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How Might One Live? A Social Theory of Human Motivated Behavior

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Abstract

This study aimed at inspecting problems surrounding the concept of motivation, discovering the ontological reasons behind them, providing a comprehensive definition for motivation, and introducing a new way around the controversies through a social theory of human motivated behavior. The new theory is built on Gilles Deleuze's conceptualization of ontology and his definition of open systems, Robert Merton's categorization of deviant behaviors, and the fact that behaviors with some preexisting goals and paths toward them precede the individuals. Based on this new social theory, every motivated behavior precedes the individuals who take them in terms of pre-established goals and paths toward them. This way, every motivated behavior in the initial stage could be of six types: structural, innovative, conforming, path-adopted, unmotivated, and agentic. The new social theory does not reject the previous motivational theories and findings, but provides as open framework to actually apply them in real life situations.

Keywords Motivated behavior · Gilles Deleuze · Robert Merton · Social theory · Ontology

Introduction

The field of psychology is replete with controversial concepts, but in the ongoing historical competition among them, motivation alongside emotion, by any reckoning, may stand out as the overall victor. Its first psychological use dates back to 1901, but it took almost three

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decades till the publication of the first book which entitled the concept (Troland 1928). For more than a century, motivation has been used as a label to represent theories and works concerned with whys of human behaviors. The main concern of theories has been motivated behaviors which are differentiated from non-motivated behaviors as the former are goal-directed, and also vary across time and person (Kalat 2008). Although a single label has been used to signify an extensive literature, the definition and domain of motivation has not been clear-cut, but on the contrary, filled with controversies and ambiguities. This issue created such problems that, at some point, APA nearly retired the concept from the field because it deemed more troublesome than helpful (Walker and Symons 1997).

A historical scrutiny of the different attempts to define motivation helps locate and magnify the problem which has inflicted its undertaking for more than a century. Motivation is one of the central concepts in psychology which, as a field, is defined as the scientific study of behavior and mental processes (e.g., Kalat 2008; Krull 2014; Myers 2008). Therefore, a possible implication is that motivation has to do with behaviors or mental processes, but motivation is neither a behavior nor a fully agentic mental process independent of external factors. This does not mean that mental processes are completely irrelevant; on the contrary, they are inseparable parts of the concept. But motivation involves more than just mental processes and that is actually one of the reasons psychology alone, in spite of factoring in contextual and cultural elements, has not succeeded in providing a comprehensive definition and theory for the concept.

Although motivation seems to be a simple and straightforward concept when scholars discuss its central role in human endeavors, the problems arise when their writings are checked to extract the definition and differentiate it from related concepts. In this regard, most scholars either keep talking around the concept, or end up presenting the concept “motive” which has been defined as a reason for doing something, or “a need or desire that prompts us to do something” (Krull 2014, p. 219).

1. Broadly speaking, Young (1961) defined the study of motivation “as a search for the determinants of human and animal activity” (p. 24). In this definition, the author discusses “the study of motivation” instead of defining the concept itself. But the meaning of motivation can be extracted from the provided definition in two possible ways. First, if the word “study” in the text is equivalent to the word “search,” motivation implicationally refers to “determinants of human and animal activity.” Second, if the word “study” stands for “a search for the determinants of,” then motivation would be human and animal activity. In the former, motivation is not differentiated from motive, while in the latter, motivation refers to activity. In other words, in both cases, motivation is not properly and distinctively defined.
2. Trying to define the concept, Mook (1987) came up with two different definitions. He suggested that “questions about motivation, are questions about the causes of specific actions” and “the study of motivation is the search for principles that will help us understand why people and animals initiate, choose, or persist in, specific actions in specific circumstances” (p. 4). In the first one, the word “questions” followed by “about” exists in both sides of the definition. Therefore, motivation becomes the causes of actions which is indistinguishable from motive. In the second one, if the word “study” is equivalent to “search for,” motivation becomes principles, and if it resembles “search for principles that will help understand,” then definition of motivation becomes a question.

- The problem is that motivation is not a set of principles and a question hardly suffices as the definition of a concept.
3. According to Weiner (1992), “the most encompassing definition of the field of motivation is why human and subhuman organisms think and behave as they do” (Weiner 1992, p. 1). First of all, he writes “the most encompassing definition of” which implies that there are other possible definitions which although not incorrect, leaves out certain aspects of the concept. Also, in this definition, the author introduces motivation as a field which again lies in the realm of talking around the concept. Furthermore, he poses a question in the definition and puts all living beings side by side in the field.
 4. According to Feldman (2013), the concept of motivation refers to factors directing, and energizing human and living organisms’ behavior which has biological, cognitive, and social aspects. Here, the author, taking motivation as a concept, introduces it as factors which both direct and energize behaviors. Once again, the definition does not differentiate motive and motivation and what directs does not necessarily energizes.

