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Contents

Feminisms and the study of religion in the 21st century

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Abstract: This article engages feminisms in the study of religion, speaking to past applications, current developments in critical feminist theories, and their utilization (or not) in the study of systems of belief and practice. Beginning with a brief discussion of past feminist work in the study of systems of belief and practice, the article then discusses a number of current feminist critical work that has yet to be applied in the study of systems of belief and practice. This gap, the author argues, can be related in some measure to the essentialization of systems of belief and practice, and an approach using a methodology of supplication — an approach that leaves behind the possibility of critical analysis.

Introduction

In the years that have followed the publication of my edited text Feminism and the study of religion[2] the two areas of study have interacted in interesting ways, although both continue to be somewhat suspicious of

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2 Darlene M. Juschka, *Feminism in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (New York

each other. Feminists have often taken mainstream systems of belief and practice to be entrenched in traditionalism and conservatively oriented particularly with regard to their adherence to, and generation of, gender/sex ideologies that locate, and continue to locate, the group marked as female/feminine in a subordinate position in relation to the group marked as male/masculine. In Christianities, for example, the anthropogonic myth (myth of the creation of humans) and demogonic myth (myth of creation of social body) in Genesis 1: 26-27, 2:4-3:24, respectively, have been, and continue to be, drawn on to mystify and justify gender oppressive social relations.

Feminisms and systems of belief and practice have often been, then, set in a conflictual relationship particularly by fundamentalistic orientations that adopt a strong gender-binaristic ideology and take as normative structural hierarchies, for example deity over humans, humans over non-human animals, men over women, adults over children, rich over poor, etc. The tendency has been to see feminisms as anti-religious when indeed this is far from the truth. There are feminists who are atheists, but they are few[3] and many feminists are themselves strong adherents of a system of belief and practice even as they challenge it and seek to reshape it in line with their feminist views.[4] The idea of a tension between feminism and systems of belief and practice is, in large part, a trope generated often by the status quo and/or adherents of the system of belief and practice. Equally, the idea that women of strong faith are not feminists or sympathetic to feminisms is equally problematic and again a means to cast a shadow on feminisms. Certainly feminists have called systems of belief and practice into question with regard to mas-

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and London: Continuum Press, 2001).

3   According to the 2015 PEW report 3.1% of the US population identified as atheist "America's Changing Religious Landscape" (2015). A review of atheist studies by Arial Keysar and Juhem Navarro-Rivera published in 2017 indicates that 7% of the world population self-identify as atheists with the majority found in China "A World of Atheism: Global Demographics," *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, eds. Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017): 553–86.

4   Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

culine hegemonic structures, but this does (did) not mean they rejected them wholesale; rather their efforts are (were) to reshape and revamp them with ideologies of gender, race, sexualities, colonialism, and the like critically engaged.[5] These efforts continue, and indeed evangelical and fundamentalistic systems now include professed feminists who are seeking to bring about change in their systems of belief and practice.[6]

Feminist, critical theorist and gender studies engagements with biblical texts have challenged and continue to challenge the interpretations of these foundational myths by arguing that Genesis 1:27, for example, does not locate the female/feminine in a subordinate position and indeed treats both genders as equal in creation and before deity. In terms of Genesis 2 and the story of Adam and Eve, feminists, for example, read against grain of normative masculine dominance and preference and instead represented Eve as inquisitive, thoughtful, and reflective, while Adam silently faded into the background (see Phyllis Bird,[7] Athalya Brenner,[8] Carol Myers,[9] Phyllis Trible,[10] Amy-Jill Levine,[11] among others). These kinds of challenges by feminist theologians/thealogians over the decades, however, have not undercut in any significant way the gender ideologies operative in most traditional Christianities. Instead a place was made for humans marked as

5   Brewster, "Atheism, Gender, and Sexuality," *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism*, eds. Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013): 516–17.

6   Brink Judy and Joan Mencher, eds., *Mixed Blessings: Gender and Religious Fundamentalism Cross Culturally* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005); Pamela Cochran, *Evangelical Feminism: A History* (New York and London: New York UP, 2005).

7   Phyllis Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 1997).

8   Athalya Brenner, *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

9   Carol Myers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

10   Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

11   Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff, (eds.), *A Feminist Companion to Matthew. Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

female/feminine so that gender ideologies of distinct and separate genders linked to an assumed heteronormativity remained intact. Even as feminists reversed the interpretation of Eve's actions to signify her curiosity as positive, this reversal continued to uphold and establish the dominant gender ideology: to turn something upside-down underscores what right-side-up looks like. Engagements such as these pull up short leaving the status quo in place because the structure has been left in place. Feminist efforts in the study of system of belief and practice during the last four decades of the 20th century have taken a number of turns and made a number of challenges, some productive, some less so. Reversal, although momentarily challenging, never successfully altered Christianity's, or any other systems of belief and practice, traditional gender ideology of opposite genders and sexes.[12]

Gender binaries, something feminist poststructuralists in the study of systems of belief and practice discuss, are a significant aspect of the majority of systems of belief and practice particularly since colonization as gender binaries are central to the construction of the conceptualization of the biological, the social and the metaphysical, and in this determine the ontological, the societal, and the speculative of human systems of organization.[13] In heteronormative masculine hegemony, for example, we learn that a proper human is either female or male, feminine or masculine, but never both nor neither; that the ethical, moral, and fantastical parameters of the social body are located in the hands of masculine deities and necessarily must be upheld and enforced by a heteronormative masculine ruling elite that reflects said heteronormative masculine deity(ies). Feminine deities, however, are not quite godly enough precisely because they are located as feminine, such as the Virgin Mary in Catholicism, problematic and threatening such as Kali in what is now called Hinduism, or are completely erased such as Asherah, ancient consort of Yahweh. Certainly binaries are not fixed and shift depending on the social and historical context, but in all locations binaries function to obscure the soci-

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12   Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge; London: Harvard UP, 1992).

13   Darlene M. Juschka, *Political Bodies/Body Politic: The Semiotics of Gender* (UK: Equinox, 2009).

ality of constructed categories and their underlying knowledge systems. Feminists in all areas of study have noted the deployment of binarism in heteronormative masculine hegemonies and called them into question. Understanding the centrality of gender and its intersection with other social categories of oppression such as colonialism, sexuality, race, social status, disability, age, and geopolitical location, feminists, along with other critical theorists, exposed and analyzed the exercise of power in and through gender binarism or what is called gender ideology.

The analysis of gender and accompanying oppressive categories does not compose the all of feminist critical work. Feminists have also made creative contributions to literature,[14] music (Ani DiFranco), art (Faith Ringgold or Judy Chicago), film (Mary Harron), philosophy,[15] science,[16] sociology,[17] psychology,[18] history,[19] epistemology,[20] ontology[21] and theal-

14 Octavia E. Butler, *Lilith's Brood* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2000); Ursula K. Le Guin, *Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2000).

15 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Perspectives on Gender 2 (Boston: Unwin, 1990); Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016).

16 Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008).

17 Barbara Smith, *The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender, and Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1998).

18 Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, Thomas Gora, and Alice Jardine (New York: Columbia UP, 1980).

19 Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan W. Scott (Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 1996): 152–80.

20 Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural?: Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies*, Race, Gender, and Science (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana UP, 1998); Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, (eds.), *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, Synthese Library 161 (Dordrecht, Holland; Boston: D. Reidel; Hingham, MA, 1983).

21 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York:

ogy[22] much of which has arisen from inter-disciplinary, intra-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary contexts.[23] These kinds of contexts extend feminist work and often break down barriers that can limit imaginative and creative thinking, while foregrounding curiosity.[24] My own work is done in both the humanities and social sciences, in both the study of religion and women's and gender studies, while it is cross-cultural and cross-historical, and I am not singular in this kind of academic work.

One of the more significant contributions of feminists to the study of systems of belief and practice, to my mind, has been the introduction of interdisciplinary work, a methodology that has undercut the essentialization of "religion" as a thing existent in the world. The essentialization of religion is a theological approach to systems of belief and practice, and this approach assumes that deity and religion are found in the world and they are discoverable. This approach represents systems of belief and practices as "things sought" and amounts to a methodology of supplication: that is, people seek and find (or are found), and what they find is not a construction and not a social practice; rather it is the essence of existence. The methodology of supplication leaves behind the possibility of a critical — that is reflective and analytical — engagement of systems of belief and practice. An interdisciplinary methodology does not make such an assumption as systems of belief and practice do not hold pride of place and they cannot be at the center; rather they count among other social and discursive practices.

Feminists were not the only theorists who engaged in an interdisciplinary methodology, but they have been significantly consistent and thorough. Drawing on anthropological, sociological, feminist, semiotic, philosophical, linguistic, historical, literary, anti-racist, and queer, among

Routledge, 1993).

22 Plaskow; Judith Plaskow and Donna Berman, (eds.), *The Coming of Lilith: Essays on Feminism, Judaism, and Sexual Ethics, 1972–2003* (Boston: Beacon, 2005).

23 Darlene M. Juschka, "Interdisciplinarity in Religious and Women's Studies," *Studies in Religion* 35.3–4 (2006): 389–99.

24 Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in the New Age of Empire* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2004).

others, theorizing they have extended method, theory, and content in the study of systems of belief and practice. Indeed, in many ways feminisms, among other critical theories, brought about a paradigm shift in all areas of study not the least of which was bringing forward social actors such as women who, in the past, had been relegated to the dark corners of knowledge systems.

Feminisms in the twenty-first century and the gaps it might fill

The feminist efforts above are not new as they came into play beginning in the mid-twentieth century; however, by the 1990s feminisms in multiple locations began to shift their work to account for critical theory developed in antiracist,[25] queer,[26] Indigenous,[27] Marxist,[28] disability,[29] and postcolonial[30] studies. This shift has been referred to, by many, as "third wave" and reshaped feminist work in all areas of study bringing feminisms into the twenty-first century. The reshaping of feminisms in the early twenty-first century has meant an extension of theories and practices to include the methodology of intersectionality and attention to heteronormativity and sexualities, colonialism and globalization, bodies, gender/sex performance, among others.

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25 Kimberlé Crenshaw (ed.), *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995); Sherene Razack, *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping and the New Imperialism* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004).

26 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: U of California P, 1990).

27 Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman, (eds.), *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2010).

28 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham; London: Duke UP, 2003).

29 Linton. Simi, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York UP, 1998).

30 Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier, eds., *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

Globalization

For example, noting increased global suffering in the wake of neoliberalism and the industrial-military complex,[31] the reshaping of nationalisms along the lines of intolerance and cupidity, civil strife[32] , and climates shifts that increase aridity, flooding, extreme weather and rising oceans, feminists have moved the local to the global and intertwined them in order to address current environmental threats facing all life; while feminist post-humanists, such as Donna Haraway,[33] question the way value is given to life and how humans locate themselves at the center of creation and therefore see themselves as the only form of life with real value. In this frame, humanism and its attendant philosophies are seen to be anthropocentric, that is the human is located at the center. Likewise, systems of belief and practice locate the human at the center leaving behind all other life having deemed these to exist to serve human needs and therefore having no intrinsic value. This view of non-human animals was/is significant to the otherfication seen in colonization, Eugenics, and Walt W. Rostow's stages of economic development wherein those marked by race, gender, sexuality, geopolitical location are deemed to not have properly or fully crossed the boundary between wilderness and civilization and between non-human and human animals.[34]

The animal-human binary is a root binary that functions in systems of belief and practice, monotheism in particular, setting human animals apart, while the gender binary of female-woman-feminine and male-man-masculine as opposites[35] operates in tandem with the non-hu-

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31   Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed books, 2002).

32   Cynthia Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* (Lanham, Maryland: Roman and Littlefield, 2007); Cynthia Enloe, "Beyond Steve Canyon and Rambo: Feminist Histories of Militarized Masculinity," *The Militarization of the Western World* (New Brunswick; London: Rutgers UP, 1989): 119–40.

33   Donna J. Haraway.

34   Juschka, *Political Bodies/Body Politic: The Semiotics of Gender*.

35   Laqueur.

man/human animal binary with each supporting and legitimating the other. Therefore the female/feminine is closer to animality through her fleshiness of the "body", firmly lodged in her reproductive organs, while the male/masculine is removed from animality and located closer to deity through his humanness linked to his abstract "mind". This gender play was central to 19th and early 20th century colonization in Canada, and the US, as well as globally.

Warfare and civil strife

Another area of feminist concern has been on warfare and civil strife as these have had a tremendous impact on all non-combatants, while warfare has been declined in the masculine. Naming and critically engaging warrior ideologies from different locations around the globe feminists have forced global systems to acknowledge rape, mutilation, and murder of humans marked as female/feminine by soldiers or peace keepers as crimes of war and not a natural event of war. Laura Shepherd[36] and Robin Riley,[37] among others, have done close studies on warfare asking how gender, and its intersections with the other value loaded categories of race, status, age, able-bodiedness, and indigeneity play out in differing contexts where war and/or civil strife are enacted. Warfare is a social activity shaped by and within social contexts and therefore is neither natural nor inevitable. The forms it takes are socially ascribed to, so for example, in the ancient Greek world conflict between Greek city-states led to the losing state being overrun and subjected to the murder of infants and toddlers, enslavement of girls and boys, rape and murder of women, and the torturing to death of older men and women for the amusement of the soldiers. Goods, food, and any kind of wealth, including those previously enslaved, were appropriated. Warfare was part of the economy

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36 Laura Shepherd, *Gender, UN Peacebuilding, and the Politics of Space: Locating Legitimacy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017); Laura Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice* (London, UK: Zed Books, 2008).

37 Robin Riley, *Depicting the Veil: Transnational Sexism and the War on Terror* (UK: Zed Books, 2013); Robin Riley, Chandra Talpad Mohanty, and Minnie Bruce Pratt, eds., *Feminism and War: Confronting US Imperialism* (UK: Zed Books, 2008).

of ancient Greece.[38] In ancient Rome the field of war was open in March and closed October 15th with the horse sacrifice.[39] When agricultural activity was complete, warfare for the enrichment of the state and its elite was engaged allowing for the acquisition of goods, precious metals, animals, and slaves. Certainly, discourses of threats and need for protection were often the rationale for warfare, but these ideological plays simply obfuscated the realities of warfare. For example, in the Third Punic War between Rome and Carthage in 146 BCE, the Roman senate had Carthage denuded of its wealth and then burned to the ground with all its remaining inhabitants murdered or enslaved. In both ancient Greece and Rome war was taken to be natural, and particularly natural to the male/masculine, although certain there were the "monstrous" female/feminine such as the legendary Amazons or the infamous "tremblers" of ancient Sparta.

The links between systems of belief and practice and warfare have been undertheorized and too often taken to be insignificant[40].The typical approach is to assume that systems of belief and practice are in themselves never the reason for a war; instead they conceal the "real" reasons for civil unrest and warfare. I do not think systems of belief and practice merely conceal the "real" reasons, such as economics or political ideologies, for warfare. Rather, they are a means by which to: legitimate warfare; mark as other those who are deemed the enemy; to construct an identity of sameness; to separate, expropriate, imprison, and murder; and a means by which to construct and maintain ideologies such as warrior ideologies of masculine hegemonies. Warrior ideologies, although showing variation in terms of time and location, share mythemes such

38   Kathy L. Gaca, "Ancient Warfare and the Ravaging Martial Rape of Girls and Women: Evidence from Homeric Epic and Greek Drama," *Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World*, eds. Mark Masterson, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, and James Robson (London and New York: Routledge, 2015): 278–97.

39   Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion: With an Appendix on the Religion of the Etruscans*, forward by Mircea Eliade, trans. Philip Krapp, vol. 1 (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

40   One recent text is *War and Religion* edited by Jeffrey M. Shaw and Demy Timothy J., eds., *War and Religion: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict*, 3 (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2017).

as the constellation of the warrior, king and priest, natural hierarchies, warfare as practice, the suppression and control of the female/feminine by the male/masculine, and metaphysical encouragement and sanction of all of the above. Warfare (king), masculinity (warrior), and systems of belief and practice (priest) are ideologically linked in multiple demogonic (demos[41] + creation of) myths such as found in ancient Sumerian and Babylonian myth in the figure of Gilgamesh (warrior, king and priest), in the Iliad the figures of Achilles (warrior), Agamemnon (king), and Chryses (priest), in Nso mythology the fon, as priest and king, and warriors who transform into leopards to protect their community,[42] and in the Tanakh the figures of David (warrior), Saul (king) and Samuel (priest).[43] Systems of belief and practice, warfare and masculinities intersect to produce most if not all of humanity's most horrific stories of brutality, torture, mass murder, genocidal efforts, and scorched-earth policies such as seen in the Holocaust of WWII, the US war on North Vietnam 1955-1975, Rwanda in 1994, Abu Ghraib from 2003 until 2006, Myanmar beginning in 2016.

From my feminist work on war, warfare and masculinity I have noted the reluctance of scholars in the study of systems of belief and practice and theological studies to take seriously the intersection of war, warfare and masculinity and have wondered about this. Is it because systems of

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41 Demos is an ancient Greek term referring to the common people in a democracy and extending from this then, a people as a collective.

42 Miriam Goheen, *Men Own the Fields, Women Own the Crops: Gender and Power in the Cameroon Grassfields* (Wisconsin: U of Wisconsin P, 1996).

43 Bruce Lincoln *Death, War and Sacrifice: Studies in Ideology and Practice* (Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1991) discusses these figures and their constellation in ancient Indo-European mythological systems and subsequent systems such as Vedic, Roman, or Norse, among others. Roger Woodard's text *Indo-European Sacred Space: Vedic and Roman Cult* (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2006) also discusses the alliances and contestations between these figures, while both authors draw on the work of Georges Dumézil *Archaic Roman Religion: With an Appendix on the Religion of the Etruscans* and Emile Benveniste *Indo-European Language and Society*, Miami Linguistics Series.12 (Coral Gables, Florida: U of Miami P, 1973), 1969 in their discussions.

belief and practice are distanced from war, warfare and masculinities in an effort to remove them from the purely mundane? Is the lack of theorizing by scholars simply an effort to protect their own systems of belief and practice? Or has the Eurowestern colonial mythology of Church and State separation blinkered scholars so that they take the separation to be a fact and in doing so separate systems of belief and practice from war and warfare? In the ideology of colonization,[44] the mythology of a Church and State separation marked and continues to mark nations who adhere to it as necessarily rational, while those others who do not adhere to the mythology, currently Islamic nations and Islamic populations within nations, are represented as irrational as here the Church and State separation has yet to be properly brought into play. Whatever the reasons, and I am sure they are multiple, the outcome has been to ignore how systems of belief and practice intersect and work with war, warfare and, of course, properly masculine warriors.

Intersectionality

Like war, warfare and warriors, gender, sexuality, and other social markers that inflect power such as indigeneity, race, social status, geopolitical location, and age are all taken to be specialized concerns that need not be taken into account when studying systems of belief and practice. These social categories — intersecting or alone — are central to mythologies, sign-symbols and rites, constructing, as they do, identities of the subject, the group, the community, the nation, and the notion of being human in the world and the metaphysical. Black feminist theory developed the methodology of intersectionality grounded in black feminist thought in the US and UK. Challenged, white feminisms realized their tendency to locate side by side or piled one on top of the other oppressive social categories, such as race, gender, age, sexuality and so forth. Instead, theo-

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44   See, for example, the theory of "take-off" developed by Walt Rostow *The Stages of Economic Growth, a Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1960); a theory that informed, and continues to inform, global relations since its development.

rists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw[45] and Patricia Hill-Collins[46] argued that these categories intersect so that oppression operates in a distinct fashion. For example, in the racialized discourses of North America, including Mexico, black female sexuality is shaped by white female sexuality with the former, black female sexuality, measured and judged by the latter, white female sexuality. When it came to sexuality black women were not properly passive and demurring and subsequently marked as oversexed. As oversexed they cannot be sexually assaulted with the consequences of this gendered-racial ideology visible in the streets and the courts as Crenshaw so astutely argues.[47]

However, even as these identity categories are central to systems of belief and practice, they are deemed unworthy of analysis and therefore too often bracketed or simply ignored. We can see this play in Christian narratives of the mythic figure of Jesus Christ whose genitals and anus are represented as they signify that he is a male human being, and furthermore signifies those humans who are his proper ritual experts. But equally, the penis and anus are erased and replaced by the phallus and a seal through abstraction, the latter two of which secure heteronormative and dominant masculinity since they are linked to the deities of the "Father and Son". The phallus and the seal that mark the proper subject act as sign-symbols of power in predominately white, Christian or Christian-esque, heteronormative masculine hegemonies. In Christianities it matters that deities are male/masculine even as it matters that the leaders of dominant Christianities around the globe are primarily male/masculine. Significantly, then, part of, or connected to, dominant political, social, economic, communication, etc. systems, gender ideologies purported and supported by the various systems of belief and practice tend to be the basis and measure for the operative gender ideology of the larger social body.

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45 Kimberlé (ed.) Crenshaw; Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour," *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (July 1991): 1241–99.

46 Collins and Bilge; Collins.

47 Kimberlé Crenshaw.

The mytheme of Church and State separation

If gender, sexuality, race, and other significant social categories are taken to be and represented as merely of local concern, and if the interplay of systems of belief and practice with the larger social body is minimized and/or erased, an outcome is one of distortion and bias, and further, marks a refusal to recognize the play of power. For example, the proposition of a Church and State separation is a colonizing mytheme that allows(ed) Eurowestern Christian hegemonic countries like the US, Canada, the UK, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, etc. to locate their governments and their actions as rational and legitimate. This kind of honour is not awarded to countries seen not to have separated Church and State, such as many Middle Eastern and Islamic countries, countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Sudans, Haiti, and so forth. Signified on the global stage as lacking so-called rationality, a cognitive state based on the binary of Church and State wherein the first is taken to be linked to emotions (and superstition) and the second to thought (also reason), the latter of which must overcome the former, interference in these countries is presented as necessary and helpful. However, in light of what has actually occurred in these locations such interference indeed was (is) not needful, necessary or helpful. This is only one, although significant, aspect of how systems of belief and practice shape and intersect with the hegemonic ideologies. There are a multitude of other locations such as media, education or legal systems wherein systems of belief and practice shape, support, provide the logic and justification for all that we practice and deem to be the "ways things are and ought to be". Following Louis Althusser then:

> ...the existence of the ideas of his [their] belief is material in that his [their] ideas are his [their] material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject. Naturally, the four inscriptions of the adjective 'material' in my proposition must be affected by different modalities: the materialities of a displacement for going to mass, of kneeling down, of the gesture

of the sign of the cross, or of the mea culpa, of a sentence, of a prayer, of an act of contrition, of a penitence, of a gaze, of a hand-shake, of an external verbal discourse or an 'internal' verbal discourse (consciousness), are not one and the same materiality.[48]

For Althusser, like Blaise Pascal whom he references, systems of belief and practice are ideal institutions and practices to develop, uphold and deploy ideology.

