlled by the creator and not susceptible of mutual development as the para-social relationships

that were described above. Watching a movie can be what I call an immersive experience if in some way the individual gets the impression that he is 'in' the movie. By using techniques as 'first person perspective' and various 3D IMAX technologies etc, the distance between the individual and what happens in the movie is intended to decrease and an illusion of non-mediation is evoked. The script of the movie is fixed and the interaction is therefore non-reciprocal, but the individual is not just watching a movie from a distance but he is immersed 'in' the movie via his senses. Experiences in which there is an illusion of non-mediation are also called experiences of (tele-)presence (Reeves Timmins & Lombard, 2005). Presence means that the individual fails to completely and accurately acknowledge the role of the mediating technology in the experience and because of this he may for example feel like he is in a different location or environment than he actually is, or that the objects, events or persons he is interacting with via the medium are physically present (ISPR, 2000). Experiences that evoke an illusion of non-mediation or presence I will call immersive vicarious experiences.

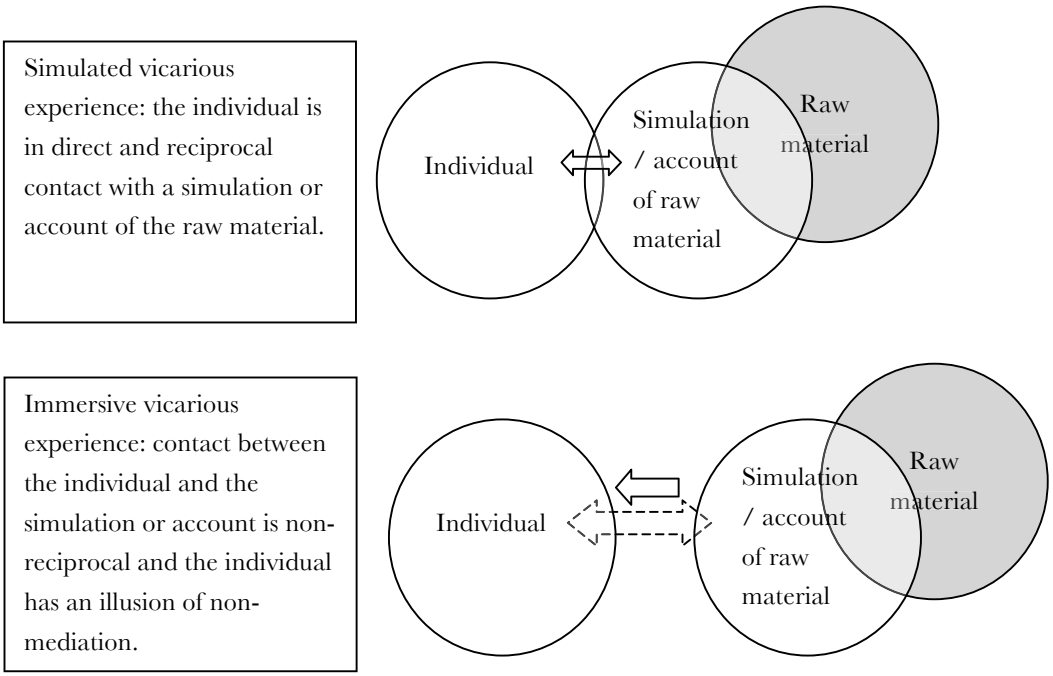


Figure 3.4 – Simulated and immersive vicarious experience

Quite recently also the reversed phenomenon of presence, inverse presence, has gained attention (Reeves Tommins & Lombard, 2005). Possibly because of the increasing number of mediated experiences that individuals nowadays are confronted with, "(i)n a variety of contexts, people are experiencing not an illusion that a mediated experience is in fact nonmediated, but the illusion that a nonmediated "real" experience is mediated" (Reeves Tommins & Lombard, 2005). There are for instance occasions in which individuals perceive a natural scene as a picture or nature documentary, or individuals who experience a traumatic event as if it were a movie that can be switched off.

Overview of vicarious experiences

Experiences that do not evoke an illusion of non-mediation, do not enable the individual to participate or engage himself with a model, simulation or account of the raw material, do not consist of contact, mediated or not, with some other individual who has or has had primary experience and do not consist of direct contact of the individual himself with the raw material, are what I consider to be pure secondary experiences. If all that has been discussed in this paragraph is combined, an overview of the different sorts of vicarious experiences can be created in the form of a tree-diagram (see figure 3.5). By asking the questions presented in this diagram, one can simply follow the branches of the tree, resulting in an answer to the question of whether one is dealing with a primary, secondary or vicarious experience and when the answer is neither primary or secondary experience, what type of vicarious experience one is dealing with.

The whole discussion on what type of vicarious experience one is dealing with, may seem like a useless semantic discussion but given the confusion that exists about what is experience, what it is not and how one can get an overview of different types of experiences (see chapter 2), this discussion is all but useless. If everything is called an experience, different terms are being used for the same phenomenon and the same terms for different phenomena, then the confusion in the experience discourse will never be resolved. Also, technological developments enable more evasive vicarious experiences, which makes it more important to have a clear understanding of what a vicarious experience is and which sorts of vicarious experiences can be distinguished.

