

## Phenomenological Analysis of Selfhood: Validation of the Affect and Control Scales of the Method

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The paper outlines the testing and validation of the *affect* and *control* scales of the Phenomenological Analysis of Selfhood (PAS) method. The method was developed as a way of assessing personality by gauging the experience of self through analysing self-narratives and makes a successful attempt to generate and test data quantitatively within a narrative psychology framework. Construct validation of the quantitative scales of the PAS against the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, the Rotter locus of control scale as well as with differentiated shading, form and total responses on the Rorschach Ink Blot test yielded a number of significant correlations.

Exploring the experience of selfhood over the last couple of decades has adopted an increasingly subjective, phenomenological flavour, perhaps as a reaction to the overly mechanistic and reductionistic approach of mainstream psychological research which is held by many as alienating from real human experience in its totality, particularly when dealing with issues of the development of meaning central to the establishment of a sense of selfhood. There has been thus, a renaissance of interest in the phenomenological paradigm, particularly where study of the self is concerned (Burch, 1990; Gergen, 1985; Harré, 2000; Merleau-Ponty, 1994; Protter, 2001; Ricoeur, 1991a&b).

The fundamental premise of phenomenological analysis is that selfhood consists not only of the living present but also of what from the passing experiences is meaningfully singled out and preserved and the chief way that people seem to do this is through remembrance and narrative. The narrative approach sees selfhood as a function of narrative where the *I* is both the

author and the narrator of the saga of *Me* the protagonist. This then is the classical interplay between the *I* and the *Me* in the symbolic interactionist tradition on the self (Ahmad, 2004). The *I-Me* distinction in psychological literature can of course be traced back to the works of James (1890) where the *I* (self-as-subject) and the *Me* (self-as-object) are considered intrinsically related components of the self. As pointed out by Hermans (1996), the storyteller can be considered as the *I* and the story or narrative figures as *Me*. As many other theorists (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; Carr, 1986; Dennett, 1992; Hermans, Kempen & van Loon, 1992; McAdams, 1990) also point out, it is through narratives that we actively create or constitute our selfhood and rationalise the meaning of our lives.

In short then, the narrative approach to the study of selfhood views narratives as interpretive devices through which people represent themselves and their worlds to the self and to others. The focus on conscious, individual experience, the complete description (as against and prior to interpretation) of human experience and the

largely qualitative and idiographic approach of the narrative tradition, of course add to the genuineness of data. However, a major limitation of the approach within psychology has been the inability or the unwillingness of researchers to validate their methods with other established tests. In spite of substantial work in the area, a search of psychological abstracts (PsycINFO, 2007) failed to produce a single case where a method of self-narrative analysis has been correlated with established psychological tests with the explicit objective of validation and very few studies (e.g., Emmons & McAdams, 1991; Little, Lecci & Watkinson, 1992) where free-response qualitative material (like life tasks, personal strivings etc) has been compared with other established tests. This has perhaps been due to the outright rejection of the quantitative paradigm by most researchers using narrative and qualitative methods and there is also the practical difficulty in comparing or validating the qualitative data reported in narrative frameworks with other established tests which mostly report data quantitatively. Thus, in spite of the emerging popularity of the narrative approach, it remains a field restricted to certain circles and certain journals, not really integrated into mainstream psychological research.

The objective of this work was to take a step in the direction of integrating the narrative approach with the mainstream through developing a method which would generate data from the subject's perspective without any imposition from the investigator in the form of pre-manufactured, generic statements or fixed alternatives as responses but a system that would incorporate quantitative procedures which would help compare individuals and groups on certain measurable dimensions or scales. Consequently, in this approach data is *naturally occurring*, a reflection of the *phenomenological experience* of the subject and documents the world from the perspective of the subject in keeping with the spirit of

phenomenology. On the other hand, the method uses the quantitative approach to study the data (so that the data can be statistically evaluated, compared and analysed) and thus contributing to nomothetic research as well as facilitating the validation of the approach with other established tests. This integration of quantitative scaling within a narrative framework is inspired in part by the work of Hermans et al. (Hermans, 1988; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 1995; Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