Systemic oppressive practices in systems of belief and practices

A critical engagement with systems of belief and practice for their often oppressive practices, which can and do reduce the quality of life for those humans who practice or are accosted by them, and for non-human animals and all life forms affected by them, does not mean dismissal or adoption of a position of non-belief; but it does require cognizance of, and a reflection on power. Challenging our social systems, integral to which are systems of belief and practice, requires honesty, forthrightness, and always an eye to power and its circulation. Following Michel Foucault's understanding of power, a critical engagement with systems of belief and practice does not assume power is lodged in one place or another, but that it shifts — shifts between and in relation to our social institutions of which systems of belief and practice are integral:

Now, the study of micro-physics presupposes that the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property, but as a strategy, the effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess; that one should take as its model a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction

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48 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation)," *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London and New York: Verso, 1995) 127.

or the conquest of a territory. In short this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic position.[49]

Feminisms in the study of systems of belief and practice have taken the position that power is integral to social organization and therefore have worked, and worked hard and diligently to challenge heteronormative masculine hegemonies and their attendant systems of belief and practice. We have worked in numerous ways to ask when, where, and how power is deployed. We ask, what are the outcomes of its deployment? And where do systems of belief and practice fit in the deployment of power? For example, the institution of the Catholic Church has for centuries ignored the abuse the religious — nuns, priests, bishops, cardinals, and even popes — have enacted on laypersons, particularly children. In the last few decades under pressure from many social justice advocacy groups, including feminist groups, the Catholic Church has been forced to look at and take responsibility for this abuse. The 2018 Philadelphia case is just such an example wherein hundreds of priests abused more than one thousand children over a seventy year period; something the Catholic Church neither stopped nor punished its priests for. Instead, the sexual assault was condoned in the act of its concealment.[50] In a second recent example, the Sisters of Providence, who ran St. Joseph's Orphanage in Burlington Vermont before its closure in 1974, have been questioned as to allegations of sexual abuse, torture and the murder of children in their care from 1930 until its closure.[51] Because feminisms in a multitude of locations demanded that sexual abuse and assault be criminalized (see for

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49   Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage-Random House, 1979): 26.

50   Jeremy Roebuck, Julia Terruso, and William Bender, "Failure at the Top," *The Inquirer Daily News* 2003, Nov 2018.

51   Laura Ly and Chuck Johnston, "Accusations of Decades of Child Abuse at Vermont Orphanage Lead to Investigation," *CNN* 2011, Sept 2018.

example the work of Catharine MacKinnon[52] and Kimberlé Crenshaw[53]) these acts of injustice are no longer accepted and concealed. Instead, with feminist pressure concerning taking sexual assault seriously such injustices have come under social and legal censure.

Interrogating conceptualizations of knowledge, the flesh, desire, emotion and pain, and troubling certainties such as normative domination by humans marked as white heteronormative male/masculine and/or Eurowestern, feminists have ensured gross misconceptualizations of human existence have been removed from our systems of knowing and understanding. Challenged, for example, was the belief held until recently of the inability of humans marked as female/feminine, and those considered "other" through their association with the feminine, to engage in abstract thinking; thinking required in the sciences, philosophy and of course theology. Consider, for example, Lawrence Summers', president of Harvard University in 2005, statement that women's cognitive capacities were insufficient to allow them to succeed in the sciences.[54] His views were soundly contested, as were his views on race, and he subsequently grudgingly stepped down from his position as president in 2006. This view of gender/sex, and all other categories of social oppression, has been developed and deployed through our knowledge systems and central to this play of epistemological power are systems of belief and practice. The intersection of knowledge, systems of belief and practice and socio-linguistic being are of central concern to both feminisms and to the study of systems of belief and practice bringing together these two areas of study and thought. Such a joining can only benefit both particularly since they continue to maintain a critical distance from each other.

52 Catharine A. MacKinnon and Reva B. Siegel (eds.), *Directions in Sexual Harassment Law* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 2012).

53 Kimberlé Crenshaw.

54 Suzanne Goldenberg, "Why Women Are Poor at Science, by Harvard President," *The Guardian* 2018, Jan 2005.

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Neoliberalism, the Rise of New Media Folklore and the Emergence of New Nationalisms[1]

Jan Kajfosz[2]

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to define the difference between nationalisms of the modern era and contemporary nationalisms. The proposition is methodologically based on the phenomenological and semiotic analysis of texts representing genres of new media folklore shared within digital communicative networks as well as on the analysis of conditions of their production, consumption, and reproduction. The author claims that the social reproduction of new nationalisms takes place beyond traditional (modern) social structures and hierarchies of knowledge credibility. He attempts to prove that new nationalisms are based on magical-mythical perception and thinking.

The aim of the paper is to answer the question what conditions shape the contemporary social production and reproduction of nationalism compared to the era of modernity. During the 1960s, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann describe the social mechanisms of production of collectively relevant meanings in their classical work, *The Social Construction of Reality*[3]. According to these authors the legitimization of knowledge and of social institutions happens on four layers: **1)** everyday vocabulary (habitual connotations of every understandable word

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3   Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (New York and London: Doubleday, 1989)

reproduce a value system and implicate an instruction on how to act towards designated phenomena and what to expect from them), **2)** simple explanatory patterns in the form of generalizing judgments and popular narratives (proverbs, legends, rumors, gossips, etc.), **3)** expert knowledge and argumentation, which is sometimes not accessible outside of expert systems; the reproduction of such knowledge requires special initiating techniques and rituals, **4)** a symbolical universe consisting of signs able to unify disparate phenomena into one perceived "order of things." – The authors claim that when expert knowledge is not immediately accessible for non-experts, popular representations of such knowledge in the form of suitable hierarchies of symbols and narratives can make them legitimate. By means of reduced and aestheticized representations of expert knowledge members of different societies can also understand incomprehensible phenomena in such a way that they feel their grandeur and usefulness for the society or even mankind, even if they cannot always justify their feelings[4]. – This all relates to the era of modernity.

Within the contemporary social production of collectively relevant sense, the importance of layer 3 and 4 decreases in favor of layer 2. The reproduction of credibility of modern knowledge institutions is disturbed to a large extent due to new communication technologies (the emergence of new media and social media), due to neoliberal patterns of trading information (the emergence of infotainment) and due to social media folklore as a sphere of everyday collective prosumption (production as well as consumption) beyond modern social hierarchies, and also beyond the constraints of long-time authorities. The production of contemporary nationalism happens to a large extent beyond the classical ideological

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4   Roland Barthes demonstrates this type of magical-mythical legitimization with the example of Einstein´s equations. Even non-physicists can understand $E=mc^2$ in such a way that they perceive it as an „esoteric image of a science entirely contained in a few letters". The equation can be spontaneously seen as a sign of a „secret of the world". I can be seen as a sign of an inaccessible knowledge and in this sense it can be perfectly understandable. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Jonathan Cape (New York: The Noonday Press, 1972), 69-70.

state apparatuses, if we are to use the notion of Louis Althusser[5]. The essential feature of new nationalisms consists in the fact that they are not embedded in former, modern hierarchies of knowledge credibility anymore. Nowadays it is hardly possible to legitimize institutions of knowledge and knowledge as such only by means of consensual acknowledged symbols and rituals or by means of symbiotic or mutual "consecration" of cooperating authorities (established information sources) in the sense proposed by Pierre Bourdieu[6].

The contemporary world under the aspect of knowledge credibility hierarchies

Within the former modern society, if somebody acknowledges a publisher as a credible knowledge institution, he will presumably acknowledge a different publisher due to the fact a word (a name) having specific connotations – implicating specific images and values – transfering them onto every entity to which it indexically relates. Designation means i.a. using generalizing maps which make invisible various changes, discontinuities and all specifics of territories to which such maps relate[7]. Within modern society, even if somebody distinguishes between more and less credible publishers he will apparently tend to believe that what is published is more credible than what is said, except anomic circumstances when credibility hierarchies change. In the world of modernity, a recognized cooperation between a credible publisher and an author who has been unknown so far can make the author credible – or vice versa, if a credible author has something in common with a new publisher, he/she can make the pub-

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5   Louis Althusser, *'Ideology and ideological state apparatusses (notes towards an investigation)'*, in Lenin and Other Essays, trans. Ben Brewster (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 86-127.

6   Pierre Bourdieu, *Kunst und Kultur: Zur Ökonomie der symbolischen Güter*, trans. Hella Beister (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014), 98-117.

7   Alfred Korzybski, *Science and sanity: An introduction to the non-Aristotelian systems and general semantics* (New York: Institute of General Semantics, 2000), 58; compare Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and simulation*, trans. Sheila F. Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

lisher trustworthy and prominent. Within spontaneous perception index-icalities (perceived contiguities) between two institutions can change in their similarity or even identity under some aspects: one institution makes other institutions credible if it has something in common with them. Our credible companionship makes us credible and our noncredible compan-ionship makes us not credible. This way, an institution, which has a good reputation can transfer this reputation to other institutions due to their co-operation. If third parties perceive such cooperation as not accidental, they easily assume that both institutions enjoy similar prestige. In this way, au-thors can make their publishers, broadcasters or even the universities cred-ible, where they had studied, where they had taught etc. – and vice versa[8].

In the same way, not only credible hierarchies of knowledge institu-tions but also credible hierarchies of narratives are produced in modern society. Within a pre-reflexive, spontaneous perception, the value is trans-ferred from the source of a narrative onto the narrative, and this occurs again on the basis of an indexical relation, on the basis of the perceived contiguity of one and the other. Let us look at the matter from the per-spective of pupils at school: the teacher, who is telling them a story is for them a metonymic representative of the school; the school is a metonym-ic representative of education, and as it follows, of objective knowledge. One and the other are, in turn, metonymically related to initiation rituals (entrance examinations, graduations), which provide the pupil with lofty – "sacred" – experiences, etc. Most importantly, the value-bearing con-notations connected with one link of the metonymic chain can be trans-ferred to another link and vice versa. The *loftiness* or *authority* (and other axiologically characterized connotations) metonymically connected with the institution of the school are 'transferred' to the teacher, and from him back to the school, and so on. They are also transferred to the stories the teacher presents to his/her students, and vice versa. In this precise man-ner, narratives can be legitimized by themselves; they can also legitimize social institutions, including those by which they were produced[9].

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8   Bourdieu, 2014, 98-117.

9   Compare Jan Kajfosz, ‚Magic in the social construction of the past: The case

The teacher, whose authority is transferred to the narrative he transmits, can be replaced by a museum guide, or by a grandfather, parents, other family members and friends (significant others) who constitute authority for the recipient and to whom the recipient is emotionally attached. Other similar sources which are able to make their messages credible are acknowledged newspapers, broadcasters etc. The value-bearing connotation connected with any object can be transferred onto the story that is associated with it and the opposite. To repeat: an axiological valuation – positive or negative – associated with the sources of narratives can be transferred to those narratives (making them credible or noncredible) and from them back again to their sources. In this way, every society produces and reproduces its picture of the world.

Within relatively stable hierarchies of credibility, expert knowledge – not accessible from the outside of expert systems – can be quite easily legitimized by symbolical universes. Within neoliberal postmodernity, this does not seem possible anymore. Neoliberal knowledge institutions can reproduce their symbolic capitals and survive on the free market only in the way of permanent "fighting" for wide audiences – in the way of entertaining, surprising, astonishing, amazing them. If they do not offer any visible technologies generally regarded as useful, the only way a knowledge institution can establish reasons for its own existence is to make spectators wonder. In such circumstances only evoking "emotional" astonishment has the power to persuade. Rhetorical strategies – communication styles of marketing and PR – overwhelm the Aristotelian syllogism within the public discourses. This can be regarded as a consequence of the fact that modern hierarchies of knowledge have collapsed. Long-term authorities have been to a large extent replaced by short-term authorities (movie stars and other celebrities as experts, bloggers, YouTubers etc.), who are characterized by the lack of need to avoid contradictions and to maintain consistencies of knowledge. Moreover, the virtual significant others (mediated people we are emotionally attached to) can change very quickly: the valuable authority of today can

of Teschen Silesia,' *Polish Sociological Review*, 2013, 183: 357-358.

be quickly removed and replaced by another one. Credible hierarchies of knowledge institutions are in so far unstable, that they probably do not exist anymore if they are defined through their stability.

Within the sphere of neoliberal media, the credibility of broadcasters is not necessarily a condition of their popularity, of their symbolic capital and of their profits. This can be demonstrated in many examples:

2012 *Animal Planet* and *Discovery Channel* – which are globally considered recognized educational broadcasters – aired the mockumentary entitled *Mermaids: The Body Found* (2011, director: Sid Bennett). The narrative about allegedly concealed, but really existent mermaids (reported as *aquatic apes* occasionally observed by navy members and scientists) was inscribed into the narrative about Darwin's evolution. This was the essential discursive figure of the message. This way, value and credibility associated with the theory about the origin of species were transferred to the story about mermaids, making them possibly real. In other words: contiguity (connection) between these two narratives made them similar under the aspect of their modality. The truthfulness of one story was transferred to the other one, making the existence of mermaids plausible. Also, the credibility of the broadcasters was transferred to the story, making "filmed" mermaids real. Reactions posted on the discussion forum of the broadcasters showed that many recipients were truly fooled, others got very angry:[10]

> *(…) I find your cavalier attitude and disregard for those of us of whom may have been longtime fans, to be egregious. Some people in this crazy world still seek the truth. You are every bit as irresponsible as those fools who aired WAR OF WORLDS. I am no longer a subscriber. You idiots. Good Bye Animal Planet.*

> *Very disappointed in The Discovery Channel with this "documentary". Really, really bad decision to air garbage. Not what I would expect from this network.*

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10   Accessed: http://animal.discovery.com/tv-shows/other/videos/mermaids.htm (26-09-2012)

Shame on you Discovery Channel. I am about to completely turn my back on Discovery and never watch your channel again. (…) Shame on you for treating your viewers like idiots!!!

Really sad.... In my opinion, the only FEW television channels you COULD TRUST TO BE TRUE, were the Discovery Channel, History Chnl., and Ntl. Geo. Now, I hesitate to trust any of them. This was a huge mistake, not stating it was FICTION!!

Can we get back to science and stop injecting sci-fi into, what should be educational (?)

We can find similar discursive figures (manipulation techniques) in many other programs of broadcasters associated with educational and scientific discourses, e.g. *Ancient X-files*, aired by the *National Geographic Channel*, *Lost Tapes*, aired by *Animal Planet* etc. The attempts to make documentaries or docudramas attractive through mysteries can be demonstrated on the series *Mayday* (or: *Air Crash Investigation*) from the Canadian company Cineflix. In Episode 8 (titled *Fatal Distraction*), Season 5, there appears an undeclared urban legend regarding ghosts protecting planes[11] as a component narrative. The docudrama contains the following story: in the disaster of flight 401 in the Everglades Swamp two pilots were killed. Parts of the plane that crashed were reused in other aircrafts. Whenever they are in the air and face possible danger, the ghosts of these two dead pilots allegedly appear on board to warn the crew and in this way keep everyone safe. Reconstructed scientific investigations of the airplane crash made the story about ghosts credible in the eyes of some recipients. Without trying to decide in any way, what was real and what was not, we can say that the boundless struggle for public attention undermined to a large extent consensual differences between probability and improbability. It undermined the stability of socially shared background pieces of knowledge.

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11   Compare John G. Fuller, *The Ghost of Flight 401* (North Hobart: Hear a Book, 1987)

The dominating infotainment discourses are as astonishing as well as mystifying ("fooling"). Considering the *War of the Worlds*, a radio drama from 1938 about an invasion from Mars[12], which was due to its rhetoric figures perceived by many listeners as a message reporting real events, we cannot precisely determine, when the credibility of free mass information institutions started to collapse. It is a question of frequency of comparable hybrid genres in media. Only in the world of relatively stable background knowledge, can mockumentaries encourage their consumers to think critically and to learn how to detect rhetoric strategies. The frequent occurrence of such genres everywhere makes such background knowledge including the hierarchies of sources credibility very unstable. Mockumentaries produce the assumption any message could be true or fake and there are no criteria of its reliability. Mockumentaries, as well as all other fake news, generate profits because popularity by itself generates profit (e.g. on Youtube). There is no crucial difference between contemporary media as such and social media under this aspect.

Early modern society also knew hoaxes, mercantile legends as well as trolling in the sense of intended manipulation and mystifying for different purposes[13]. However, nowadays there is one phenomenon which is new: the difference between consensually recognized credible and non credible information sources has almost disappeared. Supremacy of rhetoric strategies in contemporary new media seems to be the answer to the question why neoliberal society does not reproduce the early modern difference between "noble" and "ignoble" media and styles of communication anymore. Fooling and being fooled, disseminating ignorance and being ignorant do not seem to discredit anybody anymore. The slogan *anything goes!* as a wish of 20th-century postmodernists has become reality. This way the culture of mystification and of shared hysteria is the essential circumstance of the emergence of new nationalisms.

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12 It was an adaptation of a science fiction novel with the same title written by Herbert G. Wells.

13 Compare Francis Wheen, *How mumbo-jumbo conquered the world: A short history of modern delusions* (London: Fourth Estate, 2004); Francis Wheen, *Strange days indeed: The golden age of paranoia* (London: Fourth Estate, 2010)

If we are to consider notions like "alternative facts" (a famous expression of Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president in the administration of U.S.) or "fake media" (Donald Trump labels by this term any uncomfortable broadcasters) as legitimate rhetoric tools of neoliberal state institutions, another new phenomenon appears: Western political institutions have started to use fake information (unproven, fabricated and easily falsifiable knowledge), as well as mystifying accusations of disseminating fake information, as legitimate tools of political competition. In this manner, the neoliberal Western state has given up the attempt to reproduce credibility of its own institutions as well as the attempt to reproduce symbolical universes, which would be able to unify different phenomena in integral and credible orders. This is another symptom of progressive destruction (not deconstruction!) of knowledge credibility hierarchies. Generalizing, confusing, mystifying, accusing acknowledged fact-finding institutions of deception, these have all started to be considered legitimate. Crossing red lines without any social consequences encourages other comparable subjects to do so.

If one acknowledged institution argues there is no global warming caused by man and another one argues there is such warming, why should Eastern Europeans and others not believe the attractive folklore narratives that refugees from Syria or Iraq are a perfectly organised body – controlled and encouraged from a hidden center – with one consequent long-time mission: to make, step by step all of Europe Islamic. Not only due to a credibility crisis but also due to folklorization of the public sphere, conspiracy theories start to work as a legitimate tool of political competition. Within conspiracy theories in Eastern Europe, we can observe an interesting assumption: *the hostile Other* is not necessary somewhere "there" (behind the state border), it is among us, pretending to be *the Own* and trying to destroy *the Own* from inside, such as hidden or apparent *Jews* (e.g. Georg Soros considered by some Hungarians to be the enemy of the state) or hidden or apparent *Moslems* (e.g. Barack Hussein Obama who, according to some inhabitants of Eastern Europe, was not even born in the USA). The popularity of conspiracy theories within

the social media folklore creation reveal something deeply true: firstly, modern hierarchies of knowledge credibility have crumbled, secondly, the culture of uncertainty, mistrust, and vulnerability against mystification is at least partially the result of marketing of fear, which is based on the principle that naivety, fear, and superstition can generate significant political and economic profits[14].

Folklorized nationalisms are products of the so-called post-truth era (*postfaktisches Zeitalter*). Crucial for their emergence is the culture of uncertainty, of collective hysteria production and its instrumentalization for short-time political and economic purposes. Neoliberal ideology – as a sphere of cognitive and acting habitus – means i.a. broad social acceptance for economically as well as politically motivated instrumentalization of people's feelings (e.g. fears, collectively shared hysterias), beliefs, collective memories, values, symbols. The management of long-term consequences of such instrumentalizations, the responsibility for long-term damages is very often delegated to "others".

New nationalisms can be defined at least by three interrelated features:
1. They are "folklorized" in such a way that their production is to a large extent interactive, spontaneous and aestheticized.
2. They are dominated by magic-mythical perception and thinking.
3. The spontaneity of nationalism production and reproduction within the folklore creation can be manipulated by accidental or professional trolling.

Folklorization of contemporary nationalisms

Social media are at least partially responsible for the disappearance of the modern difference between "noble" and "ignoble". Posting highly irrational and irresponsible tweets (irresponsible due to their consequences for the integrity of the society) by people recognized as celebrities reveal the fact that no statement can make somebody socially ostracized for a long time. Here, again, the slogan "anything goes!" can be applied.

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14 Compare Umberto Eco, *Turning back the clock: Hot wars and media populism* (London: Vintage Digital, 2014)

Within the social media, a new communication convention emerged, where no statement can make its sender scandalous, disgraceful or disgusting for a longer period of time. Emotions break out and expire, what stays is the shift of red lines. This makes everything socially acceptable as long as it does not interfere with the law. The law applies here as the only criterion of social regulation. Within some milieus of Polish social media, breaking rules of consensual rationality starts to work as a kind of protest against political correctness and as a mean of defining oneself against liberal and leftist "elites" associated with *the Other* – e.g. with *Jews* and *Germans* from abroad or alleged "hidden" *Jews* and *Germans* from the home country. Here we can detect a significant shift between *the Own* and *the Other*. Who does not identify himself with a set of ideas standing for "national culture" can be in contemporary Polish right-wing milieu recognized as a "foreigner", although not yet proven "foreigner". Thus, national belonging starts to be defined through one's political convictions.

Concerning the notion of *folklore,* we can draw on Peter G. Bogatyrev and R. Jakobson. These scholars define folklore as a poetical text aimed at *la langue*[15]. Such texts are popular. They are broadly reproduced, or their semantic structures are broadly reproduced, within a larger or smaller communicative society, within a special social group or – what seems to be the most decisive point for the rise of new nationalisms – within a digital communication network. If we claim that folklore texts (all folklore genres) fulfill a poetical function, it means they are aestheticized in such a manner that they can arouse intense feelings among its bearers, they are attractive. Folklore creation is always a sphere of spontaneous social prosumption as well as a sphere of infotainment. Shared statements must be always attractive in some aspects.

Folklore works as an instrument of maintaining shared beliefs, value systems, stereotypes, conceptual scenarios, expectations or attitudes. As stated by Antonio Gramsci, folklore is an instrument of hegemony, a

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15   Peter G. Bogatyrev and Roman Jakobson, *'Folklore as a special form of creation,'* in R. Jakobson: Selected Writings, vol. IV (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 1-15.

means of ideology reproduction[16]. Folklore is responsible for the obviousness of the life-world. Drawing on Bogatyrev and Jakobson, folklore has evolutionary character, it changes according to changing social, cultural and political needs. It adapts to changing circumstances. Every era and every environment has its own folklore.