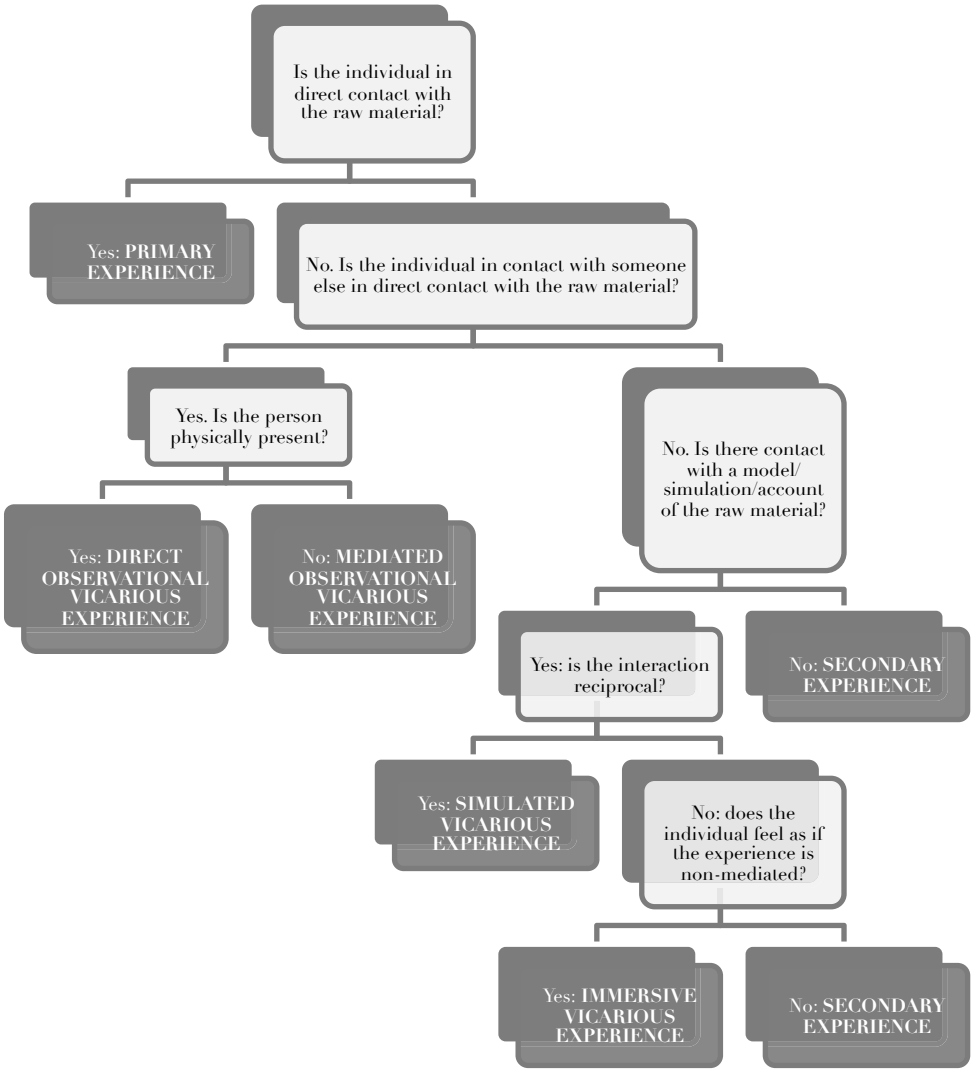


Figure 3.5 — Tree diagram of varieties of vicarious experience

As was argued in the discussion of the research problem in chapter 2, ambiguity with respect to terminology makes the literature on the experience economy difficult to organize and understand. The still dominant position of secondary experience in

Description of vicarious experience example (and source)	Flow through tree diagram of vicarious experiences in Figure 3.5	Type of vicarious experience
Dilemmas in WWII (Joke Bosch, 2000, in (Richards, 2001): Placing visitors in the position of people living in The Netherlands during the Nazi occupation by asking them the same questions and having them make similar choices.	No direct contact with RM[14], no contact with SE[15], contact with MSA[16], reciprocity	Simulated vicarious experience
Sexual education in HongKong (Lee, 2002): Presenting models of the male and female reproductive organs to students to simulate the workings of contraceptive devices.	No direct contact with RM, no contact with SE, contact with MSA, reciprocity	Simulated vicarious experience
Individuals' attitude towards the police (Rosenbaum et al, 2005): Interviewing people on their attitude towards the police based on their primary (direct) and vicarious (indirect) experience with the police.	1. Person with the encounter: no direct contact with RM, contact with SE, physical contact 2. Media or friends/family: no direct contact with RM, no contact with SE, no MSA	1. Direct observational vicarious experience 2. Secondary experience
Behavioural reactions to pain (Turkat & Guise, 1983): Showing a film in which a person either terminated the exposure to a pain stimulus and the task at hand after 10 seconds or after 70 seconds.	No direct contact with RM, contact with SE, no physical contact	Mediated observational vicarious experience
Teachers' practice (Conle et al, 2002): Having teacher candidates read literary autobiographies in order to gather data for their own personal narrative of teaching and learning.	No direct contact with RM, contact with SE, no physical contact	Mediated observational vicarious experience
Cardiac surgery patients' recovery (Parent & Fontin, 2000): Offering dyadic support by former patients exemplifying the active lives they are leading to help patients who had to undergo cardiac surgery.	No direct contact with RM, contact with SE, physical contact	Direct observational vicarious experience

Table 3.2 – Examples of vicarious experiences and the determination of the type of experience

[14] RM = raw material
[15] SE = someone else
[16] MSA = model, simulation or account

literature on experiences and the growing attention for mediated and vicarious experiences compels scholars to clarify what type of experience they are studying. By subsuming the abovementioned varieties of vicarious experience under primary or secondary experience, the effects of vicarious experiences go unrecognized. By using words to name the different conceptualizations and varieties of vicarious experience, the understanding and communication of what exactly one is talking about can be improved.

As can be seen in the tree diagram in figure 3.5 and as has been mentioned above several times: part of the answers that are given when going through the tree diagram are objective in the sense that there is contact with the raw material or there is not, there is someone else present or there is not, etc. However, at the lower end of the diagram, the question is not a matter of there being non-mediation or not, but of whether the individual feels as if the experience is non-mediated or not. This question has less to do with sensory perception than with the subjective impression that the individual has of what he is experiencing. The studies referred to above contained information on the objective as well as the subjective aspects of the tree diagram, which I have used to fill in table 3.2, as an example of how the tree diagram can help one to determine whether one is dealing with a secondary, a vicarious or a primary experience and if the experience is vicarious what kind of vicarious experience one is dealing with.

Although literature on experience in general seems to take the stance that experience always begins by sensory data, and that these sensory data are the basis of all experience, current developments in technology enable the creation of environments in which individuals are led to believe that they are having primary sensory experiences when they actually are not. Still, in a society with such an abundance of secondary experience, vicarious experience may at least be a first step in the direction of more primary experience. When primary experience is impossible or undesirable, vicarious experience, in which the individual more or less feels like he is having a primary experience, may be a valuable alternative. For this reason I will also incorporate the vicarious subjective responses that may be caused by vicarious experiences in the next paragraph.