### **Theoretical Basis of the Method's Scales**

The *Phenomenological Analysis of Selfhood (PAS)* method was developed with the two scales of *affect* (related to self-esteem) and *control* (related to locus of control) as its two measured dimensions of experience as *self-esteem* and *locus of control* have been the major dimensions of self-experience proven to be of significance through their correlation with numerous measures of physical and psychological well-being (Abood & Conway, 1992; Achamamba & Kumar, 1989; Adler & Stewart, 2004; Baumeister, Campbell, Kreuger & Vohs, 2003; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991; Cummins, 1988; Haynes & Ayliffe, 1991; Katerndahl, 1991; Lefcourt, 1984; Rivas Torres & Fernandez Fernandez, 1995; Volkmer & Feather, 1991). As Robbins and Judge (2007) argue, the two constructs of self-esteem and locus of control form *core self-evaluation*, a construct reflecting how valuable and capable individuals experience themselves to be; individuals having positive core self-evaluation possess high self-esteem and internal locus of control as against individuals with negative core self-evaluation who possess low self-esteem and external locus of control.

**Affect:** As noted by Mohr (1941), the first orientation of subjects towards a stimulus is affective and the primary form in which experiences that constitute selfhood appear to be represented is also affective (Miall,

1986). Other researchers too have identified the dimension of affect to be important in personality assessment (Dalgleish & Power, 1999; Foreman, 1966; Kirchman, 1986; Kaufman, 1989). We evaluate each experience with regard to the valence it has for us. And this valuation is largely on the positive-negative continuum. This has led various researchers to posit the positive-negative dimension of affect as the most important functional aspect of the self in quotidian experience (Lonigan, Hooe, David & Kistner, 1999; Russell & Carroll, 1999; Watson & Clark, 1992). However, affect is also seen as complex, as including numerous and distinct experiences (Harter, 1996; Leventhal, Hansell, Diefenbach, Leventhal & Glass, 1996). For instance positive affect may include feelings of pride, joy, fulfilment, satisfaction etc and negative affect may include feelings of sadness, guilt, shame, anxiety etc each a distinct experience in itself. Thus, affect is more complex than the simple positive and negative dimension posited in the PAS. But for the sake of simplicity, this dimension is used in the method, as though affect is complex, the emotional impact could be considered as perceived by the subject essentially along these two lines – that is, “how does the experience make me feel – good or bad, positive or negative?” It should also be noted that in the PAS, the approach to affect is from the *self-relevant* perspective – that is, subjects are asked to report how the experience makes them feel about themselves as against how the subject experiences the affect towards other people/situations. As Crandall and Cohen (1994) have observed self-relevant affect is an expression of self-esteem. In this way, the dimension of *affect* in the PAS becomes essentially a measure of the subject’s self-esteem. Thus, the dimension of affect as gauged by the PAS is validated with the Rosenberg (1965) Self-esteem scale and the shading and colour responses on the

Rorschach since these responses on the Rorschach are related to the organisation of affectional needs (shading responses) and affectional reactivity to external stimuli including other people (colour responses).

**Control:** The dimension of control is essentially a measure of attribution of responsibility for a self-experience, i.e. whether subjects consider themselves or other people/situations responsible for the experience. In other words, we ask of the subject - “who is responsible for the affect (positive or negative) of *your* experience?” As such the dimension could basically be considered as an assessment of locus of control once again from the self-relevant perspective, a perspective that would carry more meaning to the subject as it is one’s own personal experiences that are being analysed. In this study, the dimension of control is validated with the Rotter (1966) Locus of Control Scale and the Form responses on the Rorschach as these responses are a measure of intellectual control over affective reactivity. However, this would give rise to an important question, i.e., why should one assume that intellectual control over affect is related to perceived control of responsibility? The answer to which would be – for the basic intuitive reason that if one is able to exercise intellectual control over affective reactions, one is also likely to perceive lesser control by the external world. Whether or not this intuition is correct will be seen below where the PAS and Rorschach are compared.

### **Hypotheses**

**H1:** Index *P* (percentage of statements with positive affect) on the PAS will correlate positively with Self-esteem (SE) on the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale.

**H2.1:** Shading responses with definite form (*FK+Fc*) on the Rorschach will be positively correlated with index *P* on the PAS.

**H2.2:** When the differentiated shading

responses ( $FK+Fc$ )  $< \frac{3}{4} F$  (form determinant responses) on the Rorschach,  $P>N$  and  $I>E$  on the PAS; when ( $FK+Fc$ )  $> \frac{3}{4} F$  on the Rorschach,  $N>P$  and  $E>I$  on the PAS.