According to Bogatyrev and Jakobson, folklore creation is characterized by the so-called preventive censorship. If a statement does not meet the conceptual capacities of the receiver, he will not reproduce (not share) it. A message which does not meet mental images, semantic structures, needs and expectations of members of a communication network, will not stay in circulation. Within the social circulation, an original message can unnoticeably change according to actual social demands. Something gets forgotten, concealed or exaggerated. In this manner, communication society can make a mountain out of a molehill – and vice versa. Concerning the folklore creation, the output message must always „make sense", however, it can considerably differ from the input message. Some meanings are disappearing, some others are being borrowed from collective *mythologies*[17]. If the sender wants to be sure to reach his recipients, he must use the style of slogans, catchwords, watchwords, sayings, short expressions. Within the folklore creation which engages its bearers, the need for easily accessible sense is always stronger than for any critical reflection.

To take verbal jokes as an example, they can be humorous only for people sharing some obvious or background knowledge, e.g.: *An Arab sits in a plane to New York. A stewardess asks him: „Something to drink?" – „No, I will drive in a while."* – This joke could be considered not very consistent (Moslems usually do not drink alcohol) and not suitable at least in some circumstances of face-to-face communication. As soon as it transforms into an internet joke, e.g. into a visual joke functioning as an internet meme (demotivator), it can spread more easily and reproduce

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16   Antonio Gramsci, *Gefängnishefte. Kritische Gesamtausgabe.* vol. 6. *Philosophie der Praxis.* Hefte 10 und 11 (Hamburg: Argument, 1994), 1375.

17   Compare Barthes, 1972.

the associative link (or: implicit conceptual action scenario) between *Arab* and *terrorism* more effectively. In another situation, this associative link strengthened in this fashion will determine the reading of other texts. This way, even jokes can support beliefs. One belief makes possible another one in such a way that it functions as an assumption making similar assumptions passable and plausible. A believed and never falsified hoax makes people vulnerable against similar hoaxes and other genres of collective hysteria. People easily believe something if it corresponds to collectively shared images. If we believe others believe something, it seems there must be at least some truth about it. Let us be reminded of the sentence of William I. Thomas and Dorothy S. Thomas: „*If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences*"[18]. – If folklore unites heterogeneous groups of people under one notion (one sign) associated with danger and hostility, our attitudes towards everybody recognized by means of this notion will be violent and will provoke violence. In this manner, folklore genres can function as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Collective phantasies have performative (perlocutive) power in the sense that they can become reality, they can create real facts.

Back to the point. Folklore created beliefs in pre-modern and modern society as well, although within relatively stable hierarchies of knowledge credibility. In a neoliberal society determined by contemporary social media, its ability to create facts seems to be almost limitless[19]. Convergent folklore genres (contemporary myths, conspiracy theories, etc.), as well as parafolklore hybrid genres, have dominated social media. Folklore texts must be always comprehensible and fulfill poetic functions. They entertain, amaze, frighten, they make people laugh. New nationalisms reproduced by means of social media folklore are highly aestheticized – they arouse intense feelings – and reproduce in a very spontaneous way.

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18 William I. Thomas and Dorothy S. Thomas, *The child in America: Behavior problems and programs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), 571-572.

19 Even some young Wahabi fanatics in the West can be regarded as „victims" of religious folklore which aestheticizes violence and functions outside of hierarchies of knowledge credibility – outside of the system of Islamic theological institutions.

Zygmunt Bauman claims social media (Facebook etc.) enable their participant to "filter out" all subjects and their messages, which are incompatible with his/her own opinions and expectations. He/she can choose what people and what ideas he/she wants to face too. However there is a need for one short addendum: it is rather impossible to assume opinions and expectations of such participants to be consistent, without any discrepancies, paradoxes or antinomies. Production and reproduction of sense within social media – also in form of folklore genres – resembles acting in everyday situations off-line. Here applies the utterance of Alfred Schütz: "*The actor within the social world, however, experiences it primarily as a field of his actual and possible acts and only secondarily as an object of his thinking. In so far as he is interested in knowledge of his social world, he organizes this knowledge not in terms of a scientific system but in terms of relevance to his actions*."[20] One conspiracy theory can support the other one even if the first contradicts the other one. In different contexts, different things are believed.

Magical-mythical thinking within contemporary nationalisms

Due to the need for defining notions and their binding use as well as to the need for the precision of concluding, it is possible to distinguish between two discourse models: an analytical (Aristotelian) and a magical-mythical one. The latter type of the discourse is based on connotations and free associations able to lead from any idea to another one. Let us demonstrate it on the Internet users' discussions to the article „*Zygmunt Bauman w „El País": mamy do czynienia z kryzysem demokracji* [Zygmunt Bauman in "El País": We face democracy crisis]"[21]. It was published on 26 January 2016 by a popular Polish information portal Onet.pl. The text deals with Zygmunt Bauman's opinions concerning the condition of democracy in the world dominated by social media. I followed the

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20 Alfred Schuetz, 'The stranger: An essay in social psychology,' *American Journal of Sociology*, 1944, 49.6: 499-507.

21 Accessed: http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/zygmunt-bauman-w-el-pais-mamy-do-czynienia-z-kryzysem-demokacji/p6vbe4 (01-02-2016)

statements of internet users posted in the discussion forum related to the article during the first days after its release.

If we examine the messages posted immediately after the article had been published, only a few posts address the sociologist's claims, even if very generally (likes and dislikes). The overwhelming majority of posts deals with the author's *Jewishness* and his *communist* past. They should be not considered as usual *argumenta ad hominem* known from every text-book of rhetoric. It is something more: a manifestation of habitus developed within the social media communication and related to folklorized nationalism.

The aforementioned internet article for many of its interactive readers is only a point of departure for the reproduction of a shared set of mythical narratives and their shortened representations. They need to be recalled and confirmed again and again, in a somehow obsessive way. The narratives reproduce the same structure: the hostile *Others* (Jews, communists, leftists, etc.) have been always harming *the Own* in the same way from the beginning and will do the same to the very end. *The Other* was never *the Own* and cannot be *the Own* in any way – this distinction is eternal and absolute. Even if somebody sharply disagrees with such ideas, for them they are the very topic of the discussion. It is not even a discussion consisting of syllogisms. The arguing is based on connotations[22]. They allow "jumping" from one point to another as well as blending everything with everything. Discussions within such a discourse always lead to the same set of topics and images regardless of their points

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22 Roland Barthes calls connotation a myth. The imperceptible connotation can 'blend' with the phenomenon accompanying it. Connotation makes it possible that different phenomena blend in one magical unity of meaning, just as in the spontaneous experience the de Saussuresque signifier merges with the signified (the *signifiant* with the *signifié*), or the word merges with its object for as long as a person, in abstracting from his experiences, does not distinguish one from the other and does not notice that a word (sign) can help form or even produce its object. Barthes considers the invisible connotation to be a figure of myth on account of its ability to create a clear, easily legible, obvious world. In this context, what is particularly important is that the connotation, employed instrumentally, is able to legitimize literally everything (Barthes, 1972, 110-113).

of departure. They induce the confirmation of the difference between *Us* and *Them*, which functions as a kind of collective obsession. It reminds us somehow of free associations as a psychoanalytical category where random starting means leading someone, sooner or later, to the same repertoire of obsessional images – to the same repertoire of *idées fixes*. If such a discourse dominates the forum, it devastates any debate.

As stated, the "discussion" I followed was completely irrelevant regarding the content of the article. Acquaintance with Zygmunt Bauman's propositions contained in the message was not a prerequisite for posting opinions. Regarding the analysed posts of internet users, the appearance of such an article functioned as a kind of "starter" of collective imagination by means of a chain of habitual metonymies (based on perceived contiguities) and metaphors (based on perceived similarities). Such imagination always leads to the same result: to the confirmation of a highly emotional and obsessive set of ideas.

Considering many posts, Bauman represents *Jews* as well as *Russians* and *Germans* under the aspect of their alleged hostility against *Poles*. At the same time, he represents *communists*, *leftists,* and even *Nazis*. Within the magical-mythical discourse, such thinking cannot be recognized as inconsistent. This kind of associative concluding is a symptom of sympathetic magic: different phenomena, connected in any kind of way, are similar, and thus at least under some aspects identical[23]. The crucial feature of magical-mythical thinking is an assumption of the permanence of signs and of the reality they are related to – in the sense of the saying "there's nothing new under the sun". There is no room for any expirations (e.g. "*Czerwone zawsze będzie czerwone, nawet jak będzie przemalowane. Stary komuch.*" ["Red will be forever red, even if painted over. An old communist."]. A former member of the Stalinist organization – any biographical details or circumstances are for people posting such statements completely irrelevant – represents not only the organization as such but also everything that is linked to it through chains of habit-

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23   James G. Frazer, *The golden bough: A study in magic and religion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996)

ual associations. One enemy supports the other one: "*Kto pokazuje tego żydowskiego zbrodniarza, który zabijał Polaków, tylko niemiecko faszystowski ŁONET*" ["Who shows the Jewish criminal, who killed Poles? - Only German-fascist Onet"]. No red lines apply. Some posts are extremely disgusting and are a result of trolling due to the fact they are repeated noticeably often in not comparable contexts. Nevertheless, within magical thinking, it is possible to reason as follows: If an information portal owned by Germans (associated with Nazis) "promotes" Jews, they conspire against Poland together – as two reified communities, as two collective subjects. Even those who disagree can assume Poland has some "hidden" enemies: "*Wrogiem Polski nie Żydzi są… tylko organizacja Opus Dei!*" ["Poland's enemies are not the Jews… it is solely the organization Opus Dei!"]. Associative thinking makes possible "jumps" from one topic to another if we remind that in the addressed article the word *Polish* or any of its derivates were not even mentioned.

Such thinking can be regarded as a collective habitus reproduced in some right-wing social networks. It is a learned manner of perceiving and thinking and it is a result of "hot", highly aestheticized (i.a. iconized) and rhetorized social media discourses which inhibit analytical ("cold") perception and thinking. It can be considered as a symptom of folklorization of the public sphere.

Within magical-mythical perception and thinking, due to chains of associative links, everything can have something in common with everything, no binding distinctions occur. The difference between *good* and *bad*, *the Own* and *the Other* is here a question of situational context. Our enemies can threaten at the same time our ethnicity, our national culture, European culture, Christianity, Western civilisation or the civilised world. Folklorized nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe can be at the same time related to everything. The situational context decides, who is our companion and who our enemy. The criteria of the difference between *the Own* and *the Other* can vary significantly. Sometimes blood and soil function as a crucial distinctive criterion, sometimes it is "our culture", "our values", "European values" or "Christian values".

In the frame of magical indistinctiveness, there is no need for consistency. Folklorized nationalism discourses are not a sphere where inconsistencies, contradictions or other paradoxes could be visible or problematized. They are a part of everyday knowledge. A shared nebulae of connotations (of vague interconnected images) enabled to avoid any clear definitions and any clarifications of obvious notions.

Roland Barthes shows in his essay *The African grammar* that especially words functioning as empty signifiers can affect peoples' emotions[24]. In a similar way, Ernesto Laclau, Noam Chomsky or Edward S. Herman claim a notion can undisturbedly function as a rhetoric tool if it is vacuous, if it has no clear meaning. The meaning of such a notion is always actualized by the context[25]. The famous slogan *Make America great again!* has enormous persuasive power because it means nothing specific, it has no specific denotation. It only matches and activates connotations relating to splendid and desirable things. The slogan reminds Americans of prosperity, power, the founding fathers of the country and their ideals – of everything valuable. That is why notions like "national values", "Christian values", "European values" etc. are so popular within folklorized nationalism. They can function as instruments of manipulation and persuasion only as long as they are not defined – as long as they function as empty signifiers. Only under such conditions, it is possible to protect "Christian values" or pretend to do so while ignoring at the same time New Testament ethics. (Christianity without New Testament ethics could even remind of Slavoj Žižek´s examples of products deprived of their difficult property: coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol etc.). Magic-mythical perception makes paradoxes invisible – it creates a unity of phenomena.

24 Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and other mythologies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 103-109.

25 Ernesto Laclau, *'Why do empty signifiers matter to politics?'* in Emancipation(s), (London: Verso Books, 1996), 36-46; Noam Chomsky, *Media control: The spectacular achievments of propaganda* (New York. Stories, 1997), 20-23; Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 30-35.

In summary, new nationalism as folklorized nationalism is a symptom of the culture of trolling. Such a culture is characterized by the hypertrophy of rhetoric strategies. It is characterized by unscrupulous manipulation techniques regardless of any long-term consequences for society. New nationalisms can be defined as a result of the decline of the hierarchies of knowledge credibility. Trolling means mystifying our interlocutors by sowing discord among them, provoking quarrels by sending inflammatory messages, manipulating discussed topics, making any consensus impossible to achieve, distracting them, etc. Trolling inflames people's emotions and thus destroys formally correct concluding. It promotes magical-mythical perceiving and thinking. Trolls wake strong emotions among their interlocutors, make them think "too quickly" under the influence of developed effects. They make them focus not on primary topics but on secondary inflammable matters associated with these topics. Trolls are able to divert peoples´ attention from a significant topic to another, not a significant one. They disrupt constructive, on-topic discussions and induce effective or even irrational reactions of their interlocutors. What is crucial, trolling presumes practically the same discursive strategies, persuasion, and manipulation techniques which are present elsewhere in the frame of contemporary neoliberal public discourses.

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Adorno's Arcades Orthodoxy[1]

Luis A. Recoder[2]

Abstract: Theodor W. Adorno's letter correspondence with Walter Benjamin throughout the decade of the 1930's entertains the central question concerning the possibility of philosophy in their intellectual milieu. The fate of this possibility for Adorno hinges on Benjamin's work-in-progress *Das Passagen-Werk*—a fate that is catastrophically blocked by an uncritical tendency convicted repeatedly by the former as "undialectical." And yet Adorno obstinately persists in clinging to the canon of a philosophically overdetermined demand he endearingly calls "my Arcades orthodoxy." The threatening destruction of the aura of this orthodoxy reaches a crisis in Adorno's ruthless metacritique of Benjamin's alleged undialectical treatment of aesthetic autonomy in a draft of the *Kunstwerk* essay, marking a critical wound in the correspondence which the following exposition tracks in the enigmatic changeover in the philosophical exigency of the said orthodoxy from *prima philosophia* to *ultima philosophia*. The lingering wound is registered in Adorno's late philosophical work.

> It is time not for first philosophy but last philosophy.
> - Adorno, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*[3]

I. "My Arcades Orthodoxy"

The letter correspondence between Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin throughout the decade of the 1930's gives us a rare opportunity to appreciate the collaborative philosophical project that the

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3   Theodor W. Adorno, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique: Studies in Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies*, trans. Willis Domingo (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 40.

former characterizes as "my Arcades orthodoxy,"[4] and what I shall develop throughout my exposition as *ultima philosophia*. Though the appeal to orthodoxy is not articulated as such until late into the correspondence, i.e., in a letter dated November 10, 1938 to be exact, it is fundamentally at work as early as March 4, 1934, when the young Adorno enthusiastically exclaims: "Naturally I hardly have to tell you just how much my own downright egotistical interest in really immersing myself in your work on the Arcades is involved!"[5] Benjamin's follow-up letter a few days thereafter on March 9, 1934, emboldens the egotistical interest of his young addressee's nascent orthodoxy by confessing that "My work on the Arcades has begun to revive, and it is you yourself who have breathed life into the embers—which could never be livelier than I felt myself to be."[6] By the end of the year, in a letter dated November 6, 1934, Adorno thoroughly recognizes the profundity of his fundamental contribution to the development of the Arcades project and declares the collaborative nature of his philosophical correspondence as emblematic of "our destined contribution to *prima philosophia*."[7] The metacritical indoctrination of Adorno's Arcades orthodoxy ruthlessly works to facilitate precisely this destined contribution to *prima philosophia*—a shared philosophical endeavor that, as we shall see, undergoes a rather curious and enigmatic change in direction to *ultima philosophia* more or less midway through the correspondence.

I will offer an interpretation on the significance in the changeover from *prima philosophia* to *ultima philosophia* in a moment. Regardless of what the respective philosophies entail, it is crucial to observe that the appeal of Adorno's Arcades orthodoxy is emphatically philosophical. In a letter dated May 20, 1935, Adorno makes the following strong statement: "I

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4   Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 284.

5   Ibid., 26.

6   Ibid., 29.

7   Ibid., 53.

regard your work on the 'Arcades' as the centre [*sic*] not merely of your own philosophy, but as the decisive philosophical word which must find utterance today […]"[8] The structure of Adorno's Arcades orthodoxy thus presupposes a radiating philosophical core that concerns, on the one hand, the whole of Benjamin's philosophy and, on the other hand, the whole of contemporary philosophy. It is this dual structure of the said orthodoxy that the correspondence issuing from Adorno's destined contribution to *prima philosophia* rigorously observes. His egotistical interest in the Arcades project as the decisive philosophical word goes to the utter extremes in directing the faculty of his micrological apprenticeship to hyperbolically produce and reproduce *ad infinitum* the phantasmagoria of his esteemed interlocutor's philosophical imago. In the same letter in which he first gives expression to their shared *prima philosophia*, Adorno demonstrates in heuristic fashion the mimetic technique of reproducibility through which he incessantly redeems the philosophical centerpiece of his unique orthodoxy: "I would not dare to offer you 'advice' in these matters—what I am attempting to do is simply to stand before you almost like a representative of your own intentions against a certain tyranny, which, as you yourself once did with [Karl] Kraus, only needs to be named as such in order to be banished."[9] The tyranny that only needs to be named as such in order to be banished is the name that Adorno tirelessly utters into the philosophical ear of his interlocutor: *undialektisch*. The conviction of Benjamin as committing undialectical tyranny against his own philosophical intentions is, I want to suggest, the decisive hinge which prompts an anxious and somewhat compulsive Adorno to salvage the aura of his endangered orthodoxy by casting the spell of *prima philosophia* at this precise moment in the course of their correspondence. It is, to turn Benjamin on his head if you will, Adorno's rather belabored attempt to apply dialectical shock therapy to a certain paralysis in the exquisite dialectics at a standstill.

The threatening "destruction of the aura" of Adorno's Arcades orthodoxy is most forcefully registered in his grand critique of what will

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8   Ibid., 84.

9   Ibid., 54.

become Benjamin's notorious essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility." The crux of the controversy here concerns the fate of aesthetic autonomy that, in my estimation, ratchets up the high philosophical stakes and which arguably accounts for the unexplained shift in the epistemic paradigm to *ultima philosophia* shortly after the critique of the *Kunstwerk* essay—nearly two years following the letter on "our destined contribution to *prima philosophia*." The ruthless philosophical compulsion governing Adorno's Arcades orthodoxy is brutally unleashed in the letter of September 6, 1936, tenaciously persisting in the renewed conviction of his undialectical tyrant concerning an outstanding categorical indebtedness that must be redeemed via the decisive philosophical word. A kind of philosophical ultimatum and last chance for philosophy is enigmatically enunciated in Adorno's parenthetical remark: "with respect to your *ultima philosophia*, the Arcades project."[10]

II. The System in Ruins

The inheritance of *prima philosophia* or first philosophy stems from René Descartes and is the Latinate affixed to his major philosophical treatise of 1641: *Meditationes de Prima Philosophiae*, or *Meditations on First Philosophy*. The opening paragraphs of the "First Meditation" lay the critical foundation of *prima philosophia* in terms of a "general demolition" of the basic principles of one's belief system: "to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations."[11] To demolish everything completely including the foundations as a propaedeutic to the *Meditations* proper epitomizes the destructive character of *prima philosophia* as Descartes observes in the following cautionary thought: "Once the foundations of a building are undermined, anything built on them collapses of its own accord."[12] The inheritance of Descartes' general demolition

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10 Ibid., 147.

11 René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Vol. II*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 12.

12 Ibid.

is reawakened for early 20th century modern philosophy by Edmund Husserl, who in his 1929 Sorbonne lectures *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, opens with the fundamental thesis claiming "*Descartes'* Meditations *as the prototype of philosophical reflection*," and further defined as "the prototype for any beginning philosopher's necessary meditations, the meditations out of which alone a philosophy can grow originally."[13] The Cartesian prototype of *prima philosophia* is ultimately productive for what Husserl, in the following section, characterizes as "*The necessity of a radical new beginning of philosophy*."[14] Now this necessity in Husserl's account is motivated by the disturbing lack of necessity in his philosophical milieu, namely the withdrawal of the "driving forces" and "original vitality" motivating the radical spirit of the *Meditations*. "In this unhappy present," Husserl asks, "is not our situation similar to the one encountered by Descartes in his youth? If so, then is not this a fitting time to renew his radicalness, the radicalness of the beginning philosopher: to subject to a Cartesian overthrow the immense philosophical literature with its medley of great traditions, of comparatively serious new beginnings, of stylish literary activity (which counts on 'making an effect' but not on being studied), and to begin with new *meditationes de prima philosophia*?"[15] Certainly we can find in this Cartesian prototype of Husserl's *prima philosophia*—with its accent on the overthrow of the great philosophical traditions—the epistemic paragon of a destructive impulse guiding Adorno's prototype for venturing a radical new beginning for philosophy with his esteemed interlocutor.

By the time he publishes his *Studies in Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies* in 1956—studies developed during his correspondence in the mid 1930's while at Merton College in Oxford—it becomes utterly clear that somewhere along the way Adorno abandons the prototype of *prima*

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13 Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague, the Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 1-2 (original emphasis).

14 Ibid., 4 (original emphasis).

15 Ibid., 5.

philosophia for *ultima philosophia*, as declared in the penultimate sentence of his introduction: "It is time not for first philosophy but last philosophy."[16] According to an illuminating passage from the revised 1938 version of chapter four in the *Studies in Husserl*, the abandonment of *prima philosophia* is curiously already at work in Husserlian phenomenology. Under a title heading that thematically persists in the perseverance of Adorno's Arcades orthodoxy, "The System in Ruins," the major metacritique against epistemology delivers a short and characteristically compressed sketch on the rise and fall of *prima philosophia* from Descartes to Husserl:

> However much Husserl remained concerned with *prima philosophia*, he did demand its objective liquidation. Only thus can his relation to Descartes be understood. In Descartes, bourgeois thought strives, though not yet fully autonomously, to reproduce out of itself the Christian cosmos. At its inception, the bourgeois spirit squats in the ruins of the feudal. With phenomenology bourgeois thought turns to its end in dissociated, fragmentary determinations posited one after the other and resigns itself to the mere reproduction of what is. / Husserl's doctrine of ideas is the system in ruins, just as the first systems were clumsily heaped up out of the wreckage of the erstwhile *ordo*.[17]

The metaphysical ambitions of the bourgeois spirit locates the radicality of its autonomous epistemological origins in the Cartesian prototype of *prima philosophia* only to terminate in a catastrophic foreclosure in the "system in ruins" of Husserlian phenomenology. In Adorno's compressed philosophico-historical sketch on the aporetic apparatus of *prima philosophia* to indefinitely authorize the legitimacy of ever-new beginnings, the end of radical bourgeois thought from Descartes to Husserl terminates

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16 Adorno, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique: Studies in Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies*, 40.