3.2.3 From primary experience to subjective response

Around the mid-18th century a shift took place in the way in which authors spoke of experience (Jay, 2005). Until that moment the discourse on experience was focused on subjective sense data as was discussed in paragraph 3.2.1. From the mid-18th century the concept of experience tended more towards a focus on the even more subjective personal responses of individuals. Not the objects themselves, nor the sensory perception of individuals was deemed essential, but within this conceptualization of experience the focus is on how the individual responds based on his perception. Objects are admired not for what they are in themselves, neither for what they look, sound, smell, feel or taste like, but for what they can do to or for people and the feelings and emotions they evoke (Jay, 2005, p. 140).

The subjective response that in the context of experiences has received by far the most attention in literature is the hedonic response, or the experience of pleasure. For this type of response, personal sensual gratification or lack thereof is all that matters (Jay, 2005). When experiences are sought for because of the pleasure that can be derived from them or the pain that can be avoided because of them, we can speak of hedonic experiences. Much attention has been paid in literature to this type of experiences. Hedonic experiences are described as intense, positive, intrinsically enjoyable experiences, giving fun, excitement, pleasure, enjoyment and happiness to people (Stelmaszewska, Fields & Blandford, 2004). I will discuss hedonic effects in depth in chapter 4.

The main characteristics of differences between primary experiences and emotional experiences that I have discussed above are summarized in table 3.3.

Although according to literature on experiences raw material is the occasion for the subjective responses of individuals, in the last paragraph I discussed several types of vicarious experiences in which the individual has no direct contact with the raw material, but that can evoke a vicarious subjective response by the individual nonetheless.

Primary experience		Emotional experience
Subjective, focus on perception of subject of experience		Subjective, focus on response of subject of experience
Contact with the raw material	→	Raw material is occasion for response
Sense data, knowledge by acquaintance		Pleasurable feelings, emotions

Table 3.3 – Characteristics of the shift from primary experiences to emotional experiences

VICARIOUS SUBJECTIVE RESPONSES

To explain what vicarious subjective responses entail and how one differs from the other, I first want to discuss a phenomenon called cognitive perspective taking or cognitive role taking. When an individual observes another individual having a primary experience, directly or via a medium, he can imagine the mental states of the other individual without being himself emotionally involved. In the process he can recognize the other's emotions or the meanings of the emotional displays cognitively without being personally affected. One can for example imagine that someone else is angry when treated unjustly without feeling angry oneself. In fact, Thomas' (2010) description of 'mental imagery', or "quasi-perceptual experience" does not contain any reference to personal affection: "it resembles perceptual experience, but occurs in the absence of the appropriate external stimuli".

If the observation or imagination of another person's affective state does elicit an emotional response, so the individual himself is also in an affective state (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990; de Vignemont & Singer, 2006), the question is whether there is at least a minimal degree of differentiation between the individual and the observed other and whether the individual knows that the other person is the source of his own affective state (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990; de Vignemont & Singer, 2006). If the answer to this question is no, then we speak of 'resonance'.

Resonance is a subjective response in which individuals metaphorically relate two different sets of narrative experiences to one another in an unconscious way (Conle, 1996; Conle, Li & Tan, 2002). Usually resonance is used to denote the process in which an echo or re-sounding process is produced in reaction and response to an event. Conle (1996; Conle, Li & Tan, 2002) uses this term to denote an echoing or resounding process in the context of vicarious experiences. The vicarious experience, like for example the simulation or account or other expression of the raw material, functions as a metaphor and the individual relates this to his own previous primary or vicarious experiences so he may experience certain emotions without consciously being aware that the observation or imagination of the other person's emotional display has caused his emotions.

If the observation or imagination of emotional displays of someone else leads an individual to feel emotions too and if he knows that the other person's emotions are the cause of his own emotions, then the question becomes whether or not he shares the other's emotions. If this is the case, then we can speak of an empathic response of the individual. Although there is still much discussion about what empathy is exactly (Wispé, 1986), there seems to be agreement on some characteristics of empathy in literature.

An empathic response consists of the sharing of feelings when exposed to them so the individual's affective state is isomorphic to the other person's affective state (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972; de Vignemont & Singer, 2006; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990). When an individual observes or imagines someone else being sad and this saddens him, we speak of empathy. There is a correspondence of positive or negative tone, or a matching of affect (Gruen & Mendelsohn, 1986). When feeling sympathetic on the other hand, this isomorphism of feelings does not necessarily have to take place. The individual may feel sorry, concerned or worried when observing or imagining someone else being sad but it doesn't mean that he himself feels the same way. Sympathy also differs from empathy in the sense that in sympathy a desire or urge for the other person to feel better and a heightened awareness of another's suffering as something to be alleviated is involved (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990; Gruen & Mendelsohn, 1986; Wispé, 1986). The individual suffers with the observed person and feels compassion and an urge to help, to take whatever mitigating actions are necessary to alleviate the suffering.

CRITIQUE ON EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

There has been much critique concerning the focus on emotional experiences. The search for immediate sensuous pleasure is said to produce only isolated and meaningless moments of joy, indifference to all other values, boredom, and a hedonistic self-indulgence (Jay, 2005, pp. 152-153). Art critics in the sixties for example criticized the fact that works of art were used as mere occasions for the beholder's temporal reaction to them and that much contemporary art increasingly resembled mere entertainment (Jay, 2005). In the search for pleasure, people seem to behave as "collectors" of pleasurable moments (Jay, 2005, p. 313), an attitude popularly expressed as "been there, done that, bought the T-shirt".

These emotional experiences are in a way very passive. Individuals submerge themselves in a stream of sensations and rush from one experience to the next (Jay, 2005). The rate at which people are said to search for one pleasurable experience after the other does not leave time for reflection and the discovery of retrospective meaning, which has caused some thinkers to denounce the crisis of experience and others to argue "that the domination of a less healthy version of experience is precisely what defines the contemporary era" (Jay, 2005, p. 407). In fact, contemporary society has been described as an Experience Society ('Erlebnis-Gesellschaft', (Schulze, 2000)) in which the environment is manipulated with the aim of deriving pleasure from it, a society characterized by 'experience hunger' (Cauter, 1995) and the commoditization of feelings (Debord, 1994). The critique on this type of experiences and the alternative that is often presented by the critics can be better understood when the difference between Erlebnissen en Erfahrungen is explained, as I will do in the following paragraph.