Acknowledging the problems that surround the concept, this study aimed at presenting and evaluating these problems, discovering the historical and ontological reasons behind them, coming up with a comprehensive definition for motivation as a word based on its structure, recreating motivation as a concept in a philosophical sense, and introducing a new way around the controversies through a social theory of human motivated behavior.

Motivation in Hindsight

The label “biological” has been used to address a series of early approaches toward motivation as they “all are grounded in biological functioning; all impose evolutionary principles to explain motivated behavior; and thus were influenced by Darwin” (Weiner 1992, p. 23). These approaches have been used to explain motivational issues in spite of not being originally designed for that purpose. Two prominent such approaches are psychoanalytical and instinctual.

To Freud, psychoanalysts “are first and foremost interested in motive—the why behind the thoughts that run through our heads” (Thurschwell 2000, p. 28). Freud’s (e.g., 1920/1955; 1923/1961; 1938/1964) theorizing was a hybrid of his belief in the theory of conservation of energy, his obsession with the unconscious or preemptory behaviors, his commitment to hedonism as the right doctrine and homeostasis as the governing principle, his theory of the structure of the mind (consisting of id, ego and superego), and his utilization of drive as the main influential concept.

Strictly speaking about motivational issues, two models of motivated behavior (primary and secondary) were the result of Freud’s works. The primary model, in which the thought processes are neglected, builds upon the idea of id as the force for the activity which ends up in satisfaction either through fulfillment or hallucination. In the secondary model, ego as the presenter of thought processes works on the demands of the id and brings satisfaction either through fulfillment or plans and delay of gratification. Therefore, ego is the final decision maker of the motivated behavior by filtering id demands through reality constraints.

Contrary to psychoanalysis which was not directly targeting motivation, instinct approaches were one of the earliest attempts of psychologists to explain and account for motivation and

motivated behaviors. Simply put, instinct referred to “biologically built-in impulses that lead to relatively inflexible behaviors” (Krull 2014, p. 220). Therefore, instincts were conceptualized as specific tendencies or motivational imperatives which are not directly observable but inferable from the covert behaviors (Weiner 1992). In this sense, the goal was constant but the pattern of behaviors may change.

The first comprehensive instinct theory in this sense was proposed by McDougall (1923) in his “outline of psychology.” He believed that instincts, which have cognitive, affective, and conative components, push the living organism toward specific goals. This way, every behavior is set in motion by instincts which produce energies needed for action completion. There existed three problems with these approaches: they ended up naming human behaviors rather than explaining them, there was no consensus among different theorists about how many instincts actually exist so that McDougall (1908) identified 18 instincts while Bernard (1924) suggested 5759 ones, and finally, they could not account for most human behaviors which are learned and too complex (Myers 2008).

In another attempt, Tinbergen (1951), targeting instinctive behaviors, proposed that these types of behaviors consist of patterns of activities which are innate, fixed, sequential, stereotypical, and physiologically determined. Here, unlike behavioristic viewpoint, behavior is replaced by stimulus rather than being elicited by it, and any behavior must have a fixed pattern throughout species to qualify as an instinct. By the same token, Lorenz (1952) believed that each fixed pattern behavior has its own specific energy which acts as motivator. This energy is saved until a stimulus appears and releases the behavior.

The rejection of instinct approaches led to the replacement of the concept “instinct” by “drive,” and Clark Hull (1943, 1951) was one of the pioneers in working with the new concept. His theorizing was influenced to a great extent by general laws of mechanics in physical sciences and behavioristic learning theory. In comparison to biological approaches, Hull’s theory stood distinct due to two outstanding differences. Firstly, unlike other theories which were not theories of motivation per se but applicable to motivational issues, Hull’s theory was a motivation theory in itself. And secondly, his theory was strongly linked with experimental psychology.

Influenced by Thorndike’s ideas on stimulus-response causal connection, Hull (1943) expanded the idea by bringing drive into the equation. His proposal was that a deficiency in the body, which is called need, pushes the organism toward action to satisfy the need. Motivationally speaking, his approach introduced lack of some biological needs, which create a drive to satisfy that need, as the reason behind any behavior. The key concept “drive” was introduced as an unrest state energizing one behavior after another until the unrest is removed (Kalat 2008).