**H3:** When responses determined by colour with definite form ( $FC$ ) exceed the sum of responses determined by colour with semi-definite form ( $CF$ ) and those determined by colour alone disregarding form ( $C$ ) on the Rorschach, then  $P$  and  $I$  scores on the PAS will be higher than when  $CF+C$  exceed  $FC$  on the Rorschach, that is when  $FC>CF+C$ , then  $P$  and  $I$  will be higher than when  $FC<CF+C$ .

**H4:** Index  $I$  (percentage of statements with perceived internal control of affect) on the PAS will correlate negatively with the Locus of Control (LOC) scores on Rotter's Locus of Control Scale.

**H5:**  $F\%$  on the Rorschach will correlate positively with index  $I$  on the PAS.

**H6:** Index  $W$  (total number of words) on the PAS will correlate positively with  $R$  (total number of responses) on the Rorschach test.

**H7:** Index  $P$  will show no relation with Index  $I$  on the PAS.

### Method

#### Sample:

The entire study involved the assessment of a total of 102 cases. The comparative studies were conducted on 68 university students ( $M=27$ ,  $F=41$ ; Age:18 – 22). The study involving Rorschach was conducted on 34 university students of both sexes ( $M = 16$ ,  $F = 18$ ; Age: 19 – 24). The subjects were involved in the study through the department of psychology's counselling centre.

#### Tools

The study consisted of exploring the relationships between the quantitative scales of *affect* and *control* of the PAS with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the Rotter Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966) and with form, shading and

colour responses on the Rorschach Ink-blot Test (Klopfer & Davidson, 1962). The PAS is a method of self-narrative analysis developed by the author which provides for the evaluation of narratives on the scales of *affect* and *control*. The method consists of procuring from subjects essays on themselves, followed by certain procedures for analysis of the narrative. In keeping with the spirit of phenomenology, complete freedom is given to the subjects to produce the responses which to them are pertinent, the assumption being that those experiences which form the individual's selfhood and which constitute the present experience of the subject will spontaneously emerge in the narrative.

The Rosenberg scale is a measure of global self-esteem and is generally considered the standard against which other measures of self-esteem are compared. Extensive and acceptable reliability (internal consistency and test-retest) and validity (convergent and discriminant) information exists for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Test-retest correlations are typically in the range of .82 to .88, and Cronbach's alpha for various samples are in the range of .77 to .88 (Rosenberg, 1986; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Test data on the Rotter Locus of Control scale obtained in a series of samples indicate reasonably high internal consistency estimates in the range of .65 to .79 (Rotter, 1972). Test-retest reliability estimates are satisfactory and are largely in the range of .60 to .83 (Rotter, 1972). The Rorschach Ink-blot test is a widely used projective test for personality assessment which generates data on numerous personality dimensions. Due to the qualitative nature of the material and associated problems of reliability in scoring, the rules of classification and scoring of the Rorschach protocol have been made explicit by Klopfer and Ainsworth (1954) and Klopfer and Davidson (1962) so that all examiners classify on exactly the same basis.

## Results and Discussion

Since Index *P* is considered an indication of the overall sense of perceived well-being in the individual, and on the SE test a high score is considered an indication of high self-esteem (an indication of well-being), one would expect that SE would correlate positively with index *P*. In the study, there was a significant correlation between index *P* and SE,  $r = .322$ ,  $p = < .005$  level (one-tailed). Thus, hypothesis 1 stands validated and index *P* could be considered a good indicator of a sense of well-being just as one considers self-esteem to be and as such the definition of the construct of *affect* put forth earlier as well as the method of gauging it through the PAS stands validated.

As the shading responses on the Rorschach generally depict the way in which individuals manage their needs for affection, for belonging and for obtaining satisfying contacts, the presence of shading responses (specially with definite form) displays an awareness of one's affectional needs and thus an awareness of and acceptance of self which can be taken as a sign of good adjustment and well-being (Klopfer & Davidson, 1962). Therefore the presence of shading responses with definite form is expected to correlate positively with index *P* of the PAS. However, when  $FK+Fc$  exceed  $\frac{3}{4}$  of *F*, the need for response and affection from others is overwhelming and may threaten the rest of the personality. In such a situation one may expect  $N>P$  and  $E>I$  on the PAS. Conversely, when  $FK+Fc$  is less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of *F*, one may expect  $P>N$  and  $I>E$ .