3.2.4 FROM ERLEBNISSEN TO ERFAHRUNGEN

In the developments described above the focus was either on the inherent qualities of the object or on the subjective perception or response of the subject. In the 20th century however, many thinkers from different disciplines decided that the gap between the subject and the object had to be bridged (Jay, 2005, p. 263). The difference between the 'gapped' types of experience and the bridged types, can be

explained by referring to the distinction that has been made between the German equivalents of experience: Erlebnis and Erfahrung. Also other, especially Northern-European, languages contain a distinction between different translations of the term experience, for example Finnish (elämys and kokemus), Norwegian (opplevelser and erfaring), Swedish (upplevelse and erfarenhet), Danish (oplevelse and erfaring) and Dutch (belevenis and ervaring). Given the extensive attention that German scholars have paid to the meaning of the German terms Erlebnis and Erfahrung and the distinctions between these, I will use the German terms to make the distinction between different meanings of the term experience. Erlebnis and Erfahrung have come to imply two very different notions of experience (Jay, 2005, p. 11). The verb "erleben" means "to be still alive when something happens" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 53) and thus shows the immediacy of the moment of experience. Erlebnis generally connotes a more immediate, pre-reflective, and personal variant of experience (Jay, 2005), with a focus on instantaneity and the totality of sensorial experience (Mommaas, 2000). Erlebnis can be described as a "shock-like breakdown" or "non-narrativizable interruption of normal life with intensity as its goal" (Goodman, 2003, p. 117). The immediacy of Erlebnis is shown in this focus on intensity but also in its focus on immediate gratification of needs (Mommaas, 2000). In fact, the modern selling of experiences, and their commodification, has primarily to do with Erlebnissen, leading to the immediate gratification of individuals who 'buy' experiences (Goodman, 2003; Schulze, 2000).

When individuals exert mental activities on an Erlebnis, for example by distancing oneself from it, contemplating or reflecting on it and making sense of it, it can become an Erfahrung (Jay, 2005; Mommaas, 2000). The individual is not just taking in or absorbing stimuli from his environment and neither does he merely have feelings of pleasure. There is some kind of cognitive processing involved, in the context of a long-term learning process, and the focus is not on the immediate gratification of needs (Mommaas, 2000). Where Erlebnis stands for a "shock-like breakdown" or "non-narrativizable interruption of normal life with intensity as its goal", Erfahrung connotes a creation or restoration of the coherence or narrative of an individual's life (Goodman, 2003), in the sense that a series of events in the past, present and hypothetical future are meaningfully connected in a temporal way and with a point of view (Georgakopoulou, 2004). The difference between Erlebnis, like primary and

emotional experience, and Erfahrung can be explained in terms of mental agency and a temporal dimension.

Mental agency

Compared to Erlebnissen, in Erfahrungen the individual is given a more active role. Experiences are not considered to be mere sensations or subjective responses, but as processes in which the individual interacts with his environment and in which he learns. "Experience in virtually all of its guises involves at least a potential learning process produced by an encounter with something new, an obstacle or a challenge that moves the subject beyond where it began" (Jay, 2005, p. 403). In fact, the overcoming of difficult situations like obstacles and challenges is even claimed to be present in the etymological root of the word experience itself: "Insofar as "to try" (expereri) contains the same root as periculum, or "danger," there is also a covert association between experience and peril, which suggests that it comes from having survived risks and learned something from the encounter (ex meaning a coming forth from) (…) it can also connote a worldliness that has left innocence behind by facing and surmounting the dangers and challenges that life may present" (Jay, 2005, p. 10). It is this unpredictable learning process that makes experience so valuable (Jay, 2005, p. 25).

The way in which individuals can learn based on experiences can be explained by using the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). The learning cycle begins with a so-called 'Concrete Experience'. This can be said to be the object in the experience, which can consist of anything in the individual's environment. It could be a physical object, but it could just as well be an event, an idea, a person, or even himself. First 'Reflective Observation' is needed. The individual has to be aware of the Concrete Experience and understand what it is, what has happened.

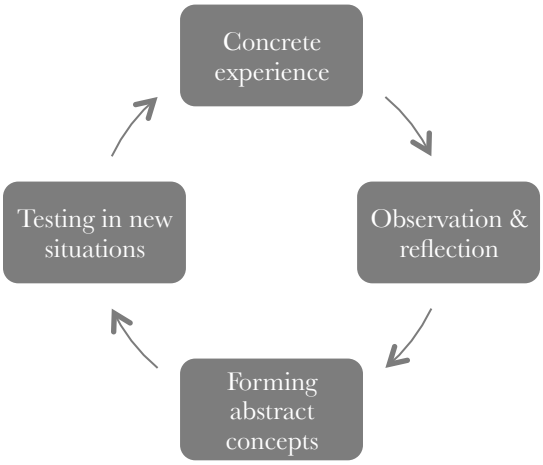


Figure 3.6 – Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

The relation between the Concrete Experience and the individual must be understood. The individual should understand what its consequences are for him and how it fits into his life or reality. The mere presence of a burn mark on one's finger (the Concrete Experience) will in itself not cause any learning. First of all it has to be noticed by the individual and it has to be related to the action that has caused it to happen, for example his holding his finger to close to the flame of a candle.

The third step in the cycle is 'Abstract Conceptualization'. When the individual is capable of understanding what the object means, what the consequences of this object are for him, he can try to form an abstract rule or concept, relating causes and effects, or the object and the consequences this has had for him, for future reference. In the abovementioned example a plausible abstract rule or concept would be 'stay away from fire.' Step four then consists of 'Active Experimentation', in which the individual takes his new-found abstract concept or rule back to reality to experiment with it, which might cause yet another 'Concrete Experience', taking the individual through the cycle again. Several other models of learning processes contain similar stages, like for example the Experiential Learning Model (Luckner & Nadler, 1997) and the Reflective Teacher Model (Ashcroft & Foreman-Peck, 1994). The cycle is a constant flow of doing and undergoing, of relating causes and effects (Winter, 1997). This

continuing flow in the interaction between an individual and his environment is essentially what distinguishes a meaningful experience from mere happenings. In this context, Dewey speaks of the "category of continuity, or the experiential continuum"-principle (1997, p. 33). "(E)very experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences. For it is a somewhat different person who enters in them… the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (Dewey, 1997, p. 35). The experience becomes part of the individual's narrative.