Two types of drives were introduced throughout Hull’s work: primary and secondary. Primary drives were related to biological needs while secondary drives concerned needs such as academic and professional achievements which did not involve any biological needs. At first, he was only concerned with the primary type and proposed that the link between stimulus and response, i.e., habit, provides the direction for behavior but the energy to execute the action needs drive; therefore, $\text{behavior} = \text{drive} \times \text{habit}$ (Hull 1943). The problem with this conceptualization was that it could not account for learned behaviors. Therefore, to compensate for this deficiency, secondary drives, otherwise called incentive, were introduced. Hull (1951) modified his theory to incorporate the concept of incentive: $\text{motivation} = \text{drive} \times \text{habit} \times \text{incentive}$. Unlike drive, the incentive value was a property of goal and pulled the organism toward action rather than pushing it.

Two main lines of criticisms appeared regarding drive approaches so that the attempt to deal with each one of them led to the emergence of another approach. The first one was that drive approaches were unable to explain behaviors in which the goal was to increase arousal such as curiosity and thrill-seeking behavior rather than reducing it (Begg and Langley 2001; Rosenbloom and Wolf 2002). This criticism resulted in the development of the arousal approaches to motivation, associated with Hans Eysenck (1967) whose ideas are mostly known as theories of personality. The main tenet of this approach is that each person wants to maintain a certain amount of arousal. The arousal stands for “activation of body and nervous system” (Coon and Mitterer 2013, p. 344). Although people differ in the optimal amount of arousal they seek, most of them perform at their best when the level of arousal is moderate. It is believed that the level of arousal people seek is a learned characteristic (Lynne-Landsman et al. 2011).

The second criticism of drive approaches was that they could not account for behaviors which do not follow an internal drive but are motivated by external stimuli. These external stimuli act as anticipated rewards (Feldman 2013). This line of criticism led to the rise of incentive approaches to motivation. Incentive is a reward that makes people engage in certain kinds of behaviors to obtain that reward even though there is no biological need for it (Krull 2014). Adopting this new concept, incentive theories of motivation suggested that the desire to obtain external goals, i.e., incentives, account for a person’s motivation (Feldman 2013; Festinger et al. 2009).

Regarding arousal and drive-reduction approaches, there existed a big problem: the former only covered external drives, while the latter just accounted for internal desires. But the popular belief was that needs and incentives interact to determine drive strength (e.g., Berridge 2004). This shortcoming paved the way for the emergence of cognitive approaches in which the source of motivation was believed to reside in people’s cognition, i.e., mental information processing or thinking (Coon and Mitterer 2013).

The most prominent cognitive theories of motivation are expectancy-value theories (e.g., Atkinson 1964; Bandura 1989; Covington 1988), attributional theories (e.g., Weiner 1986), goal theories (e.g., Elliott 1999; Latham 2003; Wentzel 2007), and self-determination theory (e.g., Ryan and Deci 2017). Based on expectancy-value framework, a person’s motivated decisions to initiate and sustain a particular task depends on his/her expectancy of success and the perceived value of the goal or achievement.

Despite all their differences, all attributional theories focus on “perception of causality, or the perceived reasons for a particular events occurrence” (Weiner 1992, p. 230). Therefore, the proponents of attributional approaches believe that humans are motivated to reach “cognitive mastery of the causal structure of environment” (Kelley 1967, p. 193). In other words, humans are motivated to figure out the reasons behind the occurrence of an event by discovering its source. However, since the causes are not observable, it is the perceiver of the event that decides them.

In what can be called the tradition of one concept replacing another in motivational theories, “goal,” as a cognitive concept, replaced the former ones such as “drive,” “need,” and “incentive.” Since then, the concept has been used in a myriad of theories all of which agree on the centrality of the goal in every behavior. Goal theories can be differentiated based on the way they bring the concept into equation: the setting of the goal (e.g., Latham 2003), the goal orientation (e.g., Ames 1984), or the content of the goal (e.g., Wentzel 2000).

According to the latest comprehensive publication of its founders, Ryan and Deci (2017), SDT is essentially a psychologically focused theory of human behavior and personality development:

The theory examines how biological, social, and cultural conditions either enhance or undermine the inherent human capacities for psychological growth, engagement, and wellness, both in general and in specific domains and endeavors. SDT research thus critically inquires into factors, both intrinsic to individual development and within social contexts, that facilitate vitality, motivation, social integration and well-being, and, alternatively, those that contribute to depletion, fragmentation, antisocial behaviors, and unhappiness. (p. 3).

Another group of theories have adopted more socially oriented approaches toward motivation. Some of them have factored in context as another influential variable (e.g., Wigfield and Wagner 2007; Pomerantz et al. 2007), and some have tried to integrate motivation and context, e.g., socio-cultural and self-regulation theories. The first group has been mainly developed in educational settings and latter applied to other settings. They have mainly focused on the impact of school, instructional materials, teachers, and peers.