Correlation was significant between index *P* on the PAS and  $FK+Fc$  on the Rorschach,  $r = .346$ ,  $p = < .05$  level (one-tailed) validating hypothesis 2.1 and strengthening the claim of index *P* being an indication of good adjustment and well-being. More specifically, amongst the two categories of shading responses considered, *Fc* indicates an awareness of and acceptance of one's own

affectional needs as well as the needs and feelings of other people. The affectional needs are experienced in terms of desire for approval and response from others (Klopfer & Davidson, 1962). Thus, optimal number of *Fc* responses indicate tactfulness, awareness and sensitivity. *FK* indicates that the individual is making an effort to understand and tolerate his/her anxiety. The *FK* score, if sufficiently large, is related to good adjustment, especially in response to psychotherapy. Thus, one could infer from the above that well-being as gauged by index *P* could involve being aware of and an acceptance of one's affectional needs.

As for hypothesis 2.2, in the sample, only one subject had  $FK+Fc$  greater than *F*. For all the others this proportion was less than  $\frac{3}{4}$ th of *F*, therefore a comparison between the two groups (where  $FK+Fc > \frac{3}{4}$ th *F* and where  $FK+Fc < \frac{3}{4}$ th *F*) could not be drawn to see whether  $P<N$  and  $I<E$  when  $FK+Fc > \frac{3}{4}$ th *F*. However, a *t* test was carried out on the subjects who scored  $FK+Fc < \frac{3}{4}$ th *F* to test for the significance of the difference between the means of indices *P* and *N*, as well as *I* and *E*. The mean for index *P* (68.55) was significantly greater than the mean for index *N* (30.85),  $t(32)=5.806$ ,  $p=<.001$  (one-tailed). The mean for index *I* (73.24) was also significantly greater than the mean for index *E* (26.76),  $t(32)=10.126$ ,  $p=<.001$  (one-tailed). This further validates indices *P* and *I* of the PAS as indicators of well-being as a ratio of  $FK+Fc$  less than  $\frac{3}{4}$ th *F* is also taken as an indication of healthy adjustment and well-being.

As colour responses on the Rorschach relate in general to the extent and nature of the individual's responsiveness to stimuli from the environment (generally in the area of interpersonal relationships), the responses to colour are to be interpreted to show how the person reacts overtly to the emotional impact of relationships with other people. More specifically, *FC* responses indicate ready but

controlled responsiveness to emotional impact. *CF* responses represent a somewhat uncontrolled but nevertheless appropriate and genuine reactivity to social stimuli and *C* responses generally indicate explosive, uncontrolled emotionality (Klopfer & Davidson, 1962). When,  $FC > CF + C$ , it could be taken as an indication of well-being and capacity of individuals to react appropriately and genuinely with both feeling and action to their social environment. This should in turn be related to higher *P* and *I* on the PAS compared to when  $FC < CF + C$ .

A *t* test was carried out between the group where  $FC > CF + C$  and the group where  $FC < CF + C$  but no significant difference was observed between the means of the groups for both the indices *P* and *I*. The mean *P* score for the group where the  $FC > CF + C$  was 70.89 and for the group where  $FC < CF + C$  was 65.67,  $t(8) = .483$ ,  $p = .05$ . The mean *I* score for the group where  $FC > CF + C$  was 74.33 and for the group where  $FC < CF + C$  was 74.56,  $t(8) = .032$ ,  $p = .05$ . The results show that there is no difference between the two groups with respect to the *P* and *I* scores on the PAS and as such hypothesis 3 has to be rejected. From this one could conclude that there is no apparent relationship between indices *P* and *I* on the PAS and the  $FC:CF+C$  ratio on the Rorschach. This implies that the reaction to emotional impact of relationships with other people as gauged by colour responses on the Rorschach could be a dimension of human behaviour quite different from the dimensions gauged through indices *P* and *I* on the PAS. However, both *P* and *I* can still be considered as valid indicators of well-being considering the consistently significant relationship of both these indices of the PAS with other validating parameters so far considered in this study. It is just that they seem to gauge dimensions of the experience of selfhood different from the dimension of emotional reactivity to the social world captured by colour responses on the Rorschach. Perhaps the reason behind this

is that the PAS is a method designed to gauge reactivity towards the *inner* world of one's experiences, not really a tool to gauge dimensions of overt emotional response to the *outer* world as gauged by the colour responses on the Rorschach. This could also imply that one's response to one's affectional needs as gauged by the shading responses and one's overt emotional reactivity towards the outer world of social relationships as gauged by the colour responses are perhaps different dimensions of experience altogether, especially since index *P* related significantly with the shading responses on the Rorschach but not with the colour responses. This could be a hypothesis worth exploring in further studies.