There are different ways in which individuals can deal with events and act upon them. All events are appraised by individuals as was shown in figure 3.6 and either correspond to or conflict with their personal concerns, which gives rise to emotions (Frijda, 1988b). Based on this appraisal the individual acts. When the event complies with his concerns, there are no obstacles and only positive emotions are evoked. Vasilyuk (1991) calls this a 'hedonic experience', which according to him is not a real experience since there is no obstacle or problem to solve. When the event conflicts with the individual's concerns on the other hand, his expectations are violated and he has to interpret the source of violation to determine the course of action. Based on the type of obstacle or problem, the individual can choose between three types of action: object-oriented practical action, mental reflection, or the generation of meaning (Vasilyuk, 1991).

Object-oriented practical action is recommended for problems that can be solved by physically reconstructing the situation. For example when confronted with a wild animal, there is not much one can do to solve the problem besides fleeing and hereby causing a physical change in the situation by distancing oneself from the animal. This type of experience is similar to what Vasilyuk calls a 'Realistic Experience.' Mental reflection is the second option the individual has in problematic situations. This type of action is recommended for situations in which the problem can be solved by adapting oneself to the new situation through reflection. When one has been invited for two parties on the same day, there is nothing one can physically do to solve the problem, one can only reflect on the choice to figure out what party to go to. This

choice depends on the person's value system, which has led Vasilyuk to call this type of experience a 'Value Experience.' The third type of action, the generation of meaning, is recommended for problematic situations that cannot be solved by using one of the other two types of action. When a loved one dies for example, the problem can't be solved by physically reconstructing the situation or by reflecting upon it. These situations are called 'Critical Situations', situations that are first and foremost characterised by impossibility (Vasilyuk, 1991). According to Vasilyuk (1991) the only thing a person that encounters such a situation can do, is to attach personal meaning to it. It is not a matter of discovering meaning but it is an active and creative process of generating and giving meaning to the event. This experience is called a 'Value Experience.'

Whether events are dealt with depends on their relation to the personal concerns of the individual. When this relation is conflictive the nature of the problematic situation determines the choice of action. Table 3.4 shows the different options.

Relation of event to personal concerns	**Course of action**	**Resulting experience**
Compliance	No course of action	Hedonic Experience (no experience)
Conflict	Object-oriented practical action	Realistic Experience
	Mental reflection	Value Experience
	Construction of meaning	Creative Experience

Table 3.4 – Ways of dealing with situations and the experiences that result from these

Depending on the situation at hand, the individual chooses a type of action that he expects will restore the balanced relationship with his environment (Jay, 2005, p. 359). In this sense experience is a transactional concept (Jay, 2005, p. 291). The relationship will of course not be identical to the relationship one had with the environment prior to the experience. Because of the conflicts resolved, the obstacles overcome, the things learned and the meaning created, there now exists a new balance. Dewey (1958) calls this process 'an' experience. He says that in practice, people are solving problems all day long but this does not necessarily mean that they are having 'an' experience. The

activity can be so automatic and mechanical that there is no conscious perception of what the individual is doing and what the relation is between what he does, why he does it and what the consequences of his actions might be. He is experiencing but not having 'an' experience in Dewey's (1958) terms.

People experience all day long because through their senses they interact with their environment. Even by just breathing we are interacting with our environment. But often the experience does not reach completion because people are distracted, interrupted, or not paying attention. For experience to become 'an' experience, Dewey (1958) concludes, it has to reach the phase of closure, or consummation. In this way the experience becomes a whole that enters our memory and shapes our view of the world. Everyday experiences, the occurrences and sensations we experience daily, that are disjointed and incomplete, are too ill-defined to offer a foundation for the future (Jay, 2005).

The completeness of an experience gives it a uniqueness; it demarcates the experience from the everyday stream of experience and becomes memorable. One can for example distinguish between ordinary experiences and extraordinary experiences (Abrahams, 1986). By contrast with ordinary experiences, extraordinary experiences always entail a sense of newness, triggered by unusual events, and they are characterized by high levels of emotional intensity.

Urry (2002) distinguishes different ways in which a division between the ordinary and the extraordinary can be established and sustained. First there is a unique object. There is only one real Eiffeltower, there is only one real Anne Frank house. Second there are particular signs. There are signs that indicate typical Englishness, Italianness, Americanness, Dutchness of a place which make it uniquely English, Italian, etc. Thirdly there are unfamiliar aspects of what had previously been thought of as familiar. Being able to explore unfamiliar aspects of things we know, like the human body or electricity, or weather, or the forest, can make for a unique experience. A fourth way consists of ordinary aspects of social life being undertaken by people in unusual contexts. To experience how for example public transport, education or health care works in a foreign country can make for a unique experience. Fifth is carrying out familiar tasks or activities within an unusual visual environment.

Although perhaps 'visual' can be extended to other senses, one can think of unique situations in which you sleep in a hotel made of ice, or you eat in a hot air balloon. Sixth and last are particular signs that indicate that a certain other object is indeed extraordinary, even though it doesn't seem to be so. A brick may seem like a normal brick until one reads the accompanying sign indicating that it is in fact a brick from the Berlin wall.

The uniqueness also causes the experience to have a single quality which differentiates it from other experiences. Dewey (1958, p. 37) comments, "An experience has a unity that gives it its name, that meal, that storm, that rupture of friendship. The existence of this unity is constituted by a single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts". "(S)omething becomes an "experience" not only insofar as it is experienced, but insofar as its being experienced makes a special impression that gives it lasting importance" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 53).

We are having 'an' experience when we perceive the relation between what we do and what we undergo, the causes and consequences. It is this relation that gives meaning to the experience and causes growth and development for the individual. When the individual carries out some activity, causing him to undergo the consequences of his actions, he learns only to the degree that he can relate his actions, his doing, to the consequences he undergoes. The impact that the experience has depends on the individual's perception of relationships or continuities to which it leads up (Dewey, 1997; Pugh & Bergin, 2005). The relationships between causes and consequences are transformed into relationships between means and ends, which the individual can use to invent, explore, create and experiment with, similar to the phase of abstract conceptualization in the Experiential Learning Cycle of Kolb (1984).