Socio-cultural theories are derived from Vygotsky's works (1962, 1978), the result of which was the view of motivation as an event which is culturally situated and socially mediated. Therefore, the context is not just a variable affecting motivation which is located within individual. The new view of motivation has been used to distinguish intrinsic motivation to self-regulate and the socialization of motivation (Branson 2000), depict it as socially distributed under cultural systems through mediation (Rueda and Moll 1994), characterize it as process which is situated socially and historically (e.g., Hickey 2003; Hickey and Granade 2004).

Furthermore, self-regulation, around the beginning of the third millennium, has gathered great momentum in psychological research as a new topic. The majority of works around the topic of self-regulation focuses on self-regulated learning and is presented in the forms of learning models. In a series of works, Boekaerts (1992, 1996) developed an adaptable learning model with several elements labeled identification, interpretation, primary and secondary appraisal, goal setting, and goal striving. Another model was a process-oriented one of metacognitive put forward by Borkowski et al. (2000). They identified the characteristics of what is called a good strategy user or information processor. Pintrich (2000) put forward a general model for self-regulatory learning, consisting of four phases: forethought, monitoring, control, and reflection. The next model was Winne's (2001, 2011) which describes self-regulated learning as an event in four stages: task definition, goals setting and planning, enacting strategies, and metacognitive adaption. Finally, influenced by Bandura's theorizing, Zimmerman (1989, 2013) developed a social cognitive model of self-regulated learning with a cyclical format and three classes of determinants: covert, behavioral, and environmental self-regulation.

Method

Generally speaking, the present study consisted of two phases: a descriptive historical-ontological phase, and a theoretical workout. These two phases entailed lots of thorough and lengthy critical investigation of historical, contextual, etymological, structural, ontological, and philosophical nature. At first, the study took a journey down the history lane to provide context for the birth of motivation. The zeitgeist of the era was laid down to discover whether the language was in need of the word and the reasons for this imperative. To this end, the birth

scene of motivation was recreated, and subsequently the word was treated like a new born child who is not still affected by structural, social, and cultural forces.

Later, a deep and thorough etymological analysis of motivation was conducted to discover the basic meaning of its root, and move forward from that point. The meanings that were covered by other words with the same root before motivation were also laid out. Basically, motivation was stripped down to the last piece. The word was, afterwards, rebuilt by what it had left, i.e., its linguistic structure. Technically speaking, motivation was recreated first as a word and then as a concept in a philosophical sense.

After reaching a comprehensive definition for motivation at point zero, its journey in psychology was tracked to describe how the meaning of the concept has changed through time. The provided description needed some explanation which was provided through ontological lens. Thus, it also involved bringing up the downside of the analytic tradition in philosophy the upside of which is claimed to be precision.

All that was mentioned set the ground for providing a solution to problems surrounding the concept of motivation. It was laid out in the form of an open social theory of motivated behavior inspired by the ideas of towering figures in the history of thought such as Gilles Deleuze, Robert Merton, Michel Foucault, and Martin Heidegger.

Re-conceptualizing Motivation

It is axiomatic that all scientific fields of study follow a set of purposes which complement each other. In humanities and social sciences such as psychology, these purposes can be listed as description, understanding or explanation, prediction, and control. They are defined as naming and classifying, stating the causes, forecasting, and being capable of changing the conditions that affect behaviors, respectively (Coon and Mitterer 2013). However, before beginning to describe, understand, predict, and control something, there is one crucial requirement that should be taken into account and that is conceptualization. From an academic perspective, the concept under investigation should be defined and conceptualized as clearly as possible; otherwise, the studies may end up providing information and knowledge about a concept different from the conceptualizations of their audience. In technical terms, this is a matter of metaphysics in general and ontology in particular.

Put simply, metaphysics is a philosophical investigation of reality in terms of its nature and structure. What distinguishes metaphysics from science is its broader and more fundamental nature “since it investigates questions that science does not address but the answers to which it presupposes” (Audi 2015, p. 661). Although ontology is sometimes mistakenly used synonymously with metaphysics, it actually is part of the field. In fact, the part of metaphysics that most directly affects theories which are concerned with humans is called ontology. In simple terms, ontology refers to one’s philosophical beliefs about what constitutes social reality (Yin 2011), and thus its concern is the nature of the world (Willig 2008).

Although it might sound simple, the issue is much more complicated. Ontology actually affects all that is done in a field from the beginning to the end. It answers the first question on which all the other questions and answers are built. As a field, it actually has taken various definitions so that embracing one instead of another creates great diversions if not conceptual battle.

