THE CONCEPT OF APPROPRIATION (ANSEIGNUNG)
AND MODES OF APPROPRIATION OF SPACE

CARL FRIEDRICH GRAIMANN
PROF. DR. PHIL.

PSYCHOLOGISCHES INSTITUT
UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG
Hauptstraße 47 - 51
D - 69110 HEIDELBERG

SUMMARY

The words of appropriation and Anseignung as used in ordinary language are ambiguous and not appropriate terms for psychological use. The psychological term of appropriation, however, has so far been largely restricted to Marxist literature. The historical background of the anthropological usage of the concept of appropriation is described, its usage in psychology clarified. The structure of appropriation as yielded by a conceptual analysis serves to evaluate the appropriateness of this term in psychological studies of the built environment.

1. THE WORD 'APPROPRIATION'

'Appropriation, the act or process of taking something as one's own or making something one's own', has for a long time been the word for the improper or even illegal taking possession of things, mainly of ownerless goods or unclaim- ed property. The proper acquisition of a good as, e.g., by purchase has never been called appropriation nor Anseignung. Also what one gets to have as his own (like a personal trait), what one gains by his own efforts or activities (like a good education) is called acquisition rather than appropriation, though Anseignung (of knowledge, skills) is
appropriate. On the other hand, the English and American usage of appropriation for the setting aside, as of funds, for a special purpose, is reflected neither in French 
appropriation nor in German Ansichung. Since, however, Ansichung is the literal translation from Latin 
appropriatio and thus the surface equivalent of French and English appropriation the differences in usage of mean-
ing are overlooked which, of course, leads to ambiguity. In any case, the everyday overall term of appropriation 
with its normative notion of impropriety does not seem to be appropriate for use in the behavioral sciences.

On the other hand, appropriation has become a psychological construct well before the notion of 'appropriation of space' came into being [cf. KOROGED-SHAFRY 1972]

Since the use of 'appropriation' in general psychology has been restricted to Soviet and other Marxist litera-
ture its basic meaning needs clarification before we are able to adopt or reject the term.

II. THE CONCEPT OF APPROPRIATION

If we consider that the term originated in Marx's anthropo-
pology and was only very much later introduced into psycho-
logy, the conceptual analysis of appropriation should be 
performed in two stages of analysis, (i) of the philoso-
phical background and the philosophical-anthropological 
meaning of Ansichung (appropriation), (ii) of the usage 
of the term in modern psychology.

1. Appropriation (Ansichung) as an anthropological term

(a) The philosophical background

The locus where we encounter the anthropological term 
appropriation, Marx's theory of man's relationship with 
nature, is also the locus of Marx's critical divorce from
Hegel. Whether Marx developed, corrected or merely simplified Hegel's conception of mind shall not be discussed here; but it is a fact that the term appropriation occurred in the semantic neighborhood of three important Hegelian constructs, which Marx adopted by critically changing their meaning: exteriorization (Enthüllung), objectification (Vergegenständlichung), and alienation (Entfernung). In Hegel's philosophy of the mind (of knowledge and science) were (sensuous) consciousness becomes self-conscious and, finally, absolute knowledge through the stages of exteriorization of consciousness into the objects of mind, namely in the process of working or producing, finding itself alienated (sich entfernet) in this objectification, and, again, overcoming this alienation as 'Selbstdurchsagen im Anderen' (knowing itself in the other). In other words, alienation or rather self-estrangement is held to be constitutive for the subject or self, which understands reality as something become real by the subject's own activity and, as such, as his reality is taken back into the self, thus becoming 'property of consciousness' (Hegel 1840).

Production, i.e., making things, is thus not only exteriorization of the self; it is the activity by which property is brought about and 'property is the embodiment of personality', i.e., that through which the self becomes real (HEGEL 1842, § 51). In his 'Philosophy of Right' Hegel describes three modes by which things may be acquired (not 'appropriated'): "We take possession of a thing (a) by directly grasping it physically, (b) by forming it, (c) by appropriating it as property".
and (c) by merely marking it as ours' (1942, § 54). Of these the second mode is the most important: "When I impose a form on something, the thing's determinate character as mine acquires an independent externality . . . " (1942, § 56). Forming a thing I put my will on it (§ 44); then it reflects my personality, which thus has become objectified.