17 Ibid., 212.

not so much in *ultima philosophia* as in the fatal abdication of philosophy *in toto* in its incapacity to move beyond "the mere reproduction of what is." It is thus Adorno's last philosophy—here as "metacritique" and not quite yet "negative dialectics"—that remains emphatically concerned with *prima philosophia* but only insofar as the afterlife of its destructive inheritance has paradoxically liquidated the liquidating philosophy altogether. "Husserl's philosophy," Adorno states in his preface, "is the occasion and not the point of this book."[18] The occasion here is the anxious concern with the dregs of *prima philosophia* to turn the hinge of its "dialectics in spite of itself" toward the salvaging gaze of *ultima philosophia*.

III. Destruction and Preservation of the Aura

The hyperbolic conviction of tyranny concerning Benjamin's undialectical remainder meticulously documented by Adorno throughout the correspondence emerges in stark relief in his microanalysis of the *Kunstwerk* essay in the decisive letter of March 18, 1936. The daring advice offered here is the categorical demand to produce "*more* dialectics."[19] The catastrophic moment for Adorno is the alleged undialectical treatment in Benjamin's account of aesthetic autonomy in the age of technological reproducibility. To briefly recall the relevant passage in the second version of the *Kunstwerk* essay, Benjamin observes that the "doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*" emerged as a reactionary movement that "gave rise to a negative theology, in the form of an idea of 'pure' art, which rejects not only any social function but any definition in terms of a representational content."[20] The reactionary doctrine of aesthetic autonomy is here de-

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18 Ibid., 1.

19 Adorno and Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*, 131 (original emphasis).

20 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version," in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland, and Others (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 24.

fined in negative terms and diagnosed as a symptom of the thorough-going technological destruction of an emphatically bourgeois tradition grounded precisely in the overvaluation of authenticity and hence aura of the unique artwork. Benjamin's thesis on the specifically filmic destruction of the aura therefore doubles as a thesis on the specifically filmic destruction of aesthetic autonomy. (Which, by the way is the filmic counterpart and elaboration of the earlier thesis on the specifically photographic destruction of the aura in the 1931 essay "Little History of Photography.") My claim is that Benjamin's equation of the destruction of aura with the destruction of tradition is the primary source of Adorno's dissatisfaction with the *Kunstwerk* essay and, moreover, the turning point which prompts the escalation in the philosophical exigency from *prima philosophia* to *ultima philosophia*.

Now Adorno, in his letter, brings to Benjamin's attention that the operating mythical concept of aesthetic autonomy in the *Kunstwerk* essay does violence to its "original intention" in carrying out a general demolition described as "the dialectical self-dissolution of myth, which is viewed here as the disenchantment of art."[21] To shed light on the matter, Adorno outlines the basic dialectical model of aesthetic autonomy from his own experience as an artist: "Dialectical though your essay is, it is less than this in the case of the autonomous work of art itself; for it neglects a fundamental experience which daily becomes increasingly evident to me in my musical work, that precisely the uttermost consistency in the pursuit of the technical laws of autonomous art actually transforms this art itself, and, instead of turning it into a fetish or taboo, brings it that much closer to a state of freedom, to something that can be consciously produced and made."[22] For as much as the mythical element intrudes in any (and perhaps all) aspiring autonomous artworks the decisive factor in Adorno's early aesthetic theory sketched in this letter is in its capacity to put into play the dialectical self-dissolution of the mythical element. And by "myth" here Adorno assumes for the most part the inheritance of

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21   Adorno and Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*, 127-128.

22   Ibid., 128-129.

the archaic bourgeois mythos intruding in the innermost cells of autonomous artworks. Aesthetic autonomy at its most dialectical is the medium par excellence through which the mythical force of tradition delegates and hence authorizes the counterforce for its own determinate negation, that is, its destruction and preservation. The source, or rather resource, of domination in Adorno's bourgeois mythos is key to his overall conception of aesthetic autonomy, succinctly formulated in his 1930 essay "Reaction and Progress": "It is only in the subordination to the work's technical dictates that the author, by allowing himself to be dominated by it, learns to dominate it himself."[23] The mediating agency of "artistic extremism," Adorno observes elsewhere, "receives its legitimacy from the tradition it negates."[24] Hence, the "destruction of the aura" is immanent to the artistic extremism of aesthetic autonomy insofar as it is not at all a means to the reckless destruction of the tradition but a critical prelude to its transformed preservation. It is this critical prelude that seems to be missing from Benjamin's *Kunstwerk* essay and why Adorno is driven to up the ante on *prima philosophia*.

The philosophical iteration of the dialectical formula for tradition elaborated in Adorno's concept of aesthetic autonomy lies at the core of his coming *ultima philosophia*, *Negative Dialectics*. In a section titled "Tradition and Knowledge" in the introduction to *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno poses the following fundamental question: "how a thinking obliged to relinquish tradition might preserve and transform tradition."[25] Schematized in this question, *prima philosophia* is modern philosophy's obligatory destruction of tradition, while its unprecedented *restitutio in integrum* preserves the "system in ruins" for their transformation to *ultima philosophia*. The achievement of this transformation is emblazoned in the philosoph-

23 Theodor W. Adorno, "Reaction and Progress," *Night Music: Essays on Music 1928-1962*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Wieland Hoban (London: Seagull Books, 2017), 223.

24 Theodor W. Adorno, "Arnold Schoenberg, 1871-1951," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Webber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 155.

25 Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 54-55.

ical task summated at the end of the "Meditations on Metaphysics" in *Negative Dialectics*: "metaphysics migrates into micrology."[26] The Adorno-Benjamin correspondence corresponds in faithfully carrying out the first philosophical move in the destructive continuum of *prima philosophia* via the destruction of the aura; where the correspondence parts company lies in their respective micrological differences whether or not to engage the second philosophical move within the operating terms of their proto-Hegelian speculative philosophy of history as the master key for preserving a transformed tradition in the sense of *ultima philosophia*. In Adorno's intermittent negation of his Arcades orthodoxy, in which his undialectical tyrant is repeatedly convicted, the ruthless discipline and ritual of tarrying with the latter's negative is incessantly produced so as to rekindle for himself and his interlocutor the auratic grandeur of their authentic philosophical correspondence. Adorno's anxious concern to consolidate a philosophical canon for his Arcades orthodoxy is rigorously steadfast throughout the correspondence despite the occasional hint of defeatism perhaps most pronounced in the lament over the failure of succession disclosed in a letter dated November 27, 1937: "The fact that we have no 'heirs' rather fits in with the general catastrophic situation."[27]

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In closing, it might be worth noting that what we have been characterizing as the Arcades orthodoxy is by no means exclusive to Adorno but a philosophical sentiment also shared by his wife Gretel—whom Benjamin addresses as "Felezitas" in his amicable correspondence to the Adornos—and perhaps even Max Horkheimer. In the critical letter of November 10, 1938, in which he gives expression to "my Arcades orthodoxy," Adorno explains that on this particular occasion he is speaking not only for himself but also on behalf of Horkheimer and other unnamed members of the Institute for Social Research. Amidst a tour de force tirade against his undialectical tyrant concerning a recent manuscript on Baudelaire, Ador-

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26   Ibid., 407 (translation modified).

27   Adorno and Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*, 230.

no neutralizes the theoretical rancor with the following word of conso-lation, again speaking on behalf of the Institute: "You may be confident that we are prepared to make your most extreme theoretical experiments our own. But we are equally confident on our part that you will actual-ly carry out these experiments." The confirmation and commandment expressed here recites the anxious liturgy of the Arcades orthodoxy and hopeful future philosophical organon of the Institute, an incantation not without cult value as if addressed to the fading *fata morgana* of a meta-physical messiah a few lines thereafter: "We would exhort you to offer us some access to the Holy of Holies."[28]

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28   Ibid., 285.

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"Constructing a new storey beneath historical materialism": Georg Simmel and the foundations of a "relational" critical theory

Davide Ruggieri[1]

Abstract: Relational sociology (RS) and historical materialism are often considered as opposite paradigms: on the one hand, RS represents an ontological attempt to "steer" inquiries into the social realm under the relational approach, i.e. the relation is the very sociological matter; on the other hand, Marx and historical materialism are often reduced to methodological holism, referring relations to the economic. First, I argue in this paper for going beyond this dualism and reconciling RS (namely addressing Georg Simmel as the first systematic theorist) and historical materialism within the frame of Critical Theory, according to the recent address given by Axel Honneth and Rahel Jaeggi. The Critical Theory must answer the question of 'social life' as relation, focusing on the particular and the individual, disentangling the tie between the rationalization aspect and the vital sphere, as well as the interlacement between 'the informalization of economic and economization of the informal' (Honneth).

Secondly, I aim to lead Simmel's relational theory back to his *Lebenssoziologie*. In his last writings, he focused on the question dealing the origin of 'forms' within the social life under the categories of *Wechselwirkung* and *Vergesellschaftung*. The intellectualization of modern life (since Simmel's reflections in 'Philosophy of Money') is the mechanism to objectify and 'monetize' (the money as a pure mean) any aspect of life, even in the moral and the political sphere. Beyond the inexorable mechanism of modern intellectualization, Simmel also denoted the inner 'vital' character of any social relation. He put the basis for a *Lebenssoziologie*: despite Lash's interpretation and reduction to the monistic-informational model and Jaeggi's immanentism, this paper furnishes, finally, a 'relational and transcendental (emergentist)' interpretation of Simmel's sociology.

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1. Forms of social life

Relational sociology has been recently experiencing an increase of interest within the international sociological debate.[2] In this frame, the name of the sociologist Georg Simmel frequently recurs[3], because he represents a 'relational turn' into social sciences.[4] At the same time, over the past decade many scholars tackled the question dealing with a possible foundation of a *Lebenssoziologie*[5], that is sketching a sociology *of* life tout court.

The topics that will be discussed in the following pages are quite sensitive and risky, since they aim at engaging and tackling the actual debate on the *Lebenssoziologie* and the reflections on the modern 'forms of social life' according to the recent studies and researches of Axel Honneth and Rahel Jaeggi, who represent a stimulating interlocutor in the actual Crit-

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2   On this topic: Jan Fuhse and Sophie Mützel (edts), *Relationale Soziologie. Zur kulturellen Wende der Netzwerkforschung*, Wiesbaden: VS Springer, 2010; Christian Powell and François Dépelteau (edts), *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology. Ontological and Theoretical Issues* and *Applying Relational Sociology. Relations, Networks, and Society*, Houndmills-Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013; François Dépelteau (edt), *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*, Houndmills-Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2018.

3   Natalia Cantò-Mila, "Georg Simmel's Concept of Forms of Association as an Analytical Tool for Relational Sociology", in F. Dépelteau (edt), *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*, op. cit., 217-230; Christian Papilloud, "Georg Simmel and Relational Sociology", in F. Dépelteau (edt), *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*, op. cit., pp. 201-216.

4   Davide Ruggieri, "Georg Simmel and the «Relational Turn». Contributions to the foundation of the *Lebenssoziologie* since Simmel", *Simmel Studies*, 21 (1), 217, pp. 43-71.

5   On this issue: Scott Lash, "Lebenssoziologie. Georg Simmel and the Information Age", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 22(3), 2005, pp. 1–23; Scott Lash, "Life (vitalism)", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 23(2–3), 2006, pp. 323–349; Robert Seyfert, "Zum historischen Verhältnis von Lebensphilosophie und Soziologie und das Programm einer Lebenssoziologie", in Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (edt) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie (DGS), *Die Natur der Gesellschaft: Verhandlungen des 33. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Kassel 2006*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2008, pp. 4684-4694.

ical Theory scenario. The primary difficulties depend on the definition of the subject of a so-named 'Lebenssoziologie' – this is a lucky expression first used in 2005 by Scott Lash in a paper titled 'Lebenssoziologie. Georg Simmel and the Information Age'.

The theoretical coordinates of this paper refer to the 'relational' sociological perspective. The shared motto among the many relational theories is that the first subject into the sociological inquiry is 'the social relation': I argue for a *sui generis* entity (social relation) emerging from the interaction amongst individuals, that is to be assumed beyond the reductive methodological dualism between individualism and holism. My focus is particularly on the 'relational theory of society'[6] of Pierpaolo Donati, who already in the 80s insisted to argue for a 'relational sociology'[7], basically reassessing Talcott Parsons' functional social theory and his AGIL scheme. Simmel is commonly acknowledged from relational sociologists as one of the first and most prominent author in the history of sociology toward the foundation of the relation sociology *stricto sensu*: the reason is that he primarily addressed the 'social forms' under the category of social relations. *Wechselwirkung* and *Vergsesellschaftung* are both shibboleths for the detection and the fixation of social forms within human interactions. In *Soziologie* (1908) he writes:

> "A society exists where several individuals enter into interaction [*Wechselwirkung*]. This interaction always originates from specific <u>impulses</u> within or for the sake of specific <u>purposes</u>. Erotic, religious, or purely social impulses, purposes of defense from attack, the play of commerce, the need for assistance from instruction, and countless other purposes bring it about that human beings enter into fellowship—correlating their affairs with one another in activity for one another, with one another, against one another, activity that both affects

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6 Pierpaolo Donati, *Relational Sociology. A new Paradigm for the social Sciences*, London: Routledge 2011; Pierpaolo Donati, "Manifesto for a critical realist relational sociology", *International Revue of Sociology*, 25, 2015, pp. 86-109.

7 Pierpaolo Donati, *Introduzione alla sociologia relazionale*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1983.

them and feels the effects of them. These interactions indicate precisely that the individuals bearing these motivating drives and purposes become a unity, indeed a 'society.' "

And further:

"Not until such interrelations are generated on account of certain <u>motives</u> and <u>interests</u> does society emerge. So then it remains that the concern of social science in the widest sense is the history and laws of such a developing comprehensive picture. Because this is broken up among the individual social sciences, left to sociology is the specific task of considering the abstracted forms that do not so much *generate* social interaction but rather *are* social interaction. Society in a sense that sociology can use is, then, either the overall abstract concept for these forms, the genus of which they are species, or the actual momentary summation of the same."[8].

Relations in social life can assume many 'forms' and realise their own purposes. The human society consists of all those 'forms', which cannot embrace the totality, but represents the instance of being the 'whole' and the final interpretation of the world.

One of the most difficult tasks for the sociology today is defining what a 'form' of social life must represent. In the history of sociology, Georg Simmel has given to the epistemological and ontological question on the social 'forms' a wide speculative prospect. The first chapter of *Ueber soziale Differenzierung* (1890) and the former essay *Das Problem der Sociologie* (1894) (that became the first chapter of *Soziologie*, published in 1908, in a completely renewed style and argumentation) come to my mind at this point. The epistemological question is how a 'form' becomes a form under a sociological meaning: more precisely, Simmel aims at pursuing a sociological epistemology [*Erkenntnistheorie der Sozialwissenschaft*][9]. He does not follow a Kantian or Neo-kantian model of a *subjec-*

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8   Georg Simmel, *Sociology: Inquiries into the construction of social forms*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, p. 22 and 26; cfr. Georg Simmel, *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, GSG 11, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 17-18 and p. 24 (*my underlinings*).

9   Georg Simmel, Über soziale Differenzierung. Sociologische und psychologische Untersuchungen, in *Aufsätze 1887-1890. Über sociale Differenzierung. Sociologi-*

tive a priori synthesis; he provides an *objective* a priori synthesis of social materials (that is individual impulses, means, goals and values). Within social interactions there's not a dialectical mediation among individuals: the *Wechselwirkung* – this is his well-known key-concept – generates 'forms' of association (it is what Simmel will name afterwards 'Vergesellschaftung') which keep on living even if individuals do not immediately fill them, or – better – they keep on living *in spite of* individuals. This conflictual configuration of the modern society between the individual and the society is given, thanks to the increasing differentiation and subsequently through the 'money paradigm', that is Simmel's metaphysics of 'money', conceived as the universal, all-pervading and neutral 'medium' in the social as well as cultural transactions. Beyond the *relativistic* interpretation of some aspects emerging from *The Philosophy of money* book, the sociological theory in Simmel's work responds to a coherent program[10]: he would have to construct a social science (namely, the "science of human social existence"[11]) focusing on its primary subject that occurs in the form of relation. This relation fits to the four-patterned relational scheme given by Donati.: I summarized and schematized Simmel's idea of "social relation" (form of social life) as it follows (*Figure 1*):
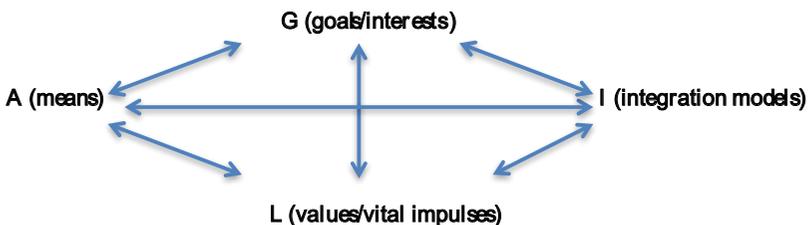
Figure 1

sche und psychologische Untersuchungen. Die Probleme der Geschichtsphilosophie (1892), GSG 2, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989, pp. 115-139.

10 Gregor Fitzi, *The Challenge of Modernity: Simmel's sociological Theory*, Oxon: Routledge, 2018; Olli Pyythinen, *The Simmelian Legacy. A Science of Relations*, Houndmills- Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018

11 Georg Simmel, *Sociology Inquiries into the construction of social forms*, op. cit., p. 27.

Georg Simmel was the first sociologist to argue for a wide 'theory of the forms of social life', particularly anchored to the L pattern.[12] It is maybe convenient to recall Max Horkheimer's original conviction to engage Simmel's thought toward the construction of the Critical Theory.[13] In Simmel's writings, this debt is clearly tangible in the concept of 'instrumental reason', for instance, and in many topics very close to Simmel's *Kuturpessimismus*[14]: the "tragedy of culture" issue and the irreconcilable dialectics between subjective and objective culture in the modernity are probably the most concrete heritage in Horkheimer's social theory.

One of the purposes of this section is thus to encourage the removal of any ideological resistance to Simmel and rediscover Horkeimer's original motto, which I consider a return to the origins of the Critical Theory in order to construct a 'Critical theory of the forms of social life'. The debt to Simmel is surely undeniable among the Frankfurt School philosophers of the first generation. However, this influence remained unsaid owing to the many forms of resistance on Simmel's *portrait* in the academic and scientific debate. By virtue of his ambivalence principle and his unsystematic theory, Simmel had rightly predicted his destiny in the lucky figure of plural 'money heritage'. From the very beginning, on the one hand Simmel was considered a war-monger, nationalist, right-wing

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12 Donati alleges: "I began this approach to social life with reference to natural rights by commenting on the thought of Toennies […] and then locating it in the L of AGIL, interpreting it in a relational manner", P. Donati, *Relational Sociology. A new Paradigm for the social Sciences*, op. cit., p. 56.

13 During my investigations in the *Archivzentrum der Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main*, an unpublished letter exchange with Hans Simmel testifies Max Horkheimer's intellectual debt to Simmel: within this correspondence, Horkheimer claimed in a letter sent to the American Consulate to let earn a VISA to Hans Simmel, who lived in Stuttgart and took care Horkheimer's parents: '[Georg Simmel] was a great German Philosopher whose ideas had a considerable influence" on his philosophical development', *Brief Max Horkheimers an dem amerikanischen Konsul* 18.11.38: MHA I 23.101.

14 Sergio Belardinelli, *"Kulturpessimismus" gestern und heute"*, in *Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3, 1992, pp. 159-171; see also Klaus Lichtblau, *Kulturkrise und Soziologie um die Jahrhundertwende: zur Genealogie der Kultursoziologie in Deutschland*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996.

thinker (a bourgeois society defender), also due to the stigmatisation of Ernst Bloch or Lukàcs' assessment in *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*; on the other hand, owing to Simmel's anti-conformist and anti-academic style, he was simultaneously considered as a typical Jewish left-wing thinker, as Aby Warburg did.[15]

In *Soziologische Exkurse. Nach Vorträge und Diskussionen* (1956) – a collection of conferences and manuscripts between 1953 and 1954 – Adorno and Horkheimer actually acknowledged Simmel's pivotal role in regard to the definition of society, the (contrasting) relationship between society and individuals, as well as the social processes of differentiation and individualisation into modernity.[16] This was probably (and finally) the first step towards the definitive 'thaw' in regard to Simmel's case. Once Habermas defined him as a 'creative although not a systematic thinker'.[17] However, we have to listen to the views of Axel Honneth, who in recent times significantly and definitively mentions Simmel without reserves. In the essay *Organisierte Selbstverwirklichung*: *Paradoxien der Individualisierung*[18], he acknowledges Simmel's intuitions on the modern 'individualization' quite stimulating, more precisely in the analysis on the paradoxical results of capitalism and the reversibility of inner life and economic life. Rahel Jaeggi, who embodies a worthy intellectual position within the fourth generation of the Critical Theory tradition, provides

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15 Aby Warburg was very skeptical to Simmel's thought: when his brother Max suggested a chair for him in Hamburg in 1915, Aby considered, beyond Simmel's virtuosity, his eclecticism and relativism very dangerous and injurious for the academic milieu, so his opinion was very negative: Georg Simmel, *Briefe 1912-1918. Jugendbriefe*, GSG 23, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008, pp. 937-938.

16 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Soziologische Exkurse. Nach Vorträge und Diskussionen*, Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1956.

17 Jürgen Habermas and Matthieu Deflem, "Georg Simmel on Philosophy and Culture: Postscript to a Collection of Essays", in *Critical Inquiry*, 22(3), 1996, p. 405.

18 Axel Honneth, "Organisierte Selbstverwirklichung: Paradoxien der Individualisierung", in A.Honneth (edt), *Befreiung aus der Mündigkeit: Paradoxien des gegenwärtigen Kapitalismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2002: 141-158

nowadays a theory on the forms of social life. Her mentions to Simmel seem to be limitative[19] because of the only use of some aesthetical impulses (the fashion issue above all). Simmel's sociological theory stands actually for the epistemological foundation of the science of forms of social relations as emerging subjects from the interactions among individuals, and fashion is only a particular 'fascinating' instance. I consider indeed this "Simmel's abstinence" to be a trace of a possible integration and dialogue to construct a wide Critical Theory in the sign of the inquiry on the 'forms of social life' considered under the lens of the 'relation'. Kenneth Fish recently advanced the convincing hypothesis that relational sociology and historical materialism may fit each other[20].

The social relation is in fact the primary subject for the sociology, according to Simmel's theory (as well as Marx). Simmel indeed enlarged the question on social relations (or social forms) such as 'forms of social lives' - I particularly mean his investigations into the metropolitan life, the social and cultural styles, the fashion as identity, the coquetry, and any form of social play and exchange in a multicultural social world: in other words, Simmel focused on the forms in which structural contingency and everyday practices determine new conduct of life as relational junction.

