“The Social Imaginary in the Context of Social Discontents: A Conceptual Model of the Social Imaginary, and its Application to the Amelioration of Civilizational Crises.”

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Abstract

This thesis is premised on the idea that the manifold social discontents – including eco-climate collapse, the violent subjugation of non-human animals, and racial and gendered oppression – are all expressions of the current social imaginary. The concept of the social imaginary has the potential to help us understand the common pathology of these egregious social ills, and how the imaginary might be transformed. Although the field of social imaginaries has emerged in its own right over the last few years, there is as yet no conceptualisation of the social imaginary as a whole. I suggest that such an overarching model will be necessary if it is to be of ameliorative value to social ills.

This thesis, therefore, seeks to present a model of social imaginaries that explains both their constitutive elements and their dynamics. It argues that each social imaginary possesses a unique character in virtue of which it coheres as a whole. The most important contributions of this thesis are:

- Positing the 'keystone concept', that is the ontological principle at the heart of each specific social imaginary in virtue of which that imaginary coheres and derives its unique character.
- Accounting for the twin dynamics of the social imaginary: the synthetic imagination that explains its reproduction; and the radical imagination that disrupts the synthetic imagination and creates opportunities for critical reflection and creative responses.
- Emphasising the responsibility of denizens in creating the imaginary world in which we live, and pointing to the ways in which this is most effectively done.
- Identifying the keystone concept of the current imaginary as *entitlement*; and suggesting that the most significant leverage point for the amelioration of social ills is veganism, because it directly rejects the most complete and salient expression of entitlement: taking the lives of others.

For my father, who I miss, and who I'm sorry is not here to see the completed work.

"It matters what worlds world worlds." ~ Donna Haraway[1]

"The central social imaginary of our times...shapes our regime, its orientation, values, what is worth living and dying for, the *thrust* of society, even its affects, and the individuals who will make all that exist concretely." ~ Cornelius Castoriadis[2]

[1] (2016, 35)

[2] (2007, 137)

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INTRODUCTION: THE SOCIAL IMAGINARY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

"We live in a time of capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings."
~Ursula K Le Guin[3]

"To imagine other forms of human existence is exactly the challenge that is posed by the climate crisis: for if there is any one thing that global warming has made perfectly clear it is that to think about the world only as it is amounts to a formula for suicide. We need, rather to envision what it might be." ~ Amitav Ghosh[4]

We are living through a time of multiple crises: the collapse of ecosystems; the colonisation of humanity over the Earth; violent and structural oppression of women and non-whites; the holocaust of over 70 billion land animals each year; global malnutrition of the over and underfed; the health of humans held hostage by pharmaceutical and animal agriculture industries; the threat of immanent climate tipping points; the headlong dash to civilizational collapse; the pushing of the least culpable over the precipice first.

Are these myriad discontents merely coincidental glitches of an otherwise functional system? Or rather, are they are all symptoms of an underlying pathology of contemporary society? This thesis takes seriously the idea that the overwhelming majority of social discontents are not glitches, but *systemic* features of the contemporary Western 'social imaginary' - the complex of meanings that supervene on the phenomena of everyday life of a given society, and provide denizens of a given social imaginary with the means to participate fully in the life of that imaginary with one another. Whether these discontents are malaises unto themselves or *symptoms* of a common malady matters, because the implications for remedial action are enormous.

In my view the concept of the social imaginary can offer us invaluable insights into the task of redressing the manifold and urgent discontents that society faces. I do not seek to claim that the social imaginary is the only concept that can provide useful insights, or that the social imaginary is better than cognate concepts (such as social paradigm, culture, background, doxa, common sense, and lifeworld). Indeed, I take it that 'social paradigm' as used by Meadows (2008) and Pirages (1990), for example, and Geertz's conception of culture (1973) are virtually

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[3] (2014)

[4] (2016, 128)

synonymous with 'social imaginary'. However, there are several reasons that commend the social imaginary as a worthy conceptual framework for the current project.

In this introductory chapter, I turn first to explaining the three reasons that recommend the concept of the social imaginary for the present project. These are: that it is expressly ameliorative; that its links to the imagination help explain its dynamics; and that to date an overarching model of social imaginaries does not exist. I then discuss the two aims of the thesis: 1) the presentation of a model of social imaginaries as a whole that has 2) ameliorative application to actually existing discontents. I then introduce the two key themes of this work: responsibility and coherence. I then briefly consider what is meant by 'the current social imaginary' and the status quo, before moving on to an outline of the seven chapters that follow.

THE RATIONALE BEHIND CHOOSING A SOCIAL IMAGINARIES FRAMEWORK

Firstly, the concept of social imaginaries, since its earliest development by Cornelius Castoriadis, has been explicitly ameliorative in outlook. Castoriadis was above all motivated by the socialist, democratic "revolutionary project" (1987, 75) of creating autonomous societies. This is what he calls praxis: its object is "the organisation and orientation of society as they foster the autonomy of all its members and which recognises that this presupposes a radical transformation of society" (1987, 77). But it must be stressed that the autonomy that he has in mind is not the individualistic freedom of liberal capitalist democracies, most commonly expressed as (consumer) "choice". Instead, autonomy can "only be conceived of as a social problem and a social relation" in which "others are always present as the otherness and as the self-ness of the subject" (1987, 108). Autonomy cannot be desired "without also wanting it for everyone and its realization cannot be conceived of in its full scope except as a collective enterprise" (1987, 107). The opposite of autonomy is alienation.