Although here we find the basic features of what Marx later came to call appropriation it should be evident that for Hegel the 'redintegration' of the objectified other into the self could not be called 'appropriation' since from the beginning the other, the object, has been the mere exteriorization of the proper self.

(b) The anthropological usage

For Marx, however, through the production of objects the individual reproduces himself, "... and he sees his own reflection in a world which he has constructed" (MRR 1963, 157). In this 'reproduction of himself' the self is exteriorized. And only in producing things man finds his 'self-realization' (loc. cit., 159), i.e., the actualization of powers or potentialities which otherwise would remain implicit. Whereas for Hegel work, language, and the formation of social relationships are constituents of the humanity of man, for Marx work becomes the all-inclusive essential and prime mover. In its products work is objectified, and the producer finds himself confronted with things alien to him unless he appropriates them by means of operations or activities. And through this appropriating work, and through work only, man develops his 'human capacities'. Acting on the external world and changing it, man at the same time actualizes his potentiality, his own nature. The appropriation of an object thus always includes the appropriation of a skill or attitude to cope with such objects.

Without being too explicit about it Marx discerns two different though basically related notions of appropriation:
On the one hand, appropriation is the word for man's relation to nature. Whichever man uses his abilities to make use of nature, in this self-realization he appropriates nature and acquires a way of coping with it. But such production (and reproduction) is not the activity of a solitary self. "Man is in the most literal sense of the word a *zoon politikon*, not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society. Production by isolated individuals outside of society ... is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of language without individuals living together and talking to one another" (1904, 268). In this sense the real subject of appropriation is not the individual but society. And it is society which preserves and hands down appropriations from generation to generation. History is this continuous change of appropriating men and appropriated nature. Whatever an individual experiences is thus performed by what others, predecessors, had appropriated. Even "the forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present" (MARX 1963, 166). Yet the full appropriation, the real appropriation of the human essence, i.e., the optimal realization of man's potentialities will only be achieved in communism, in a state when the utter alienation of man - due to capitalism - will have been overcome. However, as such as the labor-process the "appropriation of natural substances to human requirements, ...is the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather common to every such phase (MARX 1958, 183f). And in every such phase we have the two basic kinds of appropriation: societal and individual. For a psychology traditionally centering on the individual the latter kind of appropriation should be of interest. And this is exactly where Marx's anthropological term was
transformed into a psychological one, or, rather, was appropriated by psychologists.

2. Appropriation as a psychological term

One of the first psychologists to adopt the historical (materialist) approach to the study of human experience and behavior was L.S. Vygotski (1962). Mainly in his analysis of the relationship between thought and language the historical and the developmental perspective coalesce. In the course of his development, i.e., life-time, man appropriates the past experience of former generations by learning how to master the meanings of words. Meaning is the form by which the individual human being appropriates the generalized experience of man (i.e., of his culture, his class, etc.). After Vygotski's untimely death it has been mainly A.N. Leon CU who developed and concretized the concept of appropriation: "The basic mechanism of man's mental development is the mechanism of the appropriation of social and societally developed forms and kinds of activity" (1973, 276). In other words: in and by the process of appropriation the individual 're-produces' historically formed human abilities and functions, and as such produces or generates himself. We thus have two complimentary processes or activities, first visualized by Hegel and Marx: what men exteriorized in objectifying work man has to interiorize by appropriating the products of social achievement. Objective reality is never something 'given' (geben), but something to be done with (zu doen) (cf. the pragmatic and phenomenological conception of things as agenda; Graumann 1974).