In the famous excursus to the first Chapter of Simmel's *Soziologie* (1908), *How is the society possible?*, the terms *Leben* and *Lebensprozess* are very frequent, but the very crucial essay to this theme surely is *Grundfragen der Soziologie. Individuum und Gesellschaft* (1917). We find in this volume an uncountable recurrence of the terms dealing with 'social life'. Simmel talks about a proper 'life of the society' [*das Leben der Gesellschaft*], which concretizes in some specific 'forms'. The society is an 'event' [*Geschehen*] – 'the destiny and the form' - in which we live and experience [*er-*

19   Rahel Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms of Life*, Cambridge-London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018, pp. 44-50.

20   Kenneth Fish, "Relational Sociology and Historical Materialism. Three conversation starters", in C.Powell and F.Dépelteau (edts), *Conceptualizing Relational Sociology. Ontological and Theoretical Issues*, op. cit., pp. 27-44.

leben] the being connected to other people[21]. The form is literally a 'connection' [*Verbindung*], introduced by a subject who operates in the sense (and with the purpose) of connecting[22].

> "The idea of society, for purposes of scientific treatment, covers two strictly differentiated meanings. It is first the complex of interacting individuals, the socially formed human matter, as that constitutes the entire historical reality. Then, however, 'society' is also the sum of individual forms of relationship by which individuals are able to become a society in the first sense. […] Social science in a second sense has forces, relationships, and forms as its subject matter, through which people socialize, things that, viewed separately, constitute 'society' in the strict sense—which obviously is not altered by circumstance, so that the content of social interaction, the specific modifications of its substantive purpose and interest, is distinguished often or always from its particular form"[23].

In Simmel's masterpiece *Soziologie* we find trace of a social ontology based on the concept of relation (as a 'form' of the social life) as well as a sociological epistemology, since the former attempts in the first chapter of *Ueber soziale Differenzierung* (1890). The main subject is the 'relation' intended as interaction or reciprocity: Simmel draws the question dealing with the 'forms' of social interaction, even if he does not furnish in this

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21 Georg Simmel, "Grundfragen der Soziologie", in *Der Krieg und die geistigen Entscheidungen. Grundfragen der Soziologie. Vom Wesen des historischen Verstehens. Der Konflikt der modernen Kultur. Lebensanschauung*, GSG 16: Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999, pp. 69-70.

22 'The *form*, which is always a connection, is only given by a connecting subject' [*Die* Form, die *immer eine Verbindung ist, nur von einem verbindenden Subjekt hinzugefügt wird*]: Georg Simmel, "Grundfragen der Soziologie", GSG 16, op. cit., 66.

23 Georg Simmel, *Sociology: Inquiries into the construction of social forms*, op. cit., p. 26 (cfr. Georg Simmel, *Soziologie*, op. cit., p. 23). Simmel often uses such terms as 'Beziehung', 'Wechselbeziehung', 'Wechselwirkung', 'Relation' without furnishing any epistemological or ontological difference among them, but it's not the case to further discuss here this question.

book already any systematic and foundational theory of forms of 'social life'. It must be expected the 'vitalist' turn that he experienced since he found in Bergson and Nietzsche a good basis to argue for a 'vitalist social theory'[24]. In *Grundfragen der Soziologie: Individuum und Gesellschaft* (1917) and in his last contribution *Lebensanschauung. Vier Kapitel* (1918) Simmel gives an impulse to the interpretation of social facts under the semantics of 'social life'. Thus, he lands to the well-known dialectics of 'more-life' and 'more-than-life'. In both the mentioned books, he considers the 'forms' as the necessary mediation (an abstraction) in the immanent process called 'life' (intended as 'continuous self-overcoming'): the social and the cultural forms are then the medium for the common human co-existence, the objectification of inner subjective Spirit as the necessary 'stage' for self-knowledge[25].

In her recent studies, Rahel Jeaggi furnishes this assertion to define the 'forms of life:' they refer to "[…] a culturally informed 'order of human co-existence' that encompasses an 'ensemble of practices and orientations' as well as their institutional manifestations and materializations".[26] For Jaeggi forms of life are 'inert bundles of social practices'. In any form of social life, she finds a trace of 'practices and orientations' due to four fundamental conditions, which I consider similar to *a priori*:

    a) Intentionality
    b) Interpretability
    c) Normativity
    d) Finalism[27]

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24   Scott Lash, *Lebenssoziologie*, op. cit.

25   In the essay *Der Fragmentcharakter des Lebens* (1916), Simmel sustains: "I think of the 'stuff' of experience always as being *formed* into definite or indefinite conglomerations from one or other basic standpoint or world-vision. […] 'World', I argue, is a formal concept; yet like all general forms it often ends up being reduced to its most recurrent, significant or historically prominent specifications, with the consequence that none of its many other instantiations seems to belong to it any longer", Georg Simmel, "The Fragmentary Character of Life", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29(7/8), 2012, pp. 242-243.

26   Rahel Jaeggi, "Towards an Immanent Critique of Forms of Life", *Raisons politiques*, 1/57, 2015, pp. 13-29 (p. 16).

27   Ibidem, p. 17.

According to Jaeggi, an "immanent critique" stands due to "problems, crisis and conflicts" within the forms of life: "the moment of crisis forces reflection and/or adjustments of practices that were previously ignored"[28], then recurring to the problem-solving scheme within a pragmatist frame.-

This conflictual idea was already formulated in Simmel's 'tragic' theory of modern culture and society: already in the essay *Der Begriff und die Trag*ö*die der Kultur* (1911) he focused on the tragic result of the dialectics between life (as subjective issue) and its forms (as an objective sphere, that is, all that concerns the accomplishment of life itself). It is also peculiar the way Jaeggi uses the term 'bundle', when Simmel often adopted the metaphor of the 'web' [*Stoff*] to define the sphere of society and culture.

> "Those forms that compose the mind's proper activity, those mental powers that shape the world's materials, nevertheless subsist in the first instance utterly in life. They are the necessities that a particular course of life with a particular character in a given milieu of the world trains and exercises for itself in the same manner as it does its particular limbs and species functions. Life streams through these forms like a river surging forth through the waves of its current"[29].

Simmel furnishes a wider idea of sociology as inquiry on the forms of social life, and this idea is efficaciously sustained in *Grundfragen der Soziologie* (1917), that represents the last and most meaningful attempt of Simmel to ground a social theory on the basis of a vital conception of cultural and social relations. It is also peculiar that Simmel does not renounce to the conflict dimension in social and cultural issues. In the first lines of the fourth chapter, *Individuum und Gesellschaft in Lebensanschauungen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts (Beispiel der Philosophischen Soziologie)*, Simmel hits home when he says:

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28 Ibidem, p. 18.

29 Georg Simmel, "The Fragmentary Character of Life", op. cit., p. 239.

"The really problem of society is the relation between its forces and forms and the individual's own life. The question is not whether society exists only in the individuals or also outside of them. For even if we attribute «life», properly speaking, only to individuals, and identify the life of society with that of its individual members, we must still admit the existence of conflict between the two. One reason for this conflict is the fact that, in the individuals themselves, social elements fuse into the particular phenomenon called «society». «Society» develops its own vehicles and organs by whose claims and commands the individual is confronted as by an alien party. A second reason results from another aspect of the inherency of society in the individual"[30].

The society (as the ensemble of social relations) is a 'sui generis' entity, which 'emerges' among individual reciprocal interactions and it exists *thanks to* and *beyond* individuals: it applies also for its forms[31]. The conflictual aspect of the society (i.e. the fact that it exists *in, through and outside* individuals) also refers to the inner vital aspect of society: what we call the 'social life' is a primary question, that Simmel had already stated, circa one hundred years ago.

In Simmel's essay *Der Fragmentcharakter des Lebens* (1916) he sustained that:

"[…] the forms or functions that life, for its own sake, has produced from its own vitality has now become so autonomous and definite that conversely life serves them and arranges its contents into them; and the success of this arrangement serves

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30 Georg Simmel, "Individual and society in eighteenth- and nineteenth century. Views of life (an example of philosophical Sociology)", in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, edited by K.Wolff, Glencoe: The Free Press, p. 58 (cfr. Georg Simmel, "Grundfragen der Soziologie", GSG 16, op. cit., p. 122).

31 Davide Ruggieri, "Emergenza, riduzione, relazione: il paradigma della sociologia relazionale e il dualismo tra struttura e cultura", *Studi di Sociologia*, 3, 2016, pp. 279-294.

just as much as an ultimate realisation of value and meaning as did previously the introduction of these forms into the economy of life"[32].

2. Lebenssoziologie or 'Constructing a new storey beneath historical materialism'

In the preface of *Philosophie des Geldes*, Simmel adopts the following formula in order to clarify his analytical field and methodology into the social sciences inquiries: "constructing a new storey beneath historical materialism". The sociological inquiries must treat 'social forms' (that is, social relations) beyond any 'structural' view – at least according Marx's view. In the construction of Simmel's theory of value within the description of modern culture under the sign of 'money', the confrontation with Marx is constant. Simmel simply reduces the question of the relation between structure and culture with the reciprocity of both of them. Simmel sustains:

> "Methodologically, this basic intention can be expressed in the following manner. The attempt is made to construct a new *storey beneath historical materialism* such that the explanatory value of the incorporation of economic life into the causes of intellectual culture is preserved, while these economic forms themselves are recognized as the result of more profound valuations and currents of psychological or even metaphysical preconditions"[33].

Simmel's stimulating statement surely looks at the typical Marxist question dealing with the relation between structure and superstructure, as

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32 Georg Simmel, "Der Fragmentcharakter des Lebens", in *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1909-1918. Band II*, GSG 13. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000, p. 253.

33 Georg Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 54. Simmel seems to address *ante litteram* a 'culturalist' solution to the question dealing the relationship between the economic life of society and the cultural domain: Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition. A political-philosophical Exchange*, London-New York: Verso, 2003.

well as (translated in present sociological language) dealing the conflict between structure and culture. Marx defined the latter in correspondence to 'forms of social consciousness'.[34] The historical materialism derives the forms of social consciousness as a variable 'depending' on the economic base. The relation between both of them cannot be reciprocal, as instead Simmel sustained. Lukàcs saw in Simmel's theory such a possible (tragic) extreme result of historical materialism.

> "Deepening of historical materialism in fact exists in the subsumption of its results under a *Lebensphilosophie* framework, that in this case appears as the insoluble opposition between subjectivity and cultural forms, between soul and mind. This opposition is, according to Simmel, the peculiar tragedy of culture"[35].

Simmel demonstrated in the second part of *Philosophy of money* the 'monetisation' of the modern society under the category of the 'style of life': it represents the best sample of the monetisation of individual existences (the individual social life) due to the extreme require for reciprocity coefficient. The loss of personality is directly proportional to the increase of that modern search for a style of life, depending on multiple factors and variables, due to the 'differentiation' (*Differenzierung*) principle.

The problem of the 'style' in Simmel primarily consists in the fact that the modern individuals must accept to get their life 'formalised'. The style (as a *form*) of life becomes *substance.*[36] It depends on the modern

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34 See the preface to Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977.

35 György Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1954, p. 397.

36 Elizabeth Goodstein, "Style as Substance: Georg Simmel's Phenomenology of Culture", *Cultural Critique*, 52, 2002, pp. 209-234. On this issue, Emden recently alleged that the often cited 'economisation' of society is at the same time its 'financialization', i.e. the monetary economy, according to Simmel, has once again become a cultural phenomenon: Christian J. Emden, "Die Normativität des Kapitals. Zur politischen Aktualität von Georg Simmels Philosophie des Geldes", *Zeitschrift für Kulturphilosophie*, 1-2, 2015: 179.

fragmentation of social life: individuals experience social life through uncountable and exchangeable 'worlds' and values. The more the society differentiates – getting more and more complex and contingent –, the more this variable will increase individual disposition to experience 'multiple lives'. The search for a style as symmetry, unity and totality is the balancing effect of this fragmentation and dissemination. In the preface of his *Philosophy of Money* (1900), Simmel inquires the style, such as "a person, a landscape, a mood", "[…] finding in each of life's details the totality of its meaning".[37]

For Simmel, the loss of shared and binding understandings of human purposes is the sign of an advanced civilisation process that must be philosophically analysed as an aspect of what he christened as modern *Geldkultur*[38]. In the first part of his *Philosophy of Money* (the 'analytical' one), Simmel demonstrates how the money symbolically embodies the universal interdependence of the human community in an increasingly complex frame of reference (modernity process), basically due to the social differentiation, the division of labour and the functional differentiation.[39] In the second part (the 'synthetic' one) he concerns to show how the political, social, and psychological developments associated with the monetary economy have shaped human existence in modern culture. He tries, in other words, to investigate on the spiritual (*geistige*) effects on individual lives, that is '"its effects upon the inner world - upon the vitality of individuals, upon the linking of their fates, upon culture in general'[40].

> "The lack of something definite at the centre of the soul impels us to search for momentary satisfaction in evernew stimulations, sensations and external activities. Thus, it is that we

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37 Georg Simmel, *Philosophy of money*, op. cit., p. 55.

38 Georg Simmel, *Philosophie des Geldes*, GSG 6. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989, p. 336.

39 Hans-Peter Müller, "Individualisierung, Individualismus und Individualität", in H-P.Müller e T.Reitz (edts), *Simmel-Handbuch. Begriffe, Hauptwerke, Aktualität*, Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 2018, pp. 296-303 (p. 296).

40 Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, op. cit., p. 52.

become entangled in the instability and helplessness that man-
ifests itself as the tumult of the metropolis, as the mania for
travelling, as the wild pursuit of competition and as the typ-
ically modern disloyalty with regard to taste, style, opinions
and personal relationships. The significance of money for this
kind of life follows quite logically from the premises that all
the discussions in this book have identified".[41]

And further:

"The more the life of society becomes dominated by monetary
relationships, the more the relativistic character of existence
finds its expression in conscious life, since money is nothing
other than a special form of the embodied relativity of eco-
nomic goods that signifies their value".[42]

Within the recent Critical Theory scenario, Rahel Jaeggi also insists on
the metaphor of the 'monetization' of individual life and then she in-
vestigates on 'the social ontology of economic'[43] that is considering the
economic as a set of social and economic practices. She intends a set of
sequences toward the self, the others and the outside world, in a repeti-
tive or habitual manner, not necessarily concerned in social relations, but
under a socially-shared meaning. In a 'relational' perspective it should
treated indeed as the question of practices, first of all, under the social
relations and the reciprocity paradigm they got born and 'live'.

This perspective is given by Simmel, as he formulised an ethical archi-
tecture in his writing *Das individuelle Gesetzt*: the purpose of this writing
was to 'individualize' a vital (not abstract) categorical imperative and root
it in 'the stream of life' – the ethical duty can only be subsumed by the

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41 Ibidem, p. 490.

42 Ibidem, p. 518.

43 Rahel Jaeggi "A Wide Concept of Economy: Economy as a Social Practice
and the Critique of Capitalism", in P.Deutscher and C.Lafont (edts), *Critical
Theory in Critical Times Transforming the Global Political and Economic Order*,
New York: Columbia University Press, 2017, pp 160-182 (p. 163).

totality of life, which contains an internal 'normativity'.[44] Despite of the Kantian 'intellectualised' model of a pure and universal duty (which is substantially indifferent to life), Simmel conceived an 'objective' criterion on individual life, since life itself is always 'individual' – then the normativity of an ethical life must be only 'individual'. For Simmel, 'objectivity' stands for to the development of vital conditions and contents of individual life (by doing that, Simmel remarks the difference – and the false co-belonging – between 'subjectivity' and 'individuality'). In this sense, we must consider Simmel as the first sociologist who argued for a 'relational' and 'reflexive' self as the basis for a new order of social and moral life. The individual responsibility principle is given with the 'totality' of individual acts, as decisive practices in the construction of its whole life, that is to recognise individual form of social life such as Rahel Jaeggi sustains.

The first paradoxical case of that conflict between the individual and the society stands in the 18th century. For Simmel, the quest for liberty and equality coincides with the impossibility of their satisfaction. This first paradox is revealed in the socio-political experience of the French Revolution, where the 'antinomy' between liberty and equality is insuperable.

> "Die Unzulänglichkeit der gesellschaftlich gültigen Lebensformen im 18. Jahrhundert im Verhältnis zu den materiellen und geistigen Produktivkräften der Zeit kam den Individuen als eine unerträgliche Bindung ihrer Energien zum Bewusstsein: so die Vorrechte der oberen Stände, wie die despotische Kontrolle von Handel und Wandel, die immer noch mächtigen Reste der Zunftverfassungen wie der unduldsame Zwang des Kirchentums, die Fronpflichten der bäuerlichen Bevölkerung wie die politische Bevormundung im Staatsleben und die Einengungen der Stadtverfassungen".[45]

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44   Monica Lee and Daniel Silver, "Simmel's Law of the Individual and the Ethics of the Relational Self", *Theory, Culture&Society*, 29 (7/8), 2012, pp- 124-145; see also M Amat, "Simmel's Law of the Individual: A Relational Idea of Culture", *Simmel Studies*, 21 (2), 2017, pp. 41-72.

45   Georg Simmel, *Der Krieg und die geistigen Entscheidungen. Grundfragen der So-*

This unachievable satisfaction for individuals to obtain liberty and equality at the same time is the main plot of the modern society. Jaeggi recognizes that Simmel had first argued about the ambivalence principle at the basis of the modern society[46], which has its grammar norms in the 'money paradigm', so that the price of liberty directly depends on the elevated level of 'social' indifference[47], i.e. liberty coincides with 'independence', and not with any metaphysical or moral precept. Simmel denoted the progressive proliferation of the pure mean (the money) in the social practices and the generation of what I call the 'second order forms' of social life.

Simmel basically recognised in fact two kinds, or orders, of social forms: the first order (*Formen der Vergesellschaftung*) deals with the main subjects treated in *Soziologie* (1908), that is 'superiority and subordination, division of labour, formation of parties, inner solidarity coupled with exclusiveness toward the outside, and innumerable similar features in the State, in a religious community, in a band of conspirators, in an economic association, in an art of school, in the family'[48]; the second order (*Geselligkeit)* is yet those models emerging as the pure and simple

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ziologie. Vom Wesen des historischen Verstehens. Der Konflikt der modernen Kultur. Lebensanschauung, GSG 16, op.cit., p. 128 (*my underlinings*).

46 Rahel Jaeggi, "Was (wenn überhaupt etwas) ist falsch am Kapitalismus? Drei Wege der Kapitalismuskritik", in R.Jaeggi and D.Loick (edts), *Nach Marx. Philosophie, Kritik, Praxis*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2013, pp. 321-349. See also Birgitta Nedelmann, *Ambivalenz als Interaktionsform und Interakrtionsnorm*, in O.H.Luthe and R.E.Wiedenmann (eds), *Ambivalenz*, Opladen: Leske and Budrick, 1997, pp. 149-163.

47 "The increasing objectification of our culture, whose phenomena consist more and more of impersonal elements and less and less absorb the subjective totality of the individual (most simply shown by the contrast between handicraft and factory work), also involves sociological structures. Therefore, groups into which earlier man entered in his totality and individuality and which, for this reason, required reciprocal knowledge far beyond the immediate, objective content of the relationship these groups are now based exclusively on this objective content, which is neatly factored out of the whole relation", Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, op. cit., p. 318.

48 Ibidem, p. XXXIV and p. 22.

play-forms of sociability[49], that is 'fashion, sociability, coquetry, adventure' etc.: for Simmel, all these forms are basically detectable in the linguistic dimension as "talk" (*Gespräch*).[50] These last play-forms establish as a model to comprehend the reality, although they were born from ludic and contingent needs. This extreme superficiality, this 'vane and reified schematism' has become the primary social realm. The individuals nowadays mediate their worlds through these schemes, and this is sure a pernicious production of a false conscience of relations. 'False' is not to intend as an inversion of relationships between false and true, but as the distance degree to the reality. The massive use of fine technologies implements that natural destiny of social relations. It is quite paradigmatic if we think of the conversations (the linguistic dimension) on social networks based on the false facts or spoof stories, which is but a frivolous and superficial social exchange. This seductive form of reciprocity is now legitimate and self-reproductive. But the question in this case is, what do we exchange in these new forms of social life if not only the 'form'? We lose the content, we have lost the meaning and the purposes, then our social existences assume the form of the media themselves (such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc,). The stake is our personality, as Simmel attempted to demonstrate since the last chapter of *Philosophy of money*. The more the modern society requires from us a 'singular' style of life, the more we lose our personality, since both of them are inversely proportional entities. The involvement in these superficial play-forms requires the greatest sacrifice of what we keep innermost and personal, and the bigger the social circle we belong is, the deeper our loss will be.

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49   Ibidem, p. 43.

50   Georg Simmel, *Soziologie der Geselligkeit (1910)*, in *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1909-1918*, Band I, GSG 12, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2001, pp. 177-193.

3. 'Dem Leben die Transzendenz immanent ist' (Simmel): a 'transcendent-immanent' critique of social life

Jaeggi tackles (and criticizes) the question dealing the 'ethical abstinence' in the modern liberal political scheme, such as sustained by Habermas.[51] She aims at analysing forms of social life through an 'immanent' perspective, arguing that "[…] forms of life, in order to be an appropriate object of critique, must not only be malleable and created by human activity, they must also be structured by norms we can recognize and draw upon in our possible criticism".[52] This is a reasonable statement that fits to the idea of 'individual law', mentioned before, and claiming that the inner norm of any social life is given by the whole process considered as a 'vital and relational process'.

It could probably be useful once again to follow some of Horkheimer's valuable reflections on this issue. Herbert Schnädelbach had already pointed out the necessity to read Horkheimer's Critical Theory under the lens of the 'Morals' and the question of 'individual life'. He remarked how Max Horkheimer attempted to root Materialism to the eudemonistic and individual (then emotive) topic, so that the background of Horkheimer's Critical Theory was probably a 'Gefühlsethik' in the meaning originally accorded by Kant with the concept of *moralischen Gefühl*[53] In *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft* (1947) Horkheimer once claimed:

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51 Rahel Jaeggi, "Towards an Immanent Critique of Forms of Life", op. cit., p. 14; see also Rahel Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms of life*, op. cit., pp. 14-16.

52 Rahel Jaeggi, "Towards an Immanent Critique of Forms of Life", op. cit., p. 19.

53 "Die materialistische Moralphilosophie ist nicht deonotologisch, sondern *eudämoniustisch*; nicht universalistisch, sondern *individualistisch* und *situationsbezogen*; nicht rationalistisch – also irrationalistisch? […] So gerät Horkheimer nicht zufällig in die Nähe der beiden wichtigsten und einflussreichsten normentheoretischen Positionen seiner Zeit: des *Emotivismus* in der Metaethik und des *Dezisionismus*", Herbert Schnädelbach, "Max Horkheimer und die Moralphilosophie des deutschen Idealismus", in A.Schmidt and N.Altwicker (edts), *Max Horkheimer heute: Werk und Wirkung*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1986: pp. 62-63.