Based on both printed (e.g., Klein 1966; Partridge 1966) and online (e.g., etymonline.com and newworldencyclopedia.org; britanica.com) etymological dictionaries, the word

“motivation” appeared in English for the first time in 1873 as a noun. It was constructed, through word formation, from the verb “motivate” which had emerged in the language 10 years earlier in 1863, meaning “to stimulate toward action” (“motivate,” n.d.). This verb itself was derived from the noun “motive” that has existed in English since fourteenth century as both a noun and an adjective. The primary meaning of “motive” in early fifteenth century was “that which inwardly moves a person to behave in a certain way” (“motive”, n. d., para. 1). The root of motive is the Latin verb “movere” which means “to move” (Coon and Mitterer 2013). To set the ground for analyzing and discussing the meaning of “motivation,” the following table presents some words from the root “motive,” and the date of their first appearance in English.

Besides the dates of appearance, Table 1, in a meticulous scrutiny, discloses some very important points. First, when needed, “motive” has functioned as a noun, an adjective, and even a verb in English. Its functioning as noun and adjective is mentioned in etymological dictionaries, but the adjective “unmotivated” in the table shows that “motive” has indirectly, if not directly, functioned as a verb. Second, there is about five centuries gap between the emergence of “motive” and “motivation” in English during which well-known authors, from the fourteenth century onward, had repeatedly used “motive” to convey their intended meanings. Therefore, the word has carried a broad range of meanings (including those covered by motivation) until late nineteenth century. The logical way to discover what the meaning of the word “motivation” might or should have been at the beginning and before going through changes, is to compare it with other words with the same structure such as creation and investigation. Table 2 presents the denotational meaning of two such words and their verbs along with “motivation.”

A close look at Table 2 shows that although motivation follows the same rules structurally, it diverges from others in terms of meaning. While other nouns with the same structure take the meaning “the whole action or process,” motivation, stands for “reasons for acting or factors that incite actions.” There is one important, but apparently neglected, point when it comes to the family of words one member of which is ‘motivation’ compared to the other families. While all groups have the same number of words with the same structures, the word “motive” does not have a similar counterpart in the other family of words. This lack of counterpart brings about trouble and ambiguity in understanding. If we set aside the word “motive” and stick to “motivation” and treat it like other words with the same structure, it can have two meanings like them: first, the action or process of moving toward a goal, and second, a movement that has been made toward a goal.

Using the same process like other words, the best definition for motivation would be the first one, i.e., the whole action or process of moving toward a goal, because the second definition is simply a behavior or an action. Also, as discussed earlier, the need or desire that prompts action has a word assigned to it, i.e., motive. Putting all these points together,

Table 1 The emergence date of some words from the root “motive” in English

Word	Date
Motive	14c
Unmotivated	1794
Motiveless	1817
Motivate	1863
Motivation	1873

Table 2 The meanings of some words with the same structure

Word	Meaning
Create	Bring (something) into existence
Creation	Cause (something) to happen as a result of one's actions The action or process of bringing something into existence A thing which has been made or invented
Investigate	Carry out a systematic or formal inquiry to discover and examine the facts of (an incident, allegation, etc.)
Investigation	The action of investigating something or someone A formal inquiry or systematic study
Motivate	Provide someone with a reason for doing something Cause (someone) to have interest in or enthusiasm for something
Motivation	A reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way Desire or willingness to do something

“motivation,” as a word, must stand for all that happens from the outset until the actor reaches or abandons the goal. To sum up, motivation includes what causes the action in the first place and the whole array of things that happen until the end which is either accomplishing or abandoning the goal.

The Divergence of Meaning

The broad speculated definition of motivation in the previous section is almost nonexistent in the works about the concept. Therefore, there must exist at least one reason for this divergence in meaning which will be examined in this section. As mentioned before, motivation first appeared in English in 1873, but it took 31 years until it was psychologically used in 1904 as “inner or social stimulus for an action” (“motivation,” n. d.). The following table presents the rise of some important events in humanities and social sciences which interestingly occurred around the same time motivation appeared for the first time in English. The presentation of these events (Table 3) is in the spirit of using history to locate the problem and then letting the subject matter at hand define the field of study it requires (Aronson 2010).

Although the simultaneous occurrence of two events does not prove any causality per se, it certainly provides room for speculation. It is possible that the zeitgeist of the era, in which psychology as a field emerged, has necessitated the construction of motivation as a word. In

Table 3 The date of some influential events for humanities and social sciences

Date	Figure	Event
1859	Charles Darwin	He published “on the origin of species” claiming that all traits are inherited.
1861	Paul Broca	He discovered that two hemispheres of the brain have separate functions.
1869	Francis Galton	His research suggested that nurture is more important than nature.
1878	G. Stanley Hall	He received the first Ph.D. degree in psychology in America from Harvard.
1879	Wilhelm Wundt	He established the first psychology laboratory in the university of Leipzig in Germany.
1885	Hermann Ebbinghaus	He summarized his research on learning and memory in his book “on memory.”
1890	William James	He published the principles of psychology and described the field as the science of mental life.

this likely scenario, psychology, as its definition clarifies, was in search of a word more easily relevant to mental processes, and since motive did not qualify, motivation emerged. However, the more probable scenario is the utilization of the word by the field, and later the transition toward a concept with a different definition. The second scenario actually does not reject the first one, because the birth of the new word was somehow inevitable. Besides these speculations, what is certain, based on the provided dates, is that motivation was a word which later turned into a concept mainly in the field of psychology.