Appropriation is basically different from adaptation. Since the behaviorist notion of human behavior is, in principle, not different from adaptive animal behavior, we have here one of the essential features distinguishing behaviorist and Marxist psychology.
The appropriative character of human activity is reflected in all modes of activity, in perception, orientation, and acting. The examples of the child learning how to handle and to 'understand' a cup (LEVY-BY 1973, 291f) or a spoon (452f) illustrate well how appropriative activity, mediated in social interaction, is sensory and motor, linguistic and conceptual. It also clarifies that and why even the experience and treatment of material things is 'social', since in the interaction between man and object the objective meaning, i.e., the common or socially defined meaning, is appropriated. To summarize: Individual appropriation is essentially the interiorization of socially defined meanings, a process which is equivalent to the process of humanization. Individual capacities are developed into aptitudes, skills, and functions only to the extent that social achievements and meanings handed down in history will be appropriated. All appropriation being social in nature it by necessity reflects the specific structure of society at a given time in history. If HOLZKAMP (1973), e.g., analyzes perception (or rather 'sensory cognition') on the basis of historical materialism he not only criticizes the necessarily bourgeois theories of perception in Western countries, he also necessarily deals with bourgeois perception, i.e., perception as a mode of appropriation in bourgeois society (cf. also STANLER et al. 1975). The historical and social determination of appropriation is as universal as appropriation itself.

*There is, on the level of mere description, a striking similarity with what PETROV would call the interplay of 'accommodation' and 'assimilation', but the similarity should not conceal the fundamental theoretical differences.*
III. STRUCTURE AND MODES OF APPROPRIATION OF SPACE

1. Appropriation of Space

If appropriation as used in psychology refers to the individual acquisition of historically accumulated and socially mediated experience, the word "appropriation of space" needs defining. In the first place, not objects (like places), but objective meanings, not things, but modes of relating to them, are appropriated. Secondly, since each appropriation of something dialectically implies self-realization and development the mere having of something in possession or as property would not actualize any potentials and, thus, may be considered a kind of zero for "empty" appropriation. Having space available, e.g., as private or state property without utilizing it (in the broadest sense of theoretical, esthetic, practical activities) is not appropriating it. In general, whether and how space is appropriated by relevant activities depends only partly on its physical characteristics, however well they may have been designed. The kind of appropriation is largely due to the level of actualization which the individual potentialities in question have already attained. Those who have never learnt to be at ease will not easily appropriate an "easy chair" as little as someone unused to writing will be induced to do so by getting writing-paper and a pen. Yet the "power" of writing, which is not an individual achievement, but a cultural one, handed down to the individual, has to be mediated (vermittelt) in the interactional process of education (Bildung) in order to be individually appropriated. Strictly speaking, all appropriation is achieved within, and on the basis of, the process of Bildung. Again, this has implications for the appropriation of space, or rather of coping with space. Not the spatial "facility" as such, but the objective meaning it may acquire in the education or formation of the individual lends itself to appropriation.
Speaking of sensory (or perceptual) appropriation Marx refers to the level of education when he states:

"The most beautiful music has no sense for the unmusical ear - is no object for it, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers and can therefore only be so for me as my essential power is present for itself as a subjective capacity, because the sense of an object for me grows only so far as my senses go" (Marx 1959, 108).

And so, we must infer, with architecture, with man-made environment in general: The dialectical or interactional character of appropriation holds for all man's powers or capacities and for all actual or potential objects of the human environment.

A few conclusions may be drawn from the structure of appropriation for the topic of "Appropriation of Space" if we consider the above analysis as valid: (1) For any significant appropriation of space design and construction alone are necessary but not sufficient conditions. People will appropriate places and streets, houses and rooms, furniture and things only to the extent that their individual capacities are ready, i.e., have been educated for appropriating them. Nor will mere education change anything unless complemented by the production and construction of pertinent objects. (2) Different human capacities are, even within one and the same individual, on different levels of historical development. What the eye may be ready to appropriate, the ear will not; what our manipulatory powers will be able to cope with, our conscious reflection will still fail to do, and vice versa. Upon final analysis, therefore, our comprehension of the appropriation of space will have to deal with different modes of appropriation, and differentially so. (3) In the Marxist view, appropriation, taken as self-actualization, is contingent upon the degree of alienation of man, from the products of his work, from his fellow-men, and from...
himself. The degree is said to be extremely high in capitalist society, where the monopolization of the means of production turns the products of labor into mere "commodities", thus divorcing the subject of work from objects which are not his. If alienation, including self-ostranglement, is a distinctive feature of our highly industrialized societies, a view shared by non-Marxist scholars, then any analysis of the appropriation of space must also be one of alienation from space. (4) My final conclusion is a methodological one. If we conceive of appropriation as the interaction between coping with things and realization of individual capacities ("powers"), then any empirical analysis of the appropriation of space must proceed along two lines, viz., the measurement of the change of environment, i.e., its objective meanings, and, independently, of the changes in the person, i.e., in the coping skills or styles. Then, and only then, we are able to decide whether appropriation in the strict sense of the word really has occurred. Otherwise we run the risk of using appropriation in the every day ambiguous sense, a word which may for a while be fashionable, but as an empty husk calls for projective filling.