"Georg Simmel hat die Lehre vom Vermögen des Lebens entwickelt, sich selbst zu transzendieren. Jedoch bezeichnet de Begriff des Lebens, der allen diesen Philosophen zugrunde liegt, ein Reich der Natur. Selbst wenn der Geist, wie in Simmels metaphysischer Theorie, als die höchste Stufe des Lebens bestimmt wird, wird das philosophische Problem noch zugunsten eines vertieften Naturalismmums entschieden, gegen den Simmels Philosophie zugleich ein beständiger Protest ist".[54]

The exclusive attention in Habermas' theory to the question of ethics and normativism has naturally produced that 'romanticizing of individual life', that is an analytic neutralisation toward any form of individual life and all its properties, substantially keeping the black box of 'Life-world' as Jaeggi rightly sustains.[55] This under-evaluation of individual issues is given by the primacy of the (universal) 'objectivism' of the rational discourse (what Habermas conceives as 'discursive rational process'). The search for norms in order to be recognised in a democratic and communicative frame – in Simmel's words, could be expressed as the 'intellectualisation' of common life - is also the neutralisation of individual instances.

The focus point could be addressed neither on individuals, nor on norms, rather on social relations. Within an 'emergentist' frame we should, thus, consider 'social relations', and then the forms of social life, as those forms of relations, arising from the reciprocity of intentional individual actions. Jaeggi furnishes a good definition of social practices as a 'intentionally partial and not planned' set of actions[56], and they have

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54 Max Horkheimer "Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft" [1947], in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 6. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 2008, p. 173.

55 Rahel Jaeggi, "A Wide Concept of Economy", op. cit.; cfr. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 voll., Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987.

56 Rahel Jaeggi, "A wide Concept of economy", op. cit. In *Critique of Forms of Life* Jaeggi alleges: "Cultural models and shared values […] concern questions of the conduct of life that transcend the individual and find expression in established social practices and institutions. Thus, forms of life are not individual options but transpersonal forms of expression that possess public relevance", In this regard, see also Nancy Fraser and Rahel Jaeggi, *Capitalism. A Conversation in Critical Theory*, edited by B.Milstein, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

'emergent' properties in this regard.

In the first chapter 'Life as Transcendence' of Simmel's final work *The View of Life* (1918), we find a clear attempt to extend the 'formal' principle of sociological inquiries also to the forms of social and cultural life within a frame of a 'vitalist metaphysics' (or vital theory). Every human activity has boundaries that can be stepped over, and the life process itself contains an essential feature of 'transcendence,' in which it continually produces 'forms' which it then moves beyond. Life is reduced to a couple of principles: 1) it is 'more-life' [*Mehr-Leben*], that is a stream of events and capacities that enable 'forms' to produce objective culture that transcends it; 2) due to this last statement, it is also 'more-than-life' [*Mehr-als-Leben*], those great objective social and cultural forms, that come to stand in irreconcilable opposition to the creative forces that have produced them in the first place.[57] These are two complementary aspects of life within a dialectical scheme which is open and tragic ('paradoxical', according to Honneth's words), since it never ends and does not have any resolving synthesis. For Honneth, conflicts are an ineliminable feature of all forms of human sociality: he recently argues for an *Urkonflikt* explaining the arising of the societal structure. Honneth explicitly sustains that Critical Theory, in this regard, must look at Hegel, Dewey and Simmel, as a possible alternative to the *Roussaeu-Kantian, Freudian and Marxian* views.

> "[…] Social conflict is inevitable in all societies simply because the norms accepted by their members will again and again give rise to new moral claims that cannot be satisfied under existing conditions and whose frustration will therefore result in social conflicts. Here, the explanatory burden rests on the thought that the interpretation of socially valid norms is an essentially unfinished process, in which one-sided interpretations and resistance to them take turns with each other".[58]

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57 Georg Simmel, *Lebensanschauung*, in GSG 16, op. cit., p. 222.

58 Axel Honneth, "Is there an emancipatory interest? An attempt to answer critical theory's most fundamental question", *European Journal of Philosophy*, 25, 2017: 908-920 (913).

The critique of 'forms of life', as Jaeggi conceives, '[…] it begins precisely where problems, crises, and conflicts arise, even if they are not overtly manifest. This is why the critique is not conducted from an authoritarian external perspective, but from an immanent perspective'.[59]

Simmel argues for a theory of "forms of social life" in relation to the frame of an "immanent transcendence", strictly connected to the process of life: since the plot of society as well as culture is given by the dialectics of "more-life" – the immanent side of life - and "more-than-life" – the transcendent one – , the forms of social life are the result of an immanent synthesis in order to realize transcendent forms (and purposes). In Simmel's theory forms refer to objects both material and immaterial, which are generated by life: forms are, thus, always "more-than-life" for Simmel.

The concept of 'immanent transcendence' was thematised by Patrice Haynes to define some peculiar aspects of Adorno's philosophy[60]. Simmel has defined the question of life beginning to clarify the substance of human being. We are "limits" [*Grenzen*] – humankind is addressed as "Begrenztwesen" – since we need to find 'limits' in our chaotic lives and order in our multiple worlds.[61] Our concrete and immediate life – writes Simmel – lies on a boundary between two limits, superior and inferior. Life itself becomes something abstract that overwhelms any limits. Thus, the 'immanent transcendence' of life consists of the unitary act of limit-experiencing essence [*Begrentzwesen*] and overwhelming the limits [Überschreiten der Grenzen].[62] On this theme, Jaeggi rightly sustains that we must consider forms of social life under a 'procedural' scheme since the social life is always a 'process'.[63] But it is also necessary to maintain a transcendental analytical level in the inquiry on any social transaction.

The transcendent level is only a 'logical', 'rational' and 'abstract' side

59 Rahel Jaeggi, "Towards an Immanent Critique of Forms of Life", op. cit. p. 26; Rahel Jaeggi, *Critique of forms of life*, op. cit., chapter 6.

60 Patrice Haynes, *Immanent Transcendence: Reconfiguring Materialism in Continental Philosophy*, London-New York: Bloomsbury, 2012.

61 Georg Simmel, *Lebensanschauung*, GSG 16, op. cit., p. 212.

62 Ibidem, p. 215.

63 Rahel Jaeggi, "Towards an Immanent Critique of Forms of Life", op. cit., p. 26.

of life considered as part of the process. Simmel is of the view that, in a way similar to how we experience time in the forms of past, future and present – even if we live only 'one' temporal dimension –, the forms of our lives are the necessary mediations in order to organise our reciprocal social existence. Thus, following Simmel's 'vital theory', the first form of this necessary (self)transcendence of life is the *self-consciousness*, that is our primary medium to comprehend our actions and interactions with others. This form permits us to build a wide 'reflexive' social theory, since we must first consider this issue in the interaction among individuals. Self-consciousness is the first form of objectification, more precisely 'the objectification of the Self', becoming an object although it keeps on being a subject. In this consideration, Simmel probably refers directly to Hegel, and we finally rediscover the 'ancient roots' of Critical Theory.

Since for Simmel, any single moment in life (considered as an abstract content, that is a specific 'form') is relative to the whole process, he stated that the transcendental moment is indeed within the immanence of life itself: 'Dem Leben die Transzendenz immanent ist'. Jaeggi furnishes an immanent critique of forms due her approach into terms of 'problem-solving'. Thus, she considers life such as 'a process of accumulated experiences', explicitly referring to Dewey and pragmatism. Jaeggi sustains:

> "Thus, the critique of forms of life that I develop can rightfully claim to be immanent and transformative at the same time. It is immanent because it takes its starting point by referring to immanent crises and the erosion of social practices and institutions. It is transformative because the evaluation of processes of problem-solving allows for a transcendence of context – and initiates change"[64].

Escaping from a metaphysical foundation of the social theory, the final purpose of my thesis is considering 'social life' in Simmel's terms: the social life depends on an intimate reciprocity among individuals as well

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64   Ibidem, p. 28.

as on the double character of immanence and transcendence. Due to this last idea of 'immanent transcendence', the forms of social lives are considered procedurally, but also under the constitutive transcendental issues and under the very emergent character of the 'relation', which is the motor and the achievement of human co-existence. Life needs a form; but the form is always an excess for life. This paradoxical and tragic outcome of sociality and culture in Simmel could be (again and again) the new begin for a critique of the forms of social life.

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Conscience. Communicative and Strategic Actions

Morhaf Al Achkar[1]

Abstract: In the theory of communicative action, Habermas distinguished between communicative actions, oriented toward understanding, and strategic actions, oriented toward consequences. The distinction is essential in clarifying communicative rationality as a better framework for social action. Hegel employed what can be viewed as parallel distinctions when exploring actions and judgments. He elaborated existential aspects related to self-certainty and intersubjective recognition; both concepts are salient for Habermas. Bringing in Hegel enriches the conversation around the notions of acting, knowing, and being. This paper explores Hegel's explication of morality to add insights into the contradictions in every social action that can only be transcended within a communicative rationality framework.

Introduction

The distinction between strategic action and communicative action is a core component of Habermas's theory of communicative action. Analytically, participants in social action rely on their intuitive competency in distinguishing an act with an orientation to understanding from an act with an orientation to success. Empirically, and since every social actor is moved by a mix of interest- and value-based motives, the distinction is not always as clear as it is in the limit cases. Hegel's explication of the moral view of the world at the stage of "Conscience: The 'beautiful soul,' evil and its forgiveness" provides fruitful insights into the *existential* aspects of this distinction.

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In this reflective piece, I will first explicate Habermas's position on the distinction between communicative and strategic actions. Then, I will explore Hegel's critique of Kant's moral theory, the notions of conviction and acknowledgment, and the dialectics of acting and judging self-consciousnesses. Each summary section will be followed by an intermediary reflection, and the essay will end with a synthetic reflection.

Habermas: The Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas, in explicating the theory of communicative action, masterfully handled the tension between the positions of the philosopher and that of the social scientist. He describes

> The more I sought to satisfy the explicative claims of the philosopher, the further I moved from the interests of the sociologist, who has to ask what purpose such conceptual analysis should serve. I was having difficulty finding the right level of presentation for what I wanted to say; and, as we have known since Hegel and Marx, problems of presentation are not extrinsic to substantive problems.[2]

With this tension in mind, and contrary to many of his counterparts who engaged with one or the other, Habermas successfully couched his theory with equal footing between social science and philosophy in a position that "holds that an adequate theory of society must integrate methods and problematics previously assigned exclusively to either philosophy or empirical social science."[3] In what follows, I will present sketches of the distinction between communicative and strategic actions as Habermas elaborated in his more recent works. I will also, to add clarity to these notions, explicate Habermas's related theory on meaning and validity.

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2   Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), xxxix (first published 1981).

3   Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, vii.

Communicative action and strategic action

Habermas clarifies his conception of communicative rationality in his essay "Some Further Clarification of the Concept of Communicative Rationality."[4] Habermas distinguishes three main modes of language use: the noncommunicative use, such as intentional and propositional sentences, which are used only mentally as monological action planning or pure representation;[5] the communicative use of language, whether in a weak communicative sense with an orientation toward reaching understanding, such as engaging in normatively nonembedded expression of will, or in a strong communicative sense with an orientation toward agreement, such as in completely illocutionary acts that embed expressive, normative, and constative aspects; and the strategic use of language with an orientation toward consequences in the pattern of perlocutions. In this discussion, I will not focus on the noncommunicative use of language and will instead detail only the two forms of language used in the context of social actions.[6]

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4   Jürgen Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, ed. Maeve Cooke (Boston: MIT Press,1998).

5   Examples of noncommunicative use of language are linguistic expressions *used monologically* such as propositions (e.g., "It is true that Hamilton was the secretary of treasury when Washington was the president") and intentional sentences (e.g., "I will go to work tomorrow") uttered for the purpose of representation or mentally rehearsed plan of action.

6   Here, Habermas refers to Austin's distinction between locution, illocution, and perlocution. The term "locutionary" refers to the content of a propositional sentence (p) or a nominalized propositional sentence (that p). The speaker expresses the state of affairs and says something through locutionary acts. Additionally, the speaker performs an action in saying something through an illocutionary act. Habermas (*Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1) explains, "The illocutionary role establishes the mode of a sentence ('Mp') employed as a statement, promise, command, avowal, or the like" (*Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, 289). The mode is expressed in the first person present by means of performative verbs, so the action meaning can be understood such that someone can add "hereby" to the illocutionary component of the verb: "I hereby command you (confess to you, promise

Habermas takes Weber's definition of social actions as, "actions whereby actors, in pursuing their personal plans of action, are also guided by the expected action of others."[7] Habermas distinguishes between communicative and strategic actions by saying

> We will speak of *communicative action* where actors coordinate their plans of action with one another by way of linguistic processes of reaching understanding, that is, in such a way that they draw on the illocutionary binding and bonding powers (*Bindungskräfte*) of speech acts for this coordination.[8]

On the other hand, with regard to the other in a strategic action,

> This potential for communicative rationality remains unexploited, even where the interactions are linguistically mediated. Because the participants in strategic action coordinate their plans of action with one another by way of a reciprocal exertion of influence, language is used not communicatively, in the sense elucidated, but with an *orientation toward consequences*.[9]

Habermas also distinguishes communicative action "*in a weak sense*," for actions where reaching understanding applies to both the facts and to the actor-related reasons for one-sided expressions of will but not to the normative reasons for selecting the goals. On the other hand, he uses the notion of communicative action "*in a strong sense*" for actions where reaching understanding applies also to normative reasons for selecting the goals themselves. Unlike his previous position, where orientation to success was a sufficient and necessary condition for an act to be deemed

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you, etc.)." Finally, the speaker produces an effect upon the hearer through perlocutionary acts. The three acts, locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary, can be characterized using the catchphrase "To say *something*, to act *in* saying something, to bring about something *through* acting in saying something" (*Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, 289).

7   Habermas, *Pragmatics of Communication*, 326.

8   Ibid.

9   Ibid.

strategic, in his modified conception, Habermas accepted that it can still be considered a communicative use of language, albeit "weak," when the actor has an orientation toward success, provided that "the illocutionary aims *dominate* the 'perlocutionary' effects that in certain circumstances may be striven for as well."[10] Here, "perlocutionary" has a distinct use and refers to "the effects of speech acts that, if need be, can also be brought about causally by nonlinguistic actions."[11] Habermas further distinguishes perlocutionary effects as belonging to one of three classes of effects.

The first class of perlocutionary effects is grammatically regulated and results from the content of the successful illocutionary act. In this class, the illocutionary aim rules the perlocutionary one. The second class of perlocutionary effects is, in contrast, not grammatically regulated but, like the first class, results from the content of the successful illocutionary act. The third class of perlocutionary effects is achieved only in an inconspicuous manner when it comes to the addressee. The success of the strategic action in achieving this third kind of effect remains hidden from the other party, although it still depends on the manifest success of the illocutionary act. For example, a hearer understands and accepts the illocutionary act of a request to give money to Y. The hearer gives money to Y (perlocutionary effect$_1$). This action gives joy to Y's wife (perlocutionary effect$_2$). The speaker who requested the money achieves a wish she had to set up Y for theft of the money, an intention she kept hidden from the hearer (perlocutionary effect$_3$).

In strategic actions, language functions according to perlocution patterns. Linguistic communication is only subordinated to the conditions of purposive rational action.

> Strategic interactions are determined by the decisions of actors in an attitude toward success who *reciprocally observe* one another. They confront one another under conditions of double

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10   Habermas, *Pragmatics of Communication*, 329.

11   Ibid.

contingency as opponents who, in the interest of their personal plans of action, *exert influence* on one another. . . . They suspend the performative attitudes of participants in communication insofar as they take on the participating speaker and hearer roles from the perspective of third persons.[12]

The relevance of illocutionary aims comes from their role as conditions for the intended perlocutionary effects and, thus, are not the unreserved pursuit of the interlocutors, as in communicative actions.

Participants in strategic actions cannot assume truthfulness, and thus all their speech acts lose their illocutionary bonding and binding power. In addition to losing the shared normative context and the associated claims to normative rightness (as also occurs in weak communicative action), Habermas asserts,

Even the claims to truth and truthfulness raised with nonregulative speech acts are no longer aimed directly at the rational motivation of the hearer but at getting the addressee to draw his *conclusions* from what the speaker indirectly gives him to understand.[13]

Here, presuppositions of communicative action are suspended, but the interlocutors continue to use them indirectly to allow or make the other understand what they believe or want. The decisions of strategically acting subjects are based on beliefs they hold to be true without transforming into truth claims those truth values that guide them individually from the point of view of their goals and personal preferences. Thus, these points of view do not receive the intersubjective recognition because they never get raised publicly with claims to discursive vindication.

Types of interaction, Habermas asserts, can be differentiated into communicative or strategic according to the mechanism for linking up Alter's

12   Habermas, *Pragmatics of Communication*, 332.

13   Ibid.

plan of action with Ego's.[14] *We* can speak of strategic action or communicative action, depending on whether the actions were coordinated by exerting influence or by reaching understanding, respectively. Similarly, these two mechanisms are distinguished *from the perspectives of the participants* in a mutually exclusive fashion. Alter or Ego cannot participate in the processes of reaching understanding with the dual intention of causally exerting influence on the other and at the same time reach an agreement about something. This is because an agreement cannot, from the perspective of the participants, be imposed externally, whether through intervention in the action or by influencing the propositional attitude of the other.[15]

A child develops the competency to act communicatively and to have relationships to the world in the form of subject–subject (as in communicative action) or subject–object (as in instrumental action) through socializing and taking the position of the other. Habermas traces the distinction between these two attitudes back to our learning to anticipate a possible "no" from another person and internalizing that person's position, saying "no" to our own action impetuses. When it comes to interacting with objects in a person–object relationship, the "no" is understood as a consequence of an undesired action. This "no" is different from the one carrying normative validity stemming from identification with Alter Ego or with a generalized other. We intuitively distinguish between communicating with another person and acting instrumentally to produce an effect on that person. Strategic action is only a special case of instrumental action.

Clearly, in any action taken from an actual interaction, there would be a mix of empirical and rational motives, and participants can more or less tell the difference. Language use will thus represent a mix of strategic and communicative actions. Habermas asserts

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14 Habermas, *Pragmatics of Communication*.

15 Jürgen Habermas, "Toward a Critique of the Theory of Meaning," in *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, edited by Maeve Cooke (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 298–9.

> Generally, alter is moved to link up his actions with ego's actions by a complicated mix of empirical and rational motives. Because communicative action demands an orientation to validity claims, it points from the start to the possibility that participants will distinguish more or less sharply between having an influence *upon* one another and reaching an understanding *with* one another. Thus, as we shall see, a generalized "willingness to accept" can develop along two lines: empirical ties forged by inducement and intimidation, on the one hand, and rational trust motivated by agreement based on reasons, on the other hand.[16]

Participants in interactions master the competency to distinguish, when they come to an agreement with an other, whether the person has intimidated and inducted them or they were only rationally motivated.

Meaning and validity

Habermas followed the formal pragmatic approach to meaning. This approach "begins with the question of *what it means to understand an utterance*—that is, a sentence employed communicatively."[17] Habermas traces understanding an utterance back to the knowledge of the conditions under which the hearer may accept the utterance as valid. He asserts, "*We understand a speech act when we know what makes it acceptable*."[18] From the speaker's standpoint, the conditions for acceptability are the same as the conditions for the illocutionary success of her act. Acceptability is defined in the performative attitude of the participants in the communication and not in an objectivistic sense from the observers' perspective. A speech act, in the context of communicative action, can be contested or rejected by an addressee under at least one of the three aspects:

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16   Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communication Action: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, tran. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 2 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 74.

17   Habermas, *Pragmatics of Communication*, 131.

18   Habermas, *Pragmatics of Communication*, 132.

> The aspect of the rightness that the speaker claims for her action in relation to a normative context (or, indirectly, for these norms themselves); the aspect of the truthfulness that the speaker claims for the expression of subjective experiences to which she has privileged access; and finally, the aspect of the truth that the speaker, with her utterance, claims for a statement (or for the existential presuppositions of the context of a nominalized proposition).[19]

A speech act has met its acceptability conditions when it satisfies the conditions necessary for the hearer to take a "yes" position on the validity claim raised by the speaker. These conditions have to be satisfied not one-sidedly, whether in relation to the speaker or the hearer, but have to be sufficient for the intersubjective recognition of the linguistic claims that, depending on the class of the speech act, ground an agreement with specified content related to obligations relevant to the interaction's consequences. This standpoint provides an explanation of the mechanism relevant to how speech acts coordinate actions. Assuming the expressions employed in the speech act are grammatically well formed and that there is satisfaction of the general contextual conditions typical for a certain type of speech act, Habermas asserts,

> A hearer understands the meaning of an utterance when . . . he knows those *essential conditions* under which he could be motivated by a speaker to an affirmative response. These *acceptability conditions in the narrower sense* relate to the meaning of the illocutionary role that [a speaker] in the standard case expresses with the help of a performative action predicate.[20]

The yes or no response of a hearer to the validity claim, however, has a nuanced meaning to Habermas, building on the notion of "assent." For Habermas, "under the presuppositions of communicative action, a hearer can reject the utterance of a speaker only by denying its validity.

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19   Habermas, *Pragmatics of Communication*, 141–2.

20   Habermas, *Pragmatics of Communication*, 132.

Assent means then that the negation of the invalidity of the utterance is affirmed."[21] To explicate this notion further, take, for example, an assertion p, a command q, and an avowal r. Affirming p implies negating "it is untrue that p." Similarly, affirming q implies negating the sentence "It is not right that N," assuming N is the norm invoked in uttering q. Finally, affirming r implies the rejection of the sentence "It is insincere that r." This is particularly relevant in understanding the binding and bonding force of the illocutionary act. Habermas asserts,

> The binding effect of illocutionary forces comes about, ironically, through the fact that participants can say "no" to speech-act offers. The critical character of this saying "no" distinguishes taking a position in this way from a reaction based solely on caprice. A hearer can be "bound" by speech-act offers because he is not permitted arbitrarily to refuse them but only to say "no" to them, that is, to reject them for reasons.[22]

This nuanced notion of negating the negative becomes particularly relevant also when distinguishing communicative and strategic actions. Even with limit cases, the person can never come to a certainty about the truth, rightness, and truthfulness of an act. The best someone can claim is the negation of the untruth, un-rightness, and untruthfulness. Similarly, in affirming that an act is a strategic one, the best someone can say is that the claim "It is not insincere that r" is negated. The certainty of judgements about all empirical cases lies between these two limits and is open for vindication.

First Reflection

The distinction between communicative action and strategic action, whether in day-to-day interactions or in research and the social sciences, is particularly important. The reader may recall that Habermas characterizes strategic action as the social actions in which at least one actor is

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21   Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, 73.