When experiences are described in terms of learning and the mental connection between causes and consequences, time becomes an important factor. Not only does the individual not enter the experience as a blank slate, but also the lessons that he learns, the meaning that he constructs, the abstract generalizations he makes, can all be used for future reference.

Temporal dimension

The discrete encounters with the environment over time leave some sort of permanent residue for the individual (Jay, 2005, p. 61; p. 330). In this sense, an experience has a temporal dimension as accumulated learning, and memory has a central position in experience. The experiences from the past and the knowledge the individual already has play a part in experiences in the present and since no one has experienced the exact same things and accumulated the exact same knowledge as another person in the world, experiences are highly personal. For example an individual who has learned everything about car mechanics and who has much experience in repairing engines, will have a different experience when his car breaks down than a layman who does not know anything of cars. In the same way an art critic sees an artwork differently, a professional musician listens to music in a different way, a head chef tastes food differently, a doctor perceives the human body in a different way, etc. These people have accumulated experiences and knowledge, which enables them to make more connections between causes and consequences, and hence to learn more and make more sense of the experience.

The accumulation of experience and knowledge of these people causes them to be able to connect what they know, which in their case is more than what their lay fellow men know, to their experience. In terms of meaning, they are able to have more meaningful experiences, caused by their ability to perceive the 'raw material.' Raw material, as Dewey (1958) argues, is not just the difference between information and experience as I discussed in paragraph 3.2.1 but, for example when experiencing a piece of art, can also consist of a realization in thought of "what the people into whose lives it entered had in common, as creators and as those who were satisfied with it, with people in our own homes and on our own streets," (Dewey, 1958, p. 4). The work of art should not be understood as the mere expression of the personal experience of the artist himself "which is then able to provoke a comparable lived experience in the reader, beholder, or listener. Instead, it should be understood to transcend the artist's emotional state and be able to arouse a feeling of concern in the recipient, following what he or she feels about the work itself" (Jay, 2005, p. 356). Whatever the reader, beholder or listener already knows or has experienced in the past, plays a part in his interpretation of the experience and the meaning it has for him.

Of course the present experience will also have effect on the experiences the individual will have in the future. Whatever he takes away from this experience, he will bring with him into the experiences to come. Erfahrung is then "a more temporally elongated notion of experience based on a learning process, an integration of discrete moments of experience over time into a narrative whole or an adventure" (Jay, 2005, p. 11). Graphically, the temporal difference between an Erlebnis and an Erfahrung can be expressed as in figure 3.7.

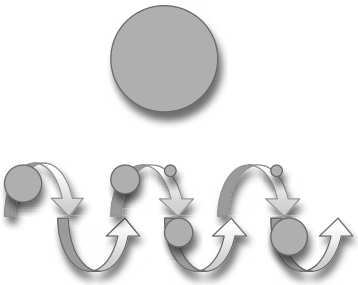


Figure 3.7 – The temporal difference between an Erlebnis and an Erfahrung

The main characteristics of this shift from Erlebnis to Erfahrung are summarized in table 3.5.

Erlebnis		**Erfahrung**
Separation of subject and object, and focus on passive subject.		Focus on active participation of subject with object
Pre-reflective	→	Mental agency involved by individual
Isolated		Cumulative, ongoing, moves individual beyond where he began.
Immediate		Mediated by connection of doing and undergoing, action and reflection, causes and consequences

Table 3.5 – Characteristics of the shift from Erlebnis to Erfahrung

3.2.5 From meaningful experiences to integrative experiences

For Gadamer (2004), genuine experiences are hermeneutical, recursive and self-reflective, in that they are constitutive of knowledge, but also function to provide the individual with "a new horizon within which something can become an experience for him" (p. 348). The meaning an experience has for an individual not only depends on his prior knowledge and experience but also on this 'new horizon', and the impact the experience has on the life of the individual (James, 1902; Saane, 1998). One can imagine that an increase in knowledge and experience in one area of life like playing chess or what apples taste best in a specific recipe has a smaller impact on the overall life of an individual than knowledge and experience to confront life's questions in general. The life context on which the experience has an impact, for which the experience has meaning, can vary from a very small part of life to life as a whole. Of course, this evaluation is personal. For someone playing chess for a living the meaning of an experience that causes him to improve his chess skills is greater than for someone who does not care much about chess. However, in both cases there is an 'expansion of meaning' caused by the experience, the individual gains knowledge and understanding.

The perceived relationships between causes and consequences, the lessons learned, the abstract conceptualizations, all become part of the individual and can now be used in every context they are needed. One can for example learn the laws of mechanics as isolated facts which have a certain use for the individual and thus a certain cash value. However, the cash value increases and the laws become much more meaningful when they 'boil over', when they are no longer mere isolated theoretical concepts that the individual has grasped and that he can use within one context, but principles he sees operating everyday in his own life and that cause a change in his perspective on reality as a whole (Jay, 2005, p. 282; Pugh & Bergin, 2005). He can now see things that, although they existed before, were not perceived by him. These experiences expand one's horizons and contribute meaning and value to future experience, "thus leaving us and the world itself irrevocably changed" (Jackson, 1998, p. 33). This irrevocable change is also referred to in the description of epiphanic experiences. There are four types of epiphanies, namely major, cumulative, minor or illuminative, and relived. "In the major epiphany, an experience shatters a person's live, and makes it never the same again… The cumulative epiphany occurs

as the result of a series of events that have built up in the person's life… In the minor or illuminative epiphany, underlying tensions and problems in a situation or relationship are revealed… In the relived epiphany, a person relives, or goes through again, a major turning point moment in his or her life" (Denzin, 1989, p. 17). What connects these types of epiphanies according to Denzin (1989) is that they are "interactional moments that leave marks on people's lives… personal character is manifested and made apparent… the person is never quite the same" (p.15). By living or reliving such an experience, one gains a new perspective on (some aspect of one's) life.