Since 1904, psychologists have greatly attended to motivation as a concept. Resultantly, the concept has become one of the building blocks of psychology with many general and specific theories. However, during this transition of the word to a concept, the meaning has greatly diverged. The truth is that the speculated meaning is too broad to be investigated within a single field of study. Regarding its definition, the reason is straightforward: from the beginning till the end of a behavior, many psychological, social, structural, socio-psychological, economical, and many other influential factors are at play. Consequently, in the process of theory formation, the concept has started to shrink in various ways. In other words, the transitional process of word to concept, which in this case occurred within the field of psychology, led to concentration on factors far narrower than what the broad meaning of motivation actually needed.

There, indeed, exists another important reason behind the divergence of concept in terms of meaning. Unlike the first reason, the second one, which is philosophical and more specifically ontological, has been rarely mentioned by authors working on motivation. In the twentieth century, western philosophy went through a major division, the result of which was two distinct traditions: analytic and continental. Using these labels to differentiate these two traditions does not mean that all the perspectives under each category follow the same path, or even resemble the same line of thought. Nevertheless, they could be separated from each other based on some important issues such as ontological orientation.

In analytic tradition, the role of philosophy is either “to clarify the limits and range of scientific knowledge” or “to understand the nature and functioning of language” (May 2005, p. 2). Therefore, in this tradition, the concern of ontology is the study of “what there is” and its project is discovery. Resultantly, “since it is a project of discovery, ontology requires identity; because it does so it is a philosophical failure” (ibid, p. 18). The continental tradition (including so many diverse and controversial perspectives that, it is believed, the label is given just because they were developed in Europe) does not have the same ontological concern and project. But this assertion does not mean that the concern and project of authors in this tradition can be summed up in one or two sentences. In this line of thought, if it can be named so, ontological concern ranges from “the study of being” (Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre) to the rejection of the usefulness of ontology (Foucault and Derrida), and the redefinition of it as a result of redefining the term “concept” itself (Deleuze).

At the beginning of its life, psychology, like many other fields within humanities, tried to establish itself as science. To this end, most works within the field, consciously or unconsciously, followed the ontology of analytic tradition of philosophy which was considered the prominent path to be considered scientific. This was also the most dominant orientation of motivational studies which put the words in the process of discovery and identity.

As was mentioned before, the analytic ontological orientation is bound to move toward the fixity of the concept. Motivation as “the whole process of moving toward a goal and all that happens during it” is not something that could be put in a general theory in a process of discovery. Thus, the inevitable result must have been the gradual move toward narrowness in

meaning. It is safe to say that in the process of discovery and fixity, motivation moved toward motive in terms of meaning, e.g., “motivation is a need or desire that energizes behavior and directs it toward a goal” (Myers 2008, p. 335).

In addition, in the process of becoming a construct, because it has to become measurable and observable, the concept must go through some changes. The broader the concept, the more changes there will be in the process of becoming a construct. What actually happens is that to fit the requirements of being a construct, the concept inevitably goes through some modifications. This is in fact one major reason concepts distance themselves from their original meanings. But, this does not mean that all works and theories around the concept have fallen completely prey to this substitution of motivation by motive. However, as they admit now and then, no theory is complete and all of them depict part of the whole picture.

A Social Theory of Human Motivated Behavior

In the last few decades, many authors have continued to work on the concept while admitting that providing a grand theory is unrealistic. However, they have tried to provide the best possible theories by including the most influential factors. Resultantly, factoring in the temporal and dynamic nature of the concept has become the most prestigious agenda in theorizing. Despite all these efforts, the new theories, like their precedents, have turned out to be reductionist and incomplete. This study also shares the belief that it is impossible to generate a grand theory. But, it takes a different path in dealing with the issue: providing a social theory of human motivated behavior rather than theorizing about motivation. Before, laying out the new theory, there are some very critical and vital points that must be made.