22   Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 2, 74.

attempting to influence another person or with the person's conditions for a perlocutionary end in mind. The strategic actor uses language only as a tool, unlike communicative action, where language is a medium for reaching understanding and agreement. She suspends her commitments to truthfulness and, potentially, to normative rightness and truth as she acts unilaterally toward her own ends. Habermas drew the distinction between communicative action and strategic action from the perspectives of the participants who rely on the intuitive competence of interlocutors. There exists in every empirical situation, however, a tension when characterizing an act as strategic. This tension results from the essence of strategic action; that is, the suspension of the conditions of communicative rationality and using language that parasitically relies on the language game of communicative action while unilaterally acting as if the rules of this game (i.e., commitment to intelligibility, truth, rightness, and truthfulness) do not apply.

This tension especially imposes itself on the other person. In the absence of an I/you dialogue, Ego is pushed to the third-person participant position, which is not unproblematic. In the limit cases, the act is either communicative or strategic. *If the act is communicative*, Ego could, however, engage in a reflective communicative conversation with Alter about the latter's communicative action, and she could get a truthful response that explicates Alter's orientation: that she was truthful, rightfully holding a norm, and raising an objective truth claim. This dialogue and reflection can be unreliable *if Alter is truly acting strategically*. Just as we cannot trust the reliability of the truthful answer about truthfulness, Ego cannot ask Alter, who is acting strategically and thus being untruthful, whether she is truthful or not and trust that the answer is true. In the absence of a dialogue and authentic reflection, Ego may find herself left to a unilateral judgment, albeit a one-sided one that, even if it claims a privileged position, is meaningless if left unacknowledged. It is an impasse unless Alter comes to reflect on her act and makes a confession.

Clearly, Habermas does not say that it is possible to make a distinction between communicative and strategic action with certainty. The possi-

bility of distinction between communicative and strategic action ought to be understood analytically as it relates to an ideal speech situation. Although these situations cannot be achieved, they need to be accepted if the possibility of acting communicatively is to be understood. This is the same argument that can be raised when we think of interlocutors in a social interaction attaining identical meaning, although we can never be certain that two people understand an utterance in an identical way. For Habermas, the distinction between communicative and strategic action must be understood as a necessary idealization. We cannot claim that one can know whether an other is acting strategically or not even though we know the difference between strategic acts and communicative acts. We know the difference analytically, yet we can never be certain in any empirical sense.[23]

As participants in a lifeworld and in any empirical act, we accept that it is problematic to claim a distinction between a communicative and strategic action from Ego's or Alter's position alone. It takes critical dialogue and reflection on the part of both participants to judge an action as such, and it is not sufficient to rely on the position of one without the other. The two analytical schemas provide a powerful framework for interpreting social actions within the horizons of the actions' possible meanings. Here appears the critical aspect of the theory when brought to the sphere of social science and methodology: as social scientists, we ought to avoid describing an action as strategic without the participant's confession. We could, however, engage the participant in a conversation about previous actions and, through a dialogue, move her position to recognizing her truth orientation, but we cannot unilaterally make claims to certainty about that orientation. We can clearly make inferences about the person's objective claims by explicating possible reasons for the claims to truth she raised. We can also make stipulations about the norms she is claiming entitlement to. We can further judge her explicitly claimed authenticity and the explicit claims to truthfulness as they take on an objective existence in language (i.e., only after they are asserted explicitly). We

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23   This paragraph is reconstructed from a conversation with Phil Carspecken.

cannot, however, make inferences about her subjective claims without her insight, ideally insight that is cultivated through critical reflection and dialogue with the other. We also cannot judge the norms she is committed to without her explicitly asserting her commitments. To further explore actions that can be judged as strategic, communicative, or a combination of both more deeply, participants or researchers could find insights in Hegel's moral dialectic in "Conscience: The 'beautiful soul,' evil and its forgiveness."

Hegel: The Beautiful Soul, Evil, and Its Forgiveness

In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, under the title "Conscience. The 'beautiful soul,' evil and its forgiveness," Hegel criticizes Kant's moral worldview, saying that it "gets bogged down in insoluble contradictions, continually contraposing a nature whose laws are independent to a will and a pure duty which are then condemned to remain ineffectual."[24] Hegel transcended these contradictions dialectically, and that will be the focus of this section. But before we get to Hegel, it will be useful to bring in a rough sketch of Kant's moral theory as he constructed its argument in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.[25]

Kant, as we know, developed the arguments for the synthetic a priori principle of causality. The law of causality, however, applies only to the phenomenal world, meaning the world as far as it is knowable. Contrasted with causality in the phenomenal world, autonomy and freedom come to be the uncaused cause in the noumenal world, the world of things in themselves, including the moral agency of the person. We belong to both the world of sense, and thus follow the laws of nature, and to the world of understanding, and thus are autonomous and free. And because we are autonomous and free, we can act morally. To Kant,

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24 Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's* Phenomenology of Spirit, tran. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1987), 492 (first published 1946).

25 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tran. and ed. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmerman (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

acting morally means to follow specific prescriptions. For him, to be morally good, it is not enough for an act to "*conform* with the moral law, but it must also be done *for its sake*."[26] Kant distinguishes motives that can be represented completely by reason alone a priori, and thus count as *moral*, from merely *empirical* motives that follow the person's preferences and express her interests in pursuing her own ends, such as happiness.

Kant's project was an attempt to construct a supreme principle of morality. This principle, the *categorical imperative,* is unlike hypothetical imperatives, which state what one ought to do if desiring a specific end. Categorical imperatives, instead, provide the *form* of every moral act. This is so because, for Kant

> an action from duty has its moral worth *not in the purpose* that
> is to be attained by it, but in the maxim according to which it
> is resolved upon, and thus it does not depend on the actuality
> of the object of the action, but merely on the *principle of willing*
> according to which . . . the action is done.[27]

Kant arrives, in his explorations into the metaphysics of morals, at a single categorical imperative: "*Act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law*."[28] After Kant develops the notion of human beings as ends in themselves and not merely as means, the categorical imperative took the formula, "So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means."[29] Kant also developed the notion of autonomy such that every rational being is viewed as "a will universally legislating through all its maxims."[30] I will not go into detail to explicate a critique or defense of Kant's moral theory; I will just follow through on what Hegel had to say while developing his

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26   Kant, *Groundwork*, 6.

27   Kant, *Groundwork*, 15.

28   Kant, *Groundwork*, 34.

29   Kant, *Groundwork*, 41.

30   Kant, *Groundwork*, 44.

own position regarding a moral worldview.

In what follows, I present three dialectical movements Hegel presented in "Conscience. The 'beautiful soul,' evil and its forgiveness," starting with (a) exposing the antinomies of Kant's moral theory to explicate the moral view of conscience. Then I will move to (b) the doubts experienced by the self from conscience and by recognizing others, and then the abolition of doubt through recognition in language. Finally, I will explicate (c) conscience in action through presenting contradictions and hypocrisy, unmasking the hypocrisy, and attaining reconciliation through forgiveness.

Kant's antinomies, and conscience

Hegel starts by calling out the contradictions in Kant's moral theory as it becomes a worldview.[31] It seems antimonial, Hegel asserts, to think of a moral consciousness that is free and yet not be able to think of that being in itself. It is also contradictory to assume duty lying beyond the self and yet expecting the self to be moral. To Hegel, attributing moral validity to the non-moral consciousness and moral responsibility to the will of a contingent knower both seem inconsistent with truth. Instead, at this stage of development of a moral worldview, conscience rejected these ideas, reabsorbed the outside transcendent into itself, and took itself as a valid moral being. Conscience takes reality as truth and its immediate particular existence as an actual, and at the same time pure, duty.

Before moving to explicate the essence of conscience, Hegel reminds us of the two previous stages of development of the moral worldview. First, there is the *legal person* who exists merely through being, acknowledged by others as being right. Second, there is the *free self* that is the product of culture. Moral self-consciousness oscillates between the two. And then conscience appears as a self-assured immediacy and authentic existence. Here, self-consciousness attains its truth and supersedes the division between the in-itself (for Kant, noumena) and the self. It transcends the

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31 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tran. A. V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977), 632–8.

breach between pure ends and nature. In this unity, consciousness does not rely on arbitrary standards for its decision. It is, rather, immediately moral as it acts.

A moral action is an objective reality for consciousness as a knowing and acting consciousness. Consciousness knows it as such inwardly and immediately in a concrete manner. When acting, consciousness does not dissect the case and examine the circumstances as a diversity of duties. If it examines the multiplicity of duties, then it will either not act in order to avoid violating some duties, or it will act and thus violate at least a few. Instead,

> in the simple moral action of conscience, duties are lumped together in such a way that all these single entities are straight-way *demolished*, and the sifting of them in the steadfast certainty of conscience to ascertain what our duty is, simply does not take place.[32]

Conscience renounces the thoughts of duty and reality as contradictory. Here is the paradox that is transcended by conscience: the person acts morally when she is aware of performing pure duty and nothing but pure duty. However, because pure duty is a mere abstraction of thought, and thus nothingness, the person only acts morally when she does not act at all. When the person acts, she is aware of a social body (an "other"), of the reality that exists already, and of the realities she desires to produce. She also has specific purposes and is fulfilling a specific, rather than universal and pure, duty. In acting, conscience brings unity out of this apparent contradiction. And here, the contradiction of pure duty and particular act is resolved.

Doubts, then recognition through language

Hegel pushes the dialectical movement forward to bring out the doubt endured by the conscience regarding whether other consciences truly en-

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32 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 386.

dorse her determination.[33] First, conscience must consider the different duties that come in concrete cases, although no one has authority for them. Conscience itself determines what would override this, and in this process, its own inclinations and impulses play a role. Here, conscience relies on self-certainty as the pure immediate truth in which it is immediately certain of itself. The content here counts as a duty and as a moral essentiality. However, once the duty is fulfilled as specific, and thus attains a specific content, it becomes removed from the knowing of the acting conscience and the identity with it.

As it attains being, the action becomes a specific action and loses the element of self-consciousness, and it may not be acknowledged by the other as duty. Here, conscience oscillates again between its self-certainty and self-doubt derived from the reaction of others. It is true that the conscientious person trusts in her own integrity since she knows it immediately. As an other, and being free of the specificity of duty, just like everyone else, she cannot tell if others are being morally good or bad when they act. To protect herself, she comes to believe others are but the products of morally bad consciousness. Thus, for others,

> What conscience place before them, they themselves know how to "displace" or dissemble; it is something expressing only the self of another, not their own self: not only do they know themselves to be free from it, but they must dispose of it in their own consciousness, nullify it by judging and explaining it in order to preserve their own self.[34]

Thus, to others, when it is no longer recognized as duty, acts are viewed, just like any ordinary reality, as an expression of personal preference and the fulfillment of the person's desires and pleasure. It is only a moral act when it is known as the self-expression of conscientious individuality. This being known as such is what is acknowledged by others. What is acknowledged is only the person's expressed self-consciousness in utter-

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33 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 643–4, 648–58.

34 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 395.

ance and not the effect of the action. It is in language that social objectivity, or what Hegel calls "Spirit," exists. In language, self-consciousness exists for an other and is immediately present and universal. Through language, Ego recognizes the ego status of another person, "which as pure 'I'='I' becomes objective to itself" and the two transcend their separate individuality through recognizing one another.[35]

With conscience, the content of the language is "the self that knows itself as essential being. This alone is what is declared, and this declaration is the true actuality of the act, and the validating of the action."[36] Conscience announces its conviction of duty, and with that announcement, the action is duty. The action counts as duty only when the conviction is declared as such. What matters is only that others are assured that conscience is assured of doing duty. Here, to question a man whether his act is duty is a meaningless demand because

> the self's immediate knowing that is certain of itself is law and
> duty. Its intention, through being its own intention, is what is
> right; all that is required is that it should know this, and should
> state its conviction that its knowing and willing are right.[37]

If a person asserts that she is acting conscientiously, then she is.

Acting conscience, hypocrisy, and reconciliation

Hegel considers conscience in a specific act. Here, he points to two antitheses: first is the one between the doer's individuality and the universal, and the second is between the individuality of the doer and the individuality of another consciousness. The first antithesis, between the individuality of the doer and the universal,[38] comes from the fact that pure duty is a universal, while the specific individuality is exempt from

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35   Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 395.

36   Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 396.

37   Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 397.

38   The separation here is between the sense of self of the individual and the doctrine or rule-set or fixed method (conversation with Phil Carspecken).

the universal. It is consciousness of the actor that provides this empty duty with specific content. She gets the content from herself as a particular self, specifically from its natural individuality. With this individual consciousness, in the purpose of the action, she is aware of her particular self. Thus, there appears to this consciousness the antithesis of duty as a universality and its reflection out of universality into this particular self.

In addition to this antithesis taking place in the inner being of conscience between the particular and the universal, there is also an external antithesis that exists between the particular individuality and another individual. There is a disparity between what the person is in himself and what is first expressed for an other. Consciousness holds firmly to duty and declares its action to conform with duty; however, because of the disparity between the universal and the inner being of the particular individuality, and as consciousness merely declares its action to conform with itself at the same time as being duty, it is judged from the position of universal consciousness to be hypocrisy.

The acting conscience is hypocrisy and, thus, a bad conscience;[39] as a result, this hypocrisy must be unmasked. Resolving this disparity is not a *fait accompli*, because hypocrisy, Hegel explains, "demonstrates its respect for duty and virtue just by making a show of them, and using them as a mask to hide itself from its own consciousness, no less than from others."[40] Yet, acknowledging hypocrisy by the self does not in and of itself imply a correspondence or identity between the self as known and the self in itself, or one can say between the me and the I. This hypocrisy

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39 Hegel uses words like "evil," "wicked," "base," "vile," and similar terms denoting extreme moral statuses. I chose to replace these words with less strong ones to maintain a voice the modern reader can relate to. The religious connotation in many of these words is clear. Also, there is clear reference to limit cases of being unable to access a good act or the desire to do harm to others in clear contrast with the state of being recognized as universally right. It may not be far from what Hegel is alluding to thinking of the existential conditions of our human agency as pushing away the possibility of being extremely bad and striving for, yet not attaining, the status of being absolutely moral.

40 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 401.

uses what is its essence only as a mere being for another and implies its disregard and contempt for that essence, exposing to others only its lack of any meaningful or substantial being. This is the essence of hypocrisy, that is, to let itself be used only as a show and as an external instrument while lacking any importance in its own self.

The identity and correspondence between the self as known and the self in itself do not occur from the one-sided unrecognized persistence of the bad consciousness or from being judged by the universal consciousness, the other. They do not occur even through having the doer assert a bad attitude and announce her acceptance of being bad and in antithesis of the universal duty if this assertion does not yet correspond with what the other knows or acknowledges of her. She confesses that she is wrong because the hypocrisy would be abolished as she unmasks herself for the other. In her confession, she would admit to being bad by making clear that she is acting in opposition to her acknowledged universal, and she is truly acting in accordance with her own conscience's inner law. This inner law of conscience is only the law of the single individuality and caprice, and that is what makes it peculiar to the acting person and specifically to her internally as opposed to being a universally acknowledged law. When someone acts based on her own law as opposed to others' laws, she is saying she considers her law the right one and theirs the wrong one. But because the universal is only an element of the existence of actual conscience, the actual conscience does not continue to oppose this universal in its willing and knowing; on the contrary, language announces the action to be an acknowledged duty.

The judgment and unmasking do not abolish hypocrisy, either. When the other consciousness denounces the hypocrisy of the acting conscience as bad and doing wrong, she is following her own law in this judgment, just like the judged bad conscience was appealing to her own law. The law referred to by the judging consciousness comes in direct opposition to the law the judged consciousness was following when she acted; thus, it is only another particular law and has no superiority over the first. As Hegel puts it,

It passes off such judging, not as another manner of being wicked, but as the correct consciousness of the action, setting itself up in this unreality and conceit of knowing well and better above the deeds it discredits, and wanting its words without deed to be taken for a superior kind of *reality*.[41]

On the contrary, as a particular law itself, it stands on the same footing with the law of the acting consciousness and gives it legitimacy. The judgment comes to show that the genuine and true duty that should be acknowledged as universal is not acknowledged. However, it does the very opposite because it only appeals to its particular law, and with that, she licenses the other and gives her the right to act in a way that appeals to her own law as well.

Hegel points to another aspect of this judgment and explores the position of the other consciousness. The judging consciousness is aware of the universal (i.e., what is common between the two as beings) in her relationship to the bad consciousness; however, since she does not behave as the actual doer did, she is not entangled in the contradiction between the universality and the individuality every actor is trapped in. The judging consciousness remains in the universality of abstract thoughts and behaves only like a consciousness that apprehends. Her first action is that of mere judgment. In this judgment, however, she places herself alongside the first acting consciousness, and through this similarity, she comes to view herself in the other consciousness. While the judging consciousness does not act and remains only in the passive attitude of apprehension, she is also in her own contradiction with herself as consciousness who determines for herself and as the absolute will of duty. It manages to stay pure because she does not act. Thus, it is hypocrisy, because she does not act, and instead, wants its judgment to be considered an actual deed; and instead of proving her moral correctness by acting, she does so by making judgments and uttering sentiments. The nature of the judging consciousness is the same as that of the doer—both make

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41   Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 405.

duty a matter of language and uttered words, the doer through having a selfish purpose for her actions, and the judge through not acting at all, although she recognizes that acting is essential in any duty because duty without an act is merely an uttered meaninglessness.

However, judging is not exclusively a negative abstract but can also be looked upon as a positive act of thought, with positive content. Looking at judgment as a positive act of the apprehending consciousness makes the identity with the judged acting consciousness clearer. Here, we have the first acting consciousness announcing its specific action to be a duty, while the judging consciousness denies this because duty is universal in its form and, as such, lacks any specific content, although any content can count as a duty. In a sense, any concrete action, with its many facets, contains a universal aspect that can be taken as a duty and also contains particular aspects that constitute the interests and the share of the acting individual. The consciousness that judges does not accept the universal aspect of the duty nor the position of the consciousness that acts, although she recognizes that the acting one knows this as her duty and that is truly the status and condition of her reality. The judging consciousness, instead, looks only at the action itself and explains it to be the result of the intentions of the actor that are based purely on selfish motives. The judging consciousness omits the fact that every action can be looked at from the viewpoint of its conformity to duty, just as it can be looked at from the viewpoint of its conformity with the particularity of the doer, that is, her motives and intentions.

The judging consciousness takes what she can see of the act, which is the outer existence, and interprets the inner aspect of the act to be only that. For example, if the action brings fame to the actor, the inner aspect is judged to be purely a desire for fame. If the action raises the status of the actor, its inner aspect is judged to be ambition. If the action brings to the doer happiness or joy, those two become what drives the doer. This judgment applies to every action since

> No action can escape such judgement, for duty for duty's sake,
> this pure purpose, is an unreality; it becomes a reality in the

deed of an individuality, and the action is thereby charged with the aspect of particularity. No man is a hero to his valet; not, however, because the man is not a hero, but because the valet—is a valet, whose dealings are with the man, not as a hero, but as one who eats, drinks, and wears clothes, in general, with his individual wants and fancies.[42]

No action can escape the judgment of the moral valet toward the agent, where the judging consciousness brings the universal aspects of the deed to oppose the personal aspect of the individuality.

The judging consciousness, as she judges, is truly the bad one. She divides the action into its universal aspect and its particular aspect—meaning into the sides that are in conformity with duty and the sides that are in conformity with the person's selfish motives—and she fixedly holds to the distinction between these two sides. She is even worse morally than her counterpart and rather hypocritical herself since she makes these judgments while presenting herself not as a bad person who is merely judging out of spite but as the correct consciousness who knows the action better and takes a position higher than the deed, claiming a reality to her judgment and a status to her words without deeds that are above the act of the doer. The acting consciousness, on the other hand, comes to perceive the judging consciousness as the same as herself and not as an alien consciousness that is disparate from her. She sees the other as acting in accord with her own disposition and nature and, thus, identical to herself. As she perceives this identity, she acknowledges it and confesses this realization (i.e., the identity) to the other, expecting equal recognition and confession. She does not make the confession out of a feeling of humiliation and does not throw herself away in relation to the other because of low regard for herself; her utterance of the confession about the perceived identity is not a unilateral act. Rather, she does so only because she realizes this identity with the other. As she makes the confession and gives utterance to this identity, she gives it an objective

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42   Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 404.

reality in language. When she confesses, she expects the other to contribute her part to this objective existence and utter a similar recognition of the common identity.

However, when the acting consciousness who sees herself as bad acknowledges this and makes the confession to the other by saying, "I am bad!" she does not receive what she expects. She does not get a similar, reciprocal confession from her identical other. The judging consciousness has something completely different in mind. In judging, she has a notion quite contrary to identity; rather, she repels the community of nature and rejects continuity with the other and, thus, actualizes the position of the hard heart.

And here, the situation completely reverses! As the confessing consciousness perceives the repulsion, she judges the other as wrong. For her, the other has refused to allow her inner self to come into an objective existence in language and has instead kept to herself while denying throwing herself away for the other person. At the same time, the hard heart observes in herself only the self-knowledge and, in the opposition to the other, holds only thought, without allowing herself to have continuity with the other who, as she made the confession, gave up her separateness and transcended her particularity, positing herself as a universal into a continuity with the other. The hard heart, however, keeps for and within herself her uncommunicative being and continues confronting the confessing consciousness with the same uncommunicative being despite the fact that the confessing one has thrown her uncommunicative being away. In so doing, the hard heart does not realize the contradiction and continues to produce the disparity, thus preventing the other from returning from the deed into an existence in language and into an identity in the communicative acknowledged continuity.

Now, the beautiful soul, the one that clings to an image of itself as self-certain without actualizing herself in a deed, has no objective existence because she does not have the capacity to give up her idealized knowledge of herself, nor can she have access to an image of her unity in or achieve a state of identity with the other. The identity of beautiful

soul, instead, only comes in a negative form, without recognition from the other and without continuity with the other. Hegel beautifully describes her, saying,

> The "beautiful soul," lacking an *actual* existence, entangled in the contradiction between its pure self and the necessity of that self to externalize itself and change itself into an actual existence, and dwelling in the *immediacy* of this firmly held antithesis—an immediacy which alone in the middle term reconciling the antithesis, which has been intensified to its pure abstraction, and is pure being or empty nothingness—this "beautiful soul," then, being conscious of this contradiction in its unreconciled immediacy, is disordered to the point of madness, wastes itself in yearning and pines away in consumption.[43]

She gives away her being-for-self as she confesses but gets nothing in return except the uncommunicative lack of acknowledgment of the unity of her mere being.