In essence, to have an experience is to come to see something in a meaningful new way in which things come together and fit together more than they did before and that opens up the possibility for more meaningful experiences. Baltes et al (1995) call these experiences "wisdom facilitative experiences" because the individual develops personally and gains wisdom in life experiences that involve dealing with difficult and uncertain situations in life, which enables him to confront other difficult situations in life. This result of experiences has been termed continuity, meaning that an appropriate experience modifies the person who has the experience, and the quality of subsequent experiences (Dewey, 1997). Continuity is desirable when it fosters growth and development, arouses curiosity and anticipation, and carries a person to a new and more coherent perspective of reality to be used in the future (Saane, 1998; James, 1902). Gadamer (2004, p. 350) argues that experiences are interminable: "the perfection that we call "being experienced", does not consist in the fact that someone already knows everything and knows better than anyone else. Rather, the experienced person proves to be, on the contrary, someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them". Experience result in an "openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 350).

The individual participates in an "event" of meaning, in which the individual himself and his horizon, or Lebenswelt, and all it contains, are involved, and in which this horizon or interpretive framework is widened when it is confronted with other horizons (Gadamer, 2004). "We could say that a meaningful action is an action the *importance* of which goes "beyond" its *relevance* to its initial situation. (…) An important

action, we could say, develops meanings that can be actualized or fulfilled in situations other than the one in which this action occurred. To say the same thing in different words, the meaning of an important event exceeds, overcomes, transcends, the social conditions of its production and may be reenacted in new social contexts," (Ricoeur, 1991, pp. 154-155), which has an influence on the individual's personal practical knowledge (Conle, Li & Tan, 2002).

Personal practical knowledge comes about through actions and experiences in the past and is usually not readily available to the individual's conscious awareness anymore because it has become amalgamated with his other experiences. It tacitly guides the individual's choices and actions and each new experience becomes part of the pool of personal practical knowledge available for further action.

The experience becomes part of the individual in such an intricate and profound way that it is even involuntarily recollected; even when in a completely different context, the lessons learned from the experience will be recalled and used (Jay, 2005, pp. 339-340). Graphically the difference between what I will call 'meaningful experiences', experiences with an isolated impact on one specific context, and 'integrative experiences', experiences that show a 'boiling over' effect and cause a change in the individual's interpretive framework or life-horizon, is expressed in figure 3.8.

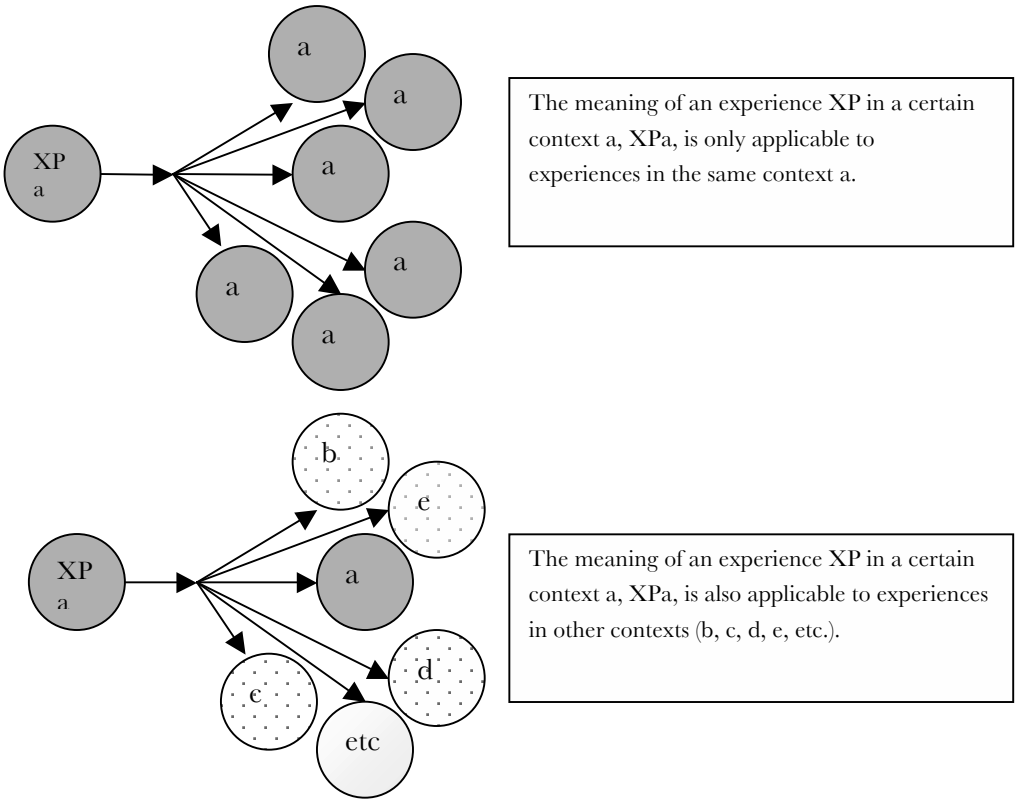


Figure 3.8 – Differences in impact between meaningful and integrative experiences

Pugh (2002; 2004) has used the term 'transformative experience' to refer to experiences of which the meaning boils or spills over to other contexts. He distinguishes three qualities to assess transformative experiences: motivated use, expansion of perception, and experiential value. Motivated use is a quality of transformative experiences that indicates whether individuals apply what they have learned in other contexts out of free will, when they are not required to do so. The quality expansion of perception refers to the degree to which the individual actively uses what he or she has learned to see some aspect of the world differently. Finally, the third quality of transformative experiences is experiential value. This quality is related to the value of what has been learned for the experience that it provides. The voluntary active use of what has been learned from the integrative experience and the valuing of the experience this provides can thus lead to a transformation of the

individual, transforming and enriching his experience with the world (Pugh & Bergin, 2005).

3.3 Conclusion: The spectrum of Experience-concepts

Based on the characteristics and descriptions of experiences that have been presented in this chapter, I have constructed a spectrum of experiences as an answer to the research question "How can experiences be conceptualized from an individual's perspective?" As we saw in chapter 2, there is much confusion in the discourse on experience since many things are being called experience. By using the conceptualizations of experiences described in this chapter, we can distinguish five different levels of experience: the secondary experience, the primary experience, the emotional experience, the meaningful experience and the integrative experience. The experiences are presented graphically in figure 3.9.