First, the new theory is a social theory. Social theories are “analytical frameworks or paradigms used to examine social phenomena” (Murphy 2013, p. 4). Therefore, social theories are multidisciplinary and refer to ideas about the ways societies develop and change and methods of explaining social behavior by taking into account power, structure, gender, etc. (Harrington 2005). As any human motivated behavior is affected by a wide array of factors, a social theory provides room for including ideas from different fields such as philosophy, sociology, and psychology under a unified theory.

Second, regarding the ontology, the new social theory follows Deleuze (1983, 1994; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 1994). Therefore, the theory follows a process of creation and discovery and the concern is becoming rather than some fixed being. Becoming is actually the most prominent Deleuzian concept which is not becoming of a being but becoming itself. In this sense, the most important function of philosophy is creating concepts. Furthermore, the created concepts must be open and expansive to produce direction for thinking rather than adding another word to the language.

The second characteristic dissolves in the third one, i.e., the new theory is an open system. According to Scott (2007), an open system is “characterized by a permanent modification of an array of concepts that are inflected differently according to different subject matter” (p. 60). Simply explained, an open system allows modification, deletion, and addition of new parts. In other words, a theory adhering to this idea is not a closed system with just predefined and static components. Closed systems, because of their nature, assign data to predefined categories even when the data defies it.

Fourth, the work of one key American figure in sociology Robert K. Merton (1949/1968) is also of great help and importance in the development of the new theory. His most significant

contribution to the field of sociology was his strain theory. The theory consisted of an analytical framework to explain the links between structural and cultural determinants of deviance. Merton (1949/1968) believed that all social behaviors, including deviant ones, are products of structural circumstances in a particular society. He distinguished between culturally acceptable goals and institutionalized means to achieve them. Whenever people cannot access the acceptable means to achieve the celebrated goals, deviance occurs. The main relevant part of his work to this study is the typology he drafted to illuminate his theory and framework:

Merton's typology thus introduces the conformist, who accepts cultural goals and society's approved means for their attainment; the innovator, who accepts the goals but finds new ways to achieve them; the ritualist, who, though rejecting the culturally sanctioned goals, nonetheless passively goes along with the behavior necessary to achieve those goals; the retreatist, who opts out of both the goals and the goal-behavior; and finally, the rebel, who rejects the cultural goals and the institutionalized means but who substitutes new goals and means of his or her own (2014, p. 178).

Fifth, for the purpose of this study and regarding human behaviors, three types of them must be differentiated: motivated, non-motivated, and unmotivated. All works on the concept of motivation only differentiate two types of behaviors: motivated vs. non-motivated or reflexes. In this study, a third type is also introduced. Unmotivated behaviors are a bit like habits but for which people do not actually have reasons if we set aside probable ipso facto self-justifications. An example would be of great help to clarify what is meant by non-motivated behaviors.

As a student, one of the authors in this study always sat on one specific chair in his university library. It was no by any taken the best seat: distance, light, convenience, serenity, etc. One day, it came to his awareness that he is actually doing it automatically without knowing. The only explanation he could find was that the first time (at the time of final exams when the library is packed with students) he had entered the library, that was the only one available. In his later visits, although often all seats were available, he without even thinking went to that chair. Something like this has happened for many people as asking several individuals revealed. As these types of behaviors are not actually motivated and reflexes, they are called unmotivated behaviors in this study. Their introduction here is actually for excluding them in the new theory.

Sixth, the proposed social theory of this study is also against polarizing motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic types. Motivated behavior may appear because of internal, external, or internalized reasons. This idea is not against the four types of regulations provided by self-determination theory. But, the belief is that the first two types of regulations are still among external motivation while the last two are internalized. Internalization is used here in the same sense Michel Foucault (e.g., 1991, 1999) used the concept. Therefore, people think the internalized behaviors are their own choice while they are actually the result of the social and structural issues.

Society is something in nature that precedes the individual. Although this sentence sounds like something authors in modern era would write, it actually belongs to Aristotle. He believed that humans are social animals which are bound to live in societies. Therefore, humans enter the world in a state that could easily lead to paradoxes and troubles. This condition is what Heidegger (2000) meant by *Geworfenheit* (thrownness). He believed that human beings are "thrown into a particular and narrow social milieu, surrounded by rigid attitudes, archaic prejudices and practical necessities not of [their] own making" (Patience 2018, p. 97).

Because society precedes the individual, social actions and motivated behaviors also precede the individuals. A person is born into a particular society and culture where there exist a wide range of acceptable behaviors. In addition, each of these behaviors has some preferred goals and paths people should take to achieve them. Therefore, after deciding to undertake a particular behavior, the initial state for every person is not all agentic. On the contrary, the actor is constrained by many social structural issues in choosing the goal, the path, and even the behavior.