The true (i.e., the existent and the self-conscious) equalization of the two sides, the beautiful soul and the hard heart, is necessitated and contained in this surrender. The hard heart goes through the exact same movement the beautiful soul went through. The self in that act is only a moment of the whole, as is the knowledge on which the judgment is based that distinguishes and separates the universal and the individual aspects of the action. The bad consciousness, as it confesses, posits itself as it sees itself in the other, but when she does not receive the recognition, she surrenders "its one-sided, unacknowledged existence of its particular being-for-self," and so the other similarly surrenders her unrecognized judgment.[44]

The beautiful soul also gives up the thought that divides the two because she has already seen herself in the other. She has already super-

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43 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 406–7.

44 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 407.

seded her particular consciousness and displayed herself as a universal, and thus, she returns into herself from her actual external existences as a universal consciousness that recognizes herself. This forgiveness is not limited to the self but extends to the other, and in this forgiveness, the consciousness renounces her unreal essential being that she puts on the same level with the other in the action and acknowledges that the action, that which was characterized as bad, is truly good. It even gives up the subjectively determined judgment as the other also gives up her subjective characterization of the act. For Hegel, "The word of reconciliation is the objectively existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself qua absolutely self-contained and exclusive individuality—a reciprocal recognition which is Absolute Spirit."[45]

Second Reflection

Here, I will reconstruct a few of the main arguments presented in the section on Hegel with an eye to reconciliation and synthesis with Habermas's theory of communicative action. I will first reflect on Hegel's explication of the contradictions of Kant's moral theory. Then I will elaborate on the act of judging. I will end with some thoughts on language and its special place for Hegel.

Hegel writes his section on morality with reference to Kant's critical philosophy in general and moral theory specifically. He starts with the insight that the person acts with awareness of performing pure duty, but quickly discovers that such an action for duty alone is not possible. There is no duty for duty's sake. For Hegel, duty can only become real and actualized in a deed that is particular. Kant's idea that the person acts with accordance to universal law, Hegel described, led to a contradiction. Thinking of duty as a universal contradicting with individuality led to the impossibility for the person to be morally good if the person acts, or led to the person not acting at all. Solutions of the kind of projecting pure duty into a holy being or secularizing duty in the notion of the general will of the group left duty far beyond the individual. This externalization

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45   Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 408.

of duty made the person, before conviction, be recognized as moral only through an act of grace from an other (e.g., a transcendent god). Instead of these externalizations and contradictions, conscience comes to the scene of acts of conviction and is, thus, immediately moral.

Rather than contemplating acting for duty and going through calculations and reasoning, conscience simply acts out of her own conviction. With conviction, knowledge takes the form of an immediate knowing, feeling, and being—an immediacy that is internal to the self-certainty of the individual. Conviction unites individuality with universality in an actual act not by reasoning and thinking about duty but by being and acting with self-certainty. In conviction, there is no longer an actualization of consciousness that can be separate from duty nor one that considers duty and individuality as contradictory. Instead, the self feels and knows itself in her existence and actualizes duty in particular acts. Conviction is pure knowing, the person's own knowing. It is internal to the singular person who is the only one with privileged access to knowing and the experience. Conviction is not a state of existence prior to an action. Conviction is the form of being experienced as acting, the self-certain pure doing and pure knowing as if it contains an element of "mine." The individuality of consciousness that acts is taken up as part of the universality of self-certainty.

The universality of pure duty, for Hegel, should not be understood as some fixed rules or doctrines that prescribe what duty is nor as a method people can apply to judge their actions. It is true that this divide between the universal and the actual has been the characteristic of previous forms of being, which Hegel highlights in the phenomenology. For conscience, however, the universal is experienced in a different manner. The universal here is identical to self-knowledge and self-certainty. Knowledge is not about knowing something but is knowing in the form of being. The person announces that she is acting of conviction, and thus, she is conscientious when the other is ensured that she is ensured of her acting conscientiously. Her moral act is thus recognized as such by others.

When conscience acts with conviction, the self enters into existence as self. The self-assured self-consciousness exists as self-assured for others. The immediate action is not what is acknowledged. What the other acknowledges is not the determinate aspect of the action nor the action's intrinsic being. What the other acknowledges is the self-knowing self as self-knowing. The element that lasts in the action is that of the self through acknowledgment. The element of lasting being cannot be the effect, because the effect cannot endure as a lasting being the way the subject endures when recognized in action. The effect acquires no permanence. Only self-consciousness that is acknowledged obtains lasting existence.

Hegel examines two contradictions: one internally between the individuality and the universal, and one externally between the individuality of the person and other individual consciousnesses. The first contradiction is what convictions allow the person to transcend only to fall into the second if the self-certain self, assured of its conviction, is not acknowledged as such by another self-consciousness. The other self-consciousness, however, has the existential reason of preserving herself for not acknowledging the conviction of the other and for calling out her hypocrisy.

Let's look closely at judging. Because conviction is a state that is accessible only to the person herself while she is acting, after the act, the action attains an objective being on its own and separates from the person's conviction. The action thus becomes an object of appraisal to the person herself and to every other. As an action, it carries the contradiction between what the person does for duty and what she does for her own pleasure and interest. Here, we have two options: the person can either not act and thus preserve her purity, or act and thus fall into this contradiction. "Beautiful soul" clings to an image of herself that is pure. She does not act and, rather, progressively withdraws from acting into a contemplative mode. She becomes to herself, and herself alone, a divine worship and pure self-certainty. On the other hand, conscience acts and thus becomes bad conscience.

Now the action is put to appraisal. The contradictions between the multiple duties among which the person needs to choose, on the one side, and the person's desires and inclinations, on the other, come to be clear to herself and to any other person. The person raises a claim to acting of conviction and thus being moral. Yet, she knows that the content of the act is determined, at least to an extent, by the caprice of her individual existence and conditions. She realizes her hypocrisy. The other self-consciousness, having access and insight to her own inclinations, desires, and contradictions, knows that the other must be entangled in similar contradictions when she acts. Thus, to preserve herself, she judges the other as acting for mere empirical motives.

According to Hegel, the motive for judging is preserving one's own self. Alter judges Ego's action and explains it as coming from empirical motives rather than from moral motives and, thus, nullifies Ego's claim to unconditional valid moral action. With *this* judgment, Alter preserves herself. It is as if the moral action of the other is actually a threat to the self of the other. Here, we again see remnants of the master and slave dialectics, where the two self-consciousnesses fight to the death to attain the other's recognition, the giving of which to the other means the annihilation of the self. Hegel gives the reason why, at this stage of dialectics, it is still a threat to the person to acknowledge the moral reasoning of the other.

By asserting that her law is the right one and the other's the wrong one, she is preserving herself from the other judging her as wrong. The judging consciousness further protects her position by attacking the other's doing/knowing/being and exposing her contradiction as a sign of hypocrisy and lower moral status. She also allows the acting person no opportunity to judge her simply because she, as the judge, does not act but only utters judgments. Yet, the judging consciousness does not acknowledge that the same rules apply to her. The judging consciousness is on the same footing of hypocrisy as the one she is judging for two reasons. First, according to Hegel, at this stage of the dialectic, the judging consciousness wants her judgment to be considered at the same level

as the deed she judges, which is wrong; acting is not at the same level as talking about acting. Second, she judges the other based on her own laws, an act that only validates the acting person's right to act on her own law as well and thus cancels the grounds for judgment. Both of these points are denied by the judging consciousness, although they are clear to the one being judged.

Clearly, for Hegel, judgment is viewed dialectically first as a statement, not a deed, and then it comes to be considered as a deed in itself. At first appearance, the person who judges seems to not be acting. But that is only a moment in the dialectical movement. She soon realizes that her judgment is an act and has an effect on the other even though it takes place only in language. Her judgment is an act by virtue of its susceptibility to being judged. Here is how language appears to be the space that constitutes acting and judging. Language, notably, has a special place in Hegel's dialectic. Language is the existence of "Spirit," or what we can call the social objectivity (using Hyppolite's terms), culture, and self-moving collectivity. Language is the unfolding mind of society that is active and moves yet can be objectified.

In language, self-consciousness is present immediately, and at the same time, it is universal. Language expresses the self and yet is expressed by the self. Language preserves the self's universality and expresses its particularity. Everything in language is universal. We cannot come to the particular in language (as Hegel outlined very early in the phenomenology of sense-certainty), yet the subject does express her particularity in language. Here, in language, the self that separated from others comes to see itself in the other and finds in the other her equal, actualizing the "I"= "I." With this recognition, the self gains objectivity, as opposed to only universal existence as being. This objectivity preserves the particularity of the self while it comes to be a unity with the other person that is recognizing and as they come to form a we/us and realize their self-consciousness. Self-consciousness preserves itself and is preserved by others in language. This perceiving of the self by the other is self-existence and becoming a self.

We see language and recognition repetitively come with conscience. First, conscience announces that she is acting from conviction. This announcement and the recognition of her announcement are what makes her act morally. Second, conscience becomes aware of her hypocrisy and confesses. Recognizing that confession would allow the self to form a unity while maintaining individuality. Both the announcement and the confession are made in language. Judging the self as acting for personal desires and inclinations (rather than being moral) and refusing to acknowledge the confession also take place in language.

Here, at this stage of the dialectic, we see in language that the master–slave dialectic relation structure (i.e., the fight between two self-consciousnesses risking their lives to attain the other's recognition) is potentially resolved in recognition or continued in a new medium without annihilating the opponents when denying recognition. Language is the medium for recognition and for denying recognition. Language is, therefore, the existence of the spirit, the group, the we/us, the coalesced self-consciousnesses that preserves the self of the individual. Thus, language resolves contradictions between persons. For Hegel, our actions claim the validity of our essence as universality. Actions resolve in language the existential contradictions of pre-linguistics. When we speak, our individuality determines what we say. What we say also speaks of our individuality and who we are. What we say and who we are have meaning only when acknowledged by possible hearers. And this is how the spoken "I" gains a universal existence while maintaining a link to the individual "I." This is also how pure duty, the universal that here also takes the form of the experience of one's true being and knowing, becomes actualized with acknowledged speech.

Final Reflection

Habermas distinguished between communicative actions, oriented toward understanding, and strategic actions, oriented toward consequences. The aim of this paper has been to explore some of the themes presented by Hegel's explication of morality in order to add to the conversation

on this distinction and to elaborate on related concepts. Hegel employed what can be viewed as parallel distinctions when exploring actions and judgments. There is also elaboration on self-certainty and intersubjective recognition; both concepts are salient for Habermas. Language as a medium of asserting oneself and as the medium for recognition are notions that are present for both. Bringing in Hegel enriches the conversation around the existential aspects of acting, knowing, and being.

To put it simply, for both Habermas and Hegel, it takes two consciousness for any social action; that is, for knowing things in the world, acting normatively, and expressing oneself authentically—or in other words, for an act of conviction that brings together knowing and being. For Habermas, a single consciousness cannot bring about resolutions: one person cannot *by herself* come to know, cannot act normatively, cannot express an authentic self. It is the same thing for Hegel, who shows that it takes two self-consciousnesses to resolve the paradoxes of our existence. The other self-consciousness is a necessary condition, yet, as we found, it is not sufficient by itself. It also takes the language being employed by the two *communicatively*. The ideal situation is where Alter and Ego are confronting one another as hearer and speaker of a language they understand. They conscientiously act with conviction; they communicatively act, which means they actualize their particularity and the universal. They assert their knowing and doing to one another; in other words, they raise criticizable universalized validity claims to truth, rightness, and truthfulness that are vindicated for one another. The other is ensured that they are self-certain, or essentially, they comprehend the act, accept the validity claims, and take it that the acting person is credible to vindicate these claims discursively when necessary. When errors occur or irrationality ensues, they are confessed, and the other acknowledges the confession to allow a unity to form again.

Many of the Hegelian notions can be relevant for enriching those of Habermas. The concept of conviction is not unrelated to the notion of raising universal validity claims in illocutionary acts that are binding and bonding. The subject acts with conviction if she actualizes her self-certain-

ty in the act. She knows as she acts. She raises claims to a rightness that is universal. She announces her self-certainty of her authentic and truthful self and asserts that her knowing is true universally, as far as she knows. Acknowledging this conviction of an other is not a mere passive use of words. Acknowledging a conviction can also be viewed as a parallel act of conviction. This can be translated to Habermas's language by referring to an agreement that is reached by achieving mutual understanding and accepting the validity conditions of the act's truth, truthfulness, and rightness. When Alter is moved by reason to link up her commitments to those of Ego, the rationally motivated agreement between the two comes to be binding and bonding to both. Alter makes judgments and take positions. Her position has consequences for her acts and her whole being. That is also why, according to Hegel, Alter could come to perceive Ego's communicative act as a threat at first and, thus, attempts to explain it away. I will elaborate this point after explicating the notion of judgment.

Alter's judgments, looked at from the perspective of the participants, are also acts. Let's take first three speech acts and their corresponding affirmative responses from a hearer. A speaker makes a request with, "You are requested to stop smoking," and a hearer, judging the request as normatively authorized, responds, "Yes, I shall comply." A speaker makes a confession with, "I confess to you that I find your action loathsome," and a hearer, judging the confession as truthful, responds, "Yes, I believe you do." A speaker makes a prediction with, "I can predict that the vacation will be spoiled by rain," and a hearer acknowledges its truth by saying, "Yes, we'll have to take that into account." The announced judgments, the acknowledgment of the normative rightness of the first claim, truthfulness of the second, and truth of the third, become speech acts themselves. Similarly, a negative judgment is also an act. Let's now take the hearer's negative responses to the request "Please bring me a glass of water," criticizing its normative rightness with, "No, you cannot treat me like one of your employees," or its truthfulness with, "No, you only want to put me in a bad light in front of other participants," or its truth with, "No, the next water tap is so far away that I could not get back

before the end of the session." In her announced judgments, the hearer is also performing an act. Judging is acting. Any judgment can be raised with a claim that can be thematized as "I hereby judge your act/utterance as truthful/untruthful, right/not right, true/untrue." This judgment, as an action, can itself be judged by a hearer as adequate or inadequate, sincere or insincere, and its truth grounds as true or untrue.[46]

Hegel, however, did not always see judging at the same level as acting. He criticized the judging consciousness for wanting her judgment to be considered at the same level as the deed, thus being hypocritical, implying that judging is a mere utterance of words and not a true action. He, however, quickly comes to assert that because the acting consciousness heard the judgment of the judging consciousness, she treated her as an equal, implying that a person who acts and a person who judges do similar things and, thus, stand on equal footing. He also raises claims to the equality of the two sides by announcing that the essence of acting morally and the essence of judging are nothing but asserting the conviction and the judgment, respectively, via words. Further clarification might be called for to find out if reconciling the two positions is possible. I will not dive into how, from the perspective of consciousness as an object-knower and then as actor, judging can be thought of as a moment in a dialectical movement, thus taking on different meanings at different stages. This is true and relevant to the multiple positions of knowing, but I would like here to invite Habermas's distinction between the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary effect to shed some light on this matter. Inviting Habermas's speech act explications allows us to move back to the distinction between communicative action and strategic action, to which we will bring some Hegelian insights.

It is well known by now that Habermas distinguished between the content of the speech act (locution), the mode of the speech act (illocution), and the speech act effect (perlocution). Austin's catchphrase "to say something (locution–p, or that p), to act in saying something (illocution–Mp), and to bring about something through acting in saying something

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46   The examples are from Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, 296, 306.

(perlocution)" is still relevant. In his more recent work, Habermas further clarified the concepts of perlocutionary effects and distinguished three types: effect$_1$ results grammatically from the content of a successful illocutionary act (e.g., executed command, kept promise, realized declared intention, etc.); effect$_2$ is grammatically nonregulated and only contingently appears as a consequence of the speech act, yet it occurs only as the result of the illocutionary success (e.g., a piece of news frightening a hearer, resistance encountered after an announcement, etc.); effect$_3$ can only be achieved in an inconspicuous manner when it comes to the hearer and from whom its success remains latent (e.g., an unannounced yet intended promotion achieved for an agent as a result of her persuading a customer to buy a product, etc.). This distinction is relevant to Habermas as he defines communicative action as that in which interlocutors pursue their illocutionary actions without reservations. It is also relevant to distinguishing strategic actions in which language use acquires the pattern of perlocution, meaning that it follows the actors' unilateral orientation to consequences. Strategic actions, however, are only possible if actors feed parasitically on a common linguistic competency learned in the context of communicative actions.

This brings us again to the issue of acting and judging. When Ego acts, she asserts that she is acting with conviction. An Alter Ego can take the participant position, and with a performative attitude, acknowledge the assertion and accept the moral act as right and normatively authorized. When she does that, she also acknowledges the person as being authentic, truthful, and self-certain. She can also maintain the same performative attitude and judge the act as wrong or coming from personal motives. Such negative judgment can then be offered to Ego, who can accept it, and thus reflect on her authenticity and truthfulness; adapt her normative commitments, acknowledge the contradiction, and amend it; or deny the judgment and give reasons to support her claim for the moral rightness and truthfulness of her act. Ego is also entitled to take a critical attitude regarding Alter's judgment. Ego can question the validity of the judgment, a critique that Alter then comes to defend her

(judging) position against. As mentioned above, because the act is that of conviction, Ego and Alter both know that when they acknowledge as valid the acceptability conditions of the other's act, they are both obliged to accept the offered claim as true, right, and truthful and oblige its consequences. This obligation demands of them both to sometimes change commitments and modify convictions and, thus, leave the position of self-certainty and potentially change as a subject. With an orientation toward understanding, the discourse continues until the two succeed in arriving at mutual understanding and agreement.

However, Alter Ego, rather than taking the performative attitude of a second person, could take the perspective of the third person and strategically judge the act. Alter comes with the end in mind of preserving herself. She knows that acknowledging the normative rightness of the other's act demands she question and change her own commitments. Recognizing the truth claim of the other's demands means changing her epistemic position. Recognizing the truthfulness of the other puts in question Alter Ego's own truthfulness and sincerity simply as a mere other finite being. Thus, instead of having a dialogue with an orientation to understanding, she comes with an orientation to success (i.e., achieving her ends of preserving herself). She explains the moral act of Ego as coming from empirical motives. She judges Ego as inauthentic and her acts as morally wrong. She denies Ego the acknowledgment of her asserted authenticity by playing the role of the valet toward the moral agent. No direct mutual understanding or agreement can be achieved with this attitude of preserving oneself even at the cost of injuring the other. To avoid such judgment that questions her convictions as a self, meaning her commitment to truth, rightness, and authenticity, Ego can simply resort to not acting, because anytime she acts, she is vulnerable to similar judgment from every other. The only time she is not judged is when she does not act. Or Ego can choose to act. When acting, Ego can quickly realize that Alter is also hypocritical for playing the role of the judge, which was only normatively authorized in a communicative action framework. This is so because, in a communicative rationality framework, which is

the grounds for judging, the judge is demanded to surrender her critique to similar vindication. Holding a stiff-necked position takes the license for judging out of the hands of the judge. Ego can choose to call out Alter's hypocrisy and invite her to return to the communicative action grounds. It could happen, however, that Ego stays oblivious to Alter's act, and Alter herself may not know that she is acting from spite. Alter's motives could remain concealed from the other and even from herself. Here, learning from Hegel, Ego still has the option of acting communicatively and forgiving the other.

Instead of continuing to act communicatively, Ego can also move to a strategic framework of action. In actuality, in every empirical act, there is a degree of this and a degree of that. There are also degrees of Ego or Alter being in the dark about what the other or the self is doing. This being in the dark, whether taking the form of being a victim of the other's latent strategic act or simply being unaware of one's own motives, is also part of the condition of our existence. We will never know for certain if a specific act was communicative or strategic. Humans develop the intuitive competency to act communicatively. They also develop the competency to call out hypocrisy, both in themselves and in an other when they are treated strategically. Just as they have the competency to seek being unconditionally moral, they also have the competency for what Hegel calls being "evil." But whether acting or judging, the person always does that with and to an other.

For Habermas, we come to know how to form subject–object relations and subject–subject relations through internalizing the "no" that others raise to our speech acts. This does not mean only the "no" we receive as a consequence of our empirical acts in an external world. Yes, there is that, which is how we learn to form relationships in the objective world, raising and testing truth claims. This is also how we understand simple imperatives. More importantly, it is, rather, the normative "no" that we learn to take in as we interact with social others and learn to take the position of a generalized other. Internalizing the position of an other who says no to our claims is what makes possible not only anticipating the re-

action of another person in a social interaction but also reflecting on our own commitments in internal dialogue-like reflections with this internalized other. Hegel presents us with something similar in the dialectic of moral conscience. When the subject acts with conviction, she is enacting the universal in her particular act. She is only moral when her conviction is recognized by an other. Furthermore, in dialogue with an other, she calls out the hypocrisy in her own act and comes to criticize the critique by calling out the other's hypocrisy. Even later, when the confession is not acknowledged, she attains a unity with the other indirectly through forgiveness. This movement, however, is not merely an existential relationship between subjects. Acting, judging, and recognizing can only be attained in the medium of language.

Language has a special place for both Hegel and Habermas. It is the existence of Spirit and the objectivity of self-consciousnesses. We cannot exist outside language, although we are not simply determined by language. We are shaped by language, and we shape language. Language comes to provide resolutions to the existential intrapersonal conflicts by taking the conflict outside the mere subject, not to project it into a transcendent but to leave it between self-consciousnesses as they oscillate between the dependent and acknowledging roles. Language also comes to provide resolution of existentially contradictory interpersonal relational structures of a kind similar to the master–slave struggle. Here and there, however, while language does not resolve the existential divide once and for all, it provides ways out. It is for the person to genuinely take up the path provided by language and participate in its original form, that is communicatively, or choose to use language only as another tool for the person's own ends, only to fall back into the many antinomies within the self and with others.

But even those who use language strategically cannot exist outside language. Language resists its use as a mere tool. The hypocrisy, using the communicative structure of language for latent interest, is called out and unmasked in language. Unmasking this hypocrisy is not a matter of calling the person "wicked" or "evil," but is an act of forgiveness that

brings a unity for the self and the other. This forgiveness and the love that is attained thereafter, however, are only accessible to those who act, those who fall in hypocrisy.

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Acknowledgment

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Berlin Journal of Critical Theory (BJCT) is a peer-reviewed journal which is published in both electronic and print formats by Xenomoi Verlag in Berlin. The goal is to focus on the critical theory of the first generation of the Frankfurt School and to extend their theories to our age. Unfortunately, it seems that most of the concerns and theories of the first generation of the Frankfurt School are neglected in its second and third generations.

We believe that the theories of the first generation of the Frankfurt School are still capable of explaining many social, cultural, and political problems of our time. However, in some cases, we need to revise those theories. For example, the culture industry in our time can also work with a different mechanism from that described by Adorno and Horkheimer. In our age, the majorities can access the media and even respond to the messages which they receive – this is something which was not possible in Adorno and Horkheimer's time. But this doesn't mean that the culture industry's domination is over. Thus, we may need to revise the theory of the culture industry to explain the new forms of cultural domination in our age.

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