2. Modes of Appropriation of Space (Appendix)

Even under the above methodological restriction the field for the study of appropriation of space is wide. The anthropological character of the concept implies that appropriation of space is not a topic restricted to psychology. All human sciences have to do with this kind of appropriation, at least in some of its modes, and, as a rule, in interdisciplinary fashion. All I can do here, in conclusion to a mainly conceptual analysis, is to map the field. Instead of discussing the various topics, I shall as an appendix to my paper present the preliminary cognitive map which Dr. Ernle and myself have drawn in preparation of the present conference. This list of topics is, of course, open, open to modification and supplementation, open, above all, to empirical realization. For the time being, it may help to find out whether the concept of appropriation of space will be appropriated by those who tend to use it.
APPENDIX: MODES OF APPROPRIATION OF SPACE

Carl F. GRADNAM
Leopold KROHN
Psychologisches Institut
Universität Heidelberg
Hauptstrasse 57/59
D 6900 HEIDELBERG R.F.A.

A. The anthropological (historical) perspective (Modes of defining, ordering, changing the environment. Changing nature into culture by means of language and work)

1. Marking, naming, labeling, categorizing, evaluating = defining spaces as appropriate or inappropriate, owned or free by means of signs, words, norms, rules, regulations, laws

2. locomotion through space, exploring = ordering by moving through nature (which, e.g., results in paths = involuntarily = walking, travelling, driving, sailing, flying = appropriation of land, sea and air

3. exploitation of nature as subsistence
   a) ordering and changing by cultivation of soil, forests, etc., domestication of plants
   b) hunting, fishing, gathering, breeding cattle

4. exploitation of nature as supply of mineral resources (mining)

5. appropriation by means of domestication of animals (e.g., breeding of distance-covering animals like dogs, horses, carrier pigeons)

6. appropriation by means of conquest and subjugation of other people(s)

7. appropriation by means of man-made structures
   a) man-made things
   b) man-made houses, roads, canals, settlements
8. appropriation by artistic or scientific representation of space (pictures, models, graphs, photographs, etc.)
9. appropriation by communication = overcoming of distances

8. The psychological perspective of appropriation (the developmental aspect)
1. motion and locomotion (space annihilation)
   a) touching, grasping things (shapes, surfaces, textures, edges, etc.)
   b) body space as primal space (oral space)
2. sensory exploration of space
   seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, kinesthetic experience
3. doing, manipulating, making, categorizing, producing, shaping, forming, destroying things
4. cognitive-linguistic mastery (mapping, measuring, modelling) naming
5. communicating
   use of space and spatial objects as media of communication
6. taking possession, gaining the power of disposal or jurisdiction of spaces, domains (land, sea, air), buildings, objects
   either temporarily or long term
   by occupation, squatting, sit-ins
   by marking off as possessed, as property, or dispossessed, or expropriated
   by fencing in, hedging off
   by defending, enforcing and maintaining law and order
   by keeping wastes (scratched earth)
   by lawful, legal, illegal occupation, by violating norms, rules
   by buying, selling, leasing, renting
   by inheritance
7. personalization of spaces
   furnishing rooms, decorating, marking, gardening, distribution of personal items, restaging space = making space habitable
References