Since Index *I* is considered a measure of the internal attribution of affect (for both positive and negative affect) as reflected in the statements generated by the subject, a high *I* would indicate that the subject perceives the control of affect is internal and should correlate negatively with the LOC scores as a low score on the LOC scale is held as an indication of an Internal Locus of Control.

The correlation between index *I* and LOC was significant,  $r = -.228$ ,  $p < .05$  (one-tailed). The correlation is also in the expected direction supporting hypothesis 4. As such the dimension of *control* on the PAS could be considered a valid assessment of the attribution of responsibility for affective experiences.

*F%* with adequate form level relates to an individual's degree of control and the ability to handle situations without becoming emotionally involved. Up to a point (80%), the higher the *F%*, the more the person is able to be impersonal and matter of fact. Therefore, if index *I* is an indication of the perceived internal control of affect, it should also correlate positively with the *F%*.

Correlation between Index *I* on the PAS and the *F%* on the Rorschach was significant,

$r=.345$ ,  $p<.05$  (one-tailed) validating hypothesis 5. Therefore index  $I$  seems to be a good indicator not only of internal control of affect but also of intellectual control over affect as is indicated by the  $F$  responses on the Rorschach. This would imply that those who perceive the control of their own affective experiences within also are able to exercise an intellectual control over affect. Thus, as is the interpretation of the  $F$  score on Rorschach, the  $I$  score on the PAS could also refer to the degree of intellectual control available to the individual and as such may also be interpreted as evidence of ego strength. Perhaps the very capacity to take internal responsibility for life experiences (both positive and negative) is behind the capacity to exercise intellectual control over one's affective responses or vice versa, hypotheses that could form the subject of further study.

The above discussion could be modified in the light of the nature of  $F$  responses on the Rorschach. For example, a low  $F\%$  (under 20%) would indicate inadequate control, a highly personalised reaction, especially in a record where other control factors like Human Movement ( $M$ ), shading with definite form ( $Fc$ ) and colour with definite form ( $FC$ ) are poorly represented. Also, an  $F\%$  over 80% is considered pathological and if combined with adequate form level means a high degree of constriction and lack of spontaneity found in highly compulsive or depressed states (Klopfer & Davidson, 1962). However, in the present study, the majority of subjects were within the normal range (20-80%) with respect to the  $F$  score on Rorschach. There were no subjects who obtained an  $F$  score of <20% and only two who got an  $F$  score of >80%.

Though one may be reserved about generalising the results due to the above-mentioned complexity in the interpretation of the  $F$  response, one could safely interpret the results as far as the relationship between *intellectual control* over affect on the Rorschach and *internal control* of affect on

the PAS is concerned at least for a population with  $F$  scores between 20-80% (which is in any case the normal range within which the subjects of this study fell).

The total responses on the Rorschach ( $R$ ) generally indicate the productive capacity of the individual and as a higher productivity on the PAS (gauged by the number of words of the essay or  $W$ ) could be considered an indication of a higher capacity to feel, experience and produce affect,  $W$  should correlate positively with  $R$ .

The correlation between  $W$  on the PAS and  $R$  on the Rorschach was significant,  $r=.427$ ,  $p<.01$  (one-tailed) showing that hypothesis 6 is valid. Thus one could take  $W$  on the PAS as an indicator of the productive capacity of the individual. As with the interpretation of  $R$  on the Rorschach, one could predict in the case of the PAS that the more intelligent persons will be the more productive, generating more  $W$  and a small number of responses may indicate lack of productivity because of limited capacity or because of disturbed emotionality. A large number of responses on the PAS like on the Rorschach may indicate the rich productivity of an able person, or it may indicate a compulsive need for quantity, hypotheses that could form the subject of further study.