For the purpose of clarification, motivated behaviors should be defined as simple and clear as possible. They are acts that people consciously decide or have to do which come with common pre-existing goals and paths toward them in a society. Therefore, although people are aware of undertaking them, their actions do not connote complete agency. At the initial state of undertaking a behavior, modeling Merton and considering the probable goals and paths in the target society (Table 4), motivated behaviors can be categorized under six types:

1. Structural: the actor wholeheartedly accepts the goal(s) and follows the path(s)
2. Innovative: the actor accepts the goal(s) but takes new path(s) to achieve it/them
3. Path-adopted: the actor rejects the goal(s) as the result of the existing path(s) which he/she follows
4. Conforming: the actor does not accept the preferred goal(s) and path(s) but goes along anyway
5. Unmotivated: the actor does not accept the goal(s) and the path(s), does not create his/her own goal(s) and path(s), does not go along, but must be a part of the act
6. Agentic: the actor does not accept the goal(s) and the path(s) and creates his/her own goal(s) and path(s) toward achieving it/them

An example certainly helps in clarifying the theory). Learning English is a motivated behavior and a required skill in many third-world and underdeveloped countries. Most of the population of such countries cannot, sometimes in spite of their willingness, leave the country. And, those who do, need English established degrees such as TOEFL and IELTS. Resultantly, the main goal of English learning has become to score well on tests, whether required educational ones or the mentioned degrees. To achieve these goals, the common path toward them has become attending English classes to work on required skills and study textbooks designed for these purposes. Rightly or not, when a person engages in this behavior, he/she is labeled a language learner and all researches done on him/her takes the person into account. But, based on this new social theory, language learning, as a motivated behavior, can be of six types.

Table 4 Different types of motivated behaviors

Type	Path	Goal
Structural	+	+
Innovative	-	+
Path-adopted	+	-
Conforming	-	-
Unmotivated	-	-
Agentic	-	-

1. In the beginning, the person may wholeheartedly accept the goal and path and follow them (structurally motivated behavior). Learners of this type are actually abundant as it is the easiest way to deal with the social behaviors.
2. He/she may accept the goal of scoring well but through a different path such as immersing himself/herself in English movies and shows with subtitles and trying to contact native speakers on social media (innovative motivated behavior).
3. The individual may attend the classes and read the textbooks and even take the tests as an exercise for the mind and reducing the chance of Alzheimer without caring for test scores (path-adopted motivated behavior).
4. The learner may not agree with the goal and path but continue them anyway because he/she does not care enough to change them and would rather go along to get along (conforming motivated behavior).
5. The person may not accept the goals and the paths toward them, and just attend the classes because he/she has no other choice, and most likely leave the results to chance (unmotivated behavior).
6. And finally, a learner may not accept both the pre-established goals and paths, but creates his /her own goal and path (agentic motivated behavior). A person in such countries may start learning English by immersing himself/herself in original films and books and connecting with native speakers through social media with the purpose of getting around censorship especially in authoritarian regimes.

It is extremely important to keep in mind that the provided theory targets motivated behaviors rather than motivation. It categorizes motivated behaviors in the initial stage of their undertakings. Therefore, the social theory does not in any way reject the previous findings on motivation as most of them focus on completely different things. On the contrary, it provides a framework to apply the sound findings of motivational theories and researches in real-life situations. The previous frameworks did not take into account the structural shape of the behaviors in relation to the individuals who take them.

Furthermore, determining the type of motivated behavior in the initial stage does not mean that it would stay the same during the whole process of undertaking the behavior. For example, a behavior may begin as structural but end up becoming an agentic one due to many reasons. However, not recognizing the behavior in the outset clouds the judgments of the researchers. Simply put, to know about motivation which is a broad conceptual process, the initial stage must be known.

Concluding Remarks

The provided social theory has the characteristics of an open framework since there are infinite number of goals and paths that individual actors may adopt. Therefore, it never turns into a closed system, and motivated behaviors which take different shapes compared to the existing one could always fit into the framework. This feature is in line with the ontological view of becoming. The individuals who are ready to take their lives into their hands through setting up their goals and paths or both, and do not conform to social behaviors as they precede them have their place in this framework. To use Deleuzian terms, this way people create themselves and their life in the process of becoming.

This view of people and life was actually one of the main functions of philosophy from the beginning but was buried behind the technical jargons of the field as an academic discipline. However, in recent years, this function of philosophy has been revived through what is called philosophy of life, and sometimes school of life. This functional resurrection has led to the emergence of many publications and interest in the works of great thinkers such as Seneca, Michel de Montaigne, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, etc. (e.g. De Botton 2000; Irvine 2009; Patience 2018). In the new world that everything seems inevitable, and knowingly or otherwise, people are surrounded with the things they think should do or have, it is refreshing to be awakened by the question “how might one live?”

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