In figure 3.9 we see that the concepts of experience not only differ in the ways that have been described in this chapter but that they can also be placed on a scale according to their meaning for and impact on the individual. Objective knowledge, information and other reified forms of experiences have in themselves no meaning for the individual until he actually comes into contact with them. Going upwards along the spectrum the meaning that the individual attaches to the experience and the impact the experience has on him become greater. Primary experiences consist of a direct contact with the secondary experience that impact the individual's senses. Emotional experiences consist of an emotional impact of the primary experience on the individual. Based on the nature of these emotions and the type of situation, the individual attaches meaning to the experience, resulting in a meaningful experience. Finally when the experience has an impact on more than one specific context of the individual's life, it becomes an integrative experience.

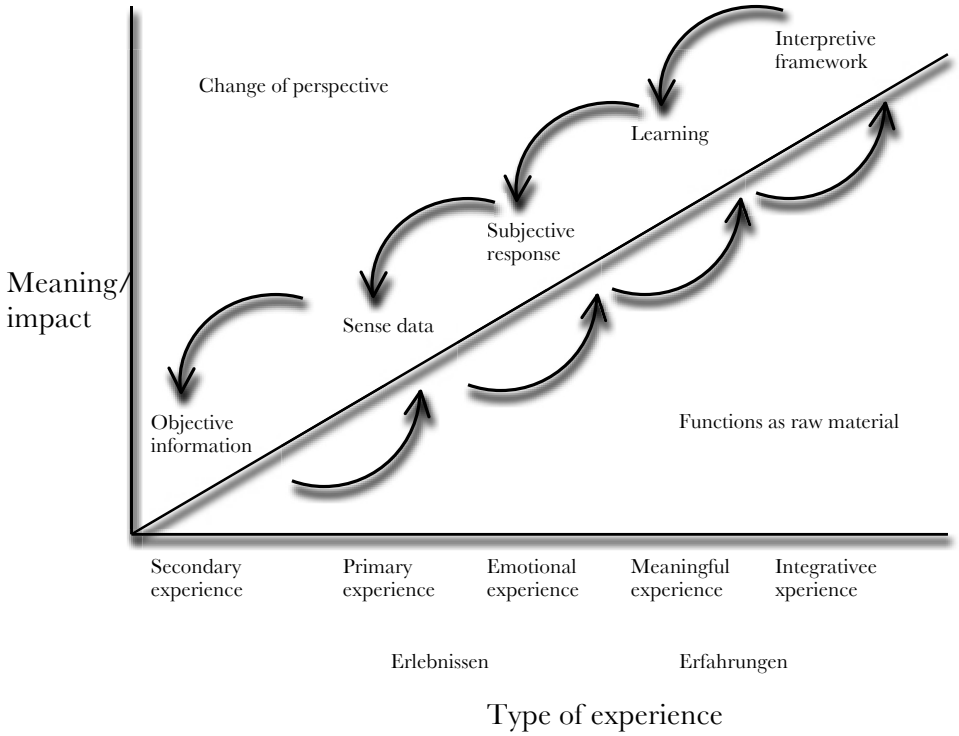


Figure 3.9 – The spectrum of experience-concepts

Every type of experience can then be said to function as raw material for the type of experience placed at its right side on the spectrum and to be needed for the ability to have the type of experience placed at its right side on the spectrum. Without an object to have contact with there can be no contact; without secondary experience there can be no primary experience. Without contact with reality there can be no emotional response to it; without primary (or as I explained in this chapter, in some cases vicarious) experience there can be no emotional experience. Without emotions that motivate the individual to act and to interpret the situation, there will be no meaningful experience. Without the construction of meaning within one context of life, it cannot boil over to other contexts; hence no integrative experience will be possible.

Looking from right to left, figure 3.9 shows that every type of experience causes a change of perspective on the experiences lying to its left on the spectrum. When in an integrative experience the individual's perspective on his whole 'Lebenswelt' changes, this will contain a change of perspective on the separate contexts that make up his lifeworld. In an integrative experience the interpretive framework of the individual is involved, which has impact on his whole perspective on life and reality and parts of his life and reality. When the meaning the individual constructs within one specific context changes through his learning process in a meaningful experience, his perspective changes and his emotional response towards the object changes with it. An example would be an experience in which the individual learns that lightning is not a sign that the Gods are disgruntled but that it is an electro-magnetic discharge of clouds. The perhaps initial fear of lightning may then disappear, based on this knowledge. When the individual's feelings towards the object change, his perception of it will also change. For example research shows a difference in the perception of odours between individuals who are interested in the object and individuals who are not (Bosmans, 2002). The perception of reality that provides sense data is in itself subjective. By using instruments like for example microscopes and telescopes for perceiving reality instead of a person's own senses, one hopes that (a part of) the uncertainty of sense-based perceptions will be diminished, and that the use of instruments will lead to more certain and more equal data (Jay, 2005). However, it should be clear that even when using instruments the perspective on reality changes relative to the instrument used. A microscope gives a completely different perspective on reality than a telescope for example. Perspectives and their influence on the experiences will be discussed in further detail in chapter 4.

The spectrum in figure 3.9 is helpful in explaining what the limitations are of the concept of experiences in the environment-centred approach and how these limitations can be solved. The environment-centred approach shows an inward focus on the objective features of experiences and experiences are presented to the individual without enough consideration for the individual and the interaction that together with the object form the experience. This concept of experience is very similar to the secondary experience located on the utter left of the spectrum. The individual is confronted with reifications of experience, and not enough attention is being paid to the aspects that are needed for experiences lying more to the right side

of the spectrum. In fact, Reed (1996) describes the risks of the present-day dominance of secondary over primary experience. According to Reed (1996), primary experience should be dominant since the meaning of secondary experience is derived from it. However, nowadays it is secondary experience that is often focused on, at the cost of primary experience. People are confronted with messages and facts that they haven't experienced for themselves.

By taking into account the characteristics of the different concepts of experiences on the spectrum in figure 3.9, the lack of attention for experiences that go beyond the level of the secondary experience and the dominant focus on the role of organizations in producing experiences as economic offerings with the 'right' objective features can be balanced out. Objective features produced by the organization are mere secondary experiences that function as raw material for the other types of experience and in the end it is the individual who decides what type of experience he or she has; not the organization.