As per hypothesis 7, the correlation between indices  $P$  &  $I$  was not significant,  $r=.123$ ,  $p>.05$ . This result is further supported by the fact that though index  $P$  was correlated significantly with Rosenberg's self-esteem and shading responses on Rorschach, the correlation between index  $I$  on the PAS and SE was not significant,  $r=.105$ ,  $p>.05$  and the correlation between index  $I$  and  $FK+Fc$  (differentiated shading responses) on the Rorschach was also not significant,  $r=.020$ ,  $p>.05$ . Also, though index  $I$  was correlated significantly with Rotter's locus of control and form responses on Rorschach, there was no significant correlation between index  $P$  and LOC,  $r=.032$ ,  $p>.05$ . Correlation between

index *P* and the *F%* on the Rorschach was also not significant,  $r = .032$ ,  $p = >.05$

Following this, one could say that the two dimensions of *affect* and *control* are in fact independent dimensions. This interpretation also has further validation in the fact that many studies comparing the relationship between *self-esteem* and *locus of control* (with which *affect* and *control* on the PAS are being compared respectively) have not really shown a clear relationship between these two constructs (e.g., Burton & Parks, 1994; Houston, 1984; Iannos & Tiggeman, 1997; Lennings, 1993; Munson, 1994; Ruther & Richman, 1993; Stephen & Philpot, 1996). As such, the constructs of self-esteem and locus of control seem to operate independently though both have been shown to have a clear relationship with numerous variables measuring physical and mental well-being and the results so far indicate that the two constructs of *affect* and *control* of the PAS operate in a similar manner to the constructs of self-esteem and locus of control respectively.

Results of the construct validation studies overall support the method and its theoretical constructs and their assessment. To sum up the findings, the dimension of *affect* (represented by indices *P* and *N*) has been found to be a valid indicator of positive/negative feelings towards the self and the dimension of *control* (represented by indices *I* and *E*) has been found to be a valid indicator of attribution of responsibility for one's experiences. Index *P* has been found to correlate positively at a significant level with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale as well as with the differentiated shading responses on the Rorschach implying that it is an indicator of self-esteem, good adjustment and sense of well-being. Index *I* has been found to correlate negatively at a significant level with the Rotter Locus of Control Scale and positively at a significant level with the Form responses on the Rorschach implying that it

is an indicator of internal control over affect as well as an intellectual control over affect and as such also an indicator of a healthy experience of selfhood. In addition, the total number of words (*W*) on the PAS correlated positively with total number of responses (*R*) on the Rorschach at a significant level implying that it is a good indicator of the productive capacity of the individual. Also, just as there is no clear relationships between the constructs of self-esteem and locus of control against which the dimensions of *affect* and *control* were validated, these two dimensions of self-experience gauged through the PAS were also found to operate independently of each other strengthening further the very rationale of validating these constructs against self-esteem and locus of control.

An important aspect of the PAS method is that in involving the subject in the process of data generation, assessment and evaluation, the entire assessment process carries more meaning and genuineness for the subject as well as the investigator as the data being analysed consists of specific personal experiences from the subject's own life as against general statements manufactured by someone else (characteristic of questionnaire assessment). At the same time, the method provides for quantitative scaling generating the measured dimensions of *affect* and *control* and thereby enabling inter-individual and inter-group comparisons facilitating systematic nomothetic research. In addition it should be noted that in the PAS the assessment of both the constructs (*affect* and *control*) is made on the same statements implying the multidimensionality of human experience. In other words, the position is that our experiences involve many layers of meaning and that a single human experience can be analysed from a number of perspectives for it is arrayed from a number of perspectives. In the PAS the attempt was to capture two of these perspectives, that of *affect* and *control*. Future work could try to



identify other such dimensions upon which each individual experience is arrayed.

Thus, the study demonstrates the validity of obtaining and assessing phenomenological content from the subject directly and in total freedom without any imposition of stimuli in the form of pre-manufactured statements or restrictions in the form of fixed alternatives of responses. Subjects are free to write whatever they want, in how much ever time they want and in whatever way they want and yet the method provides for a meaningful and valid assessment. Thus, at least as far as the study of the experience of selfhood is concerned, certain laborious processes involved in test-construction (e.g., item pool, item analysis etc) may perhaps not really be needed. One can proceed from direct human experience presented in its phenomenological totality and yet arrive at a valid assessment. As has been demonstrated in this paper, the PAS method provides for such an objective analysis of subjective meaning from the inner world of being.

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