The way I read Castoriadis' intention here is as follows: autonomy is that which aims at meaningful participation in the co-creation of social meaning, and all the ensuing structures, institutions and trajectories. Alienation is not just alienation from the means of production, apparatus of justice, or distributional equity. Although these mechanisms of alienation are all present and ubiquitous in instituting and reproducing social oppression, there is yet another more fundamental level of alienation. This is *alienation from the co-creation of social meaning*. As such, the ultimate form of alienation for Castoriadis lies in heteronomous social systems: where the locus of power and therefore social control is removed from citizenry at large and concentrated *elsewhere*. Castoriadis believed that there have only been two genuinely autonomous societies in history. The ancient Greek polis, and modern liberal democracy. Both of these should be queried: the ancient Greek polis conferred autonomy onto white men:

alienation from collective decision-making was very much the norm for most people[5]. Liberal democracy has certain structural apparatus necessary for autonomy: political inclusivity; critical education; free media. But of course, just how inclusive, how critical and free these institutions are and whether they are sufficient to outweigh its heteronomous apparatus (corporate lobbying; political donations; private/corporate press; loss of public sphere; advertising and so on) is questionable.

The freedom at the heart of autonomy is, I suggest, the freedom either to accept or – conversely – to resist and recreate the character of one's social imaginary. However, this kind of autonomy rests, first and foremost, on recognising *the fact* of the social imaginary. In contemporary parlance, we talk of "the system" existing as if it were an immutable, autonomous and natural fact. Discontents are "just the way things are". Castoriadis observes that heteronomy is to be "ruled by an imaginary, lived as more real than the real...precisely because it is *not known as such*." (1987, 103, emphasis added), suggesting that forgetting our fictions is perhaps a trick of our imaginary lives. The first step in realising autonomy, of ameliorating discontents, then, is to recognise the social imaginary *as such*.

This project is ameliorative in the Castoriadian sense in that it hopes 1) to be able to present the social imaginary *as such* as a widely graspable concept, 2) to shed light on the character of the contemporary imaginary, and 3) to suggest the most efficacious means of transforming the imaginary, as a way of addressing the most pressing social discontents. These aims are also consonant with the stipulated goals of the field of social imaginaries as has emerged in the last few years. Adams et al claim that "social imaginaries as a paradigm-in-the-making offers valuable means by which movements towards social change can be elucidated as well providing an open horizon for the critiques of existing social practices" (2015, 15). As a paradigm-in-the-making, the field of social imaginaries is heterogeneous (Adams et al, 2015, 18), but I share Smith and Adams view that all such attempts to sketch out "perspectives on social imaginaries help us reinterpret and transform socio-political worlds" (2019, xxxii).

The second significant facet of the concept of social imaginaries is that it is inextricably connected to the imagination. As such, it has the capacity to explain both the dynamics of the reproduction of the given imaginary (the social status quo) and the dynamics of resistance and transformation. To my knowledge, there is no other concept cognate with social imaginaries that offers the same explanatory power.[6] Ricoeur's notion of ideology

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[5] See for example Beard, "As far back as we can see in Western history there is a radical separation – real, cultural, and imaginary – between women and power." (2017, 70)

[6] One recent possible exception is the connection between imagination and 'common sense' that John Krummel has drawn out (2019, 45 ff). However, Krummel (like most social imaginaries thinkers) focuses almost exclusively on the creative faculty of the imagination, whereas I will be showing that it is the reproductive faculty of the imagination that accounts for the existence of the social imaginary.

and utopia, for example, are posited as modes of the social imaginary, ultimately explained by the imagination (e.g. 1991a). Similarly, Geertz turns to Susan Langer to explain cultural reproduction via the imagination.[7]

Despite this intrinsic advantage of the concept of social imaginaries, in my view the precise relationship of social imaginaries to the imagination has not been adequately theorised to date. It has been observed (see e.g. Kearney, 1998) that the imagination was formerly treated either with suspicion – as a devilish faculty intended to deceive the subject, or with derision – images are poor substitutes for reality, "analogons" (Sartre, 1964), or whispers of memory (e.g. Hume, 2000). Kant "was a watershed figure" (Adams and Smith, 2019, xxiv) in the development of our understanding of the imagination – and was the first to recognise just how fundamental the imagination is to human understanding. Since Kant there has been broad agreement that imagination is either 'reproductive' or 'productive' (i.e. creative): either it just reproduces 'images' (broadly construed, and by no means limited to the eidetic) as representations of experience, or it creates *new* images or forms. In this dichotomy, the latter has won the attention of social imaginary theorists, starting with Castoriadis who was dismissive of the reproductive or 'secondary' imagination, as he put it.

In Castoriadis' case, we can understand this as a casualty of his overriding preoccupation with the radical imagination – the capacity to create new forms *ex nihilo*. In turn, we can understand this preoccupation as following directly from his guiding sense of praxis, that I outlined above. For Castoriadis, the ultimately non-determinate nature of the 'social-historical' was of paramount importance for the 'revolutionary project', for without the innate ability to transform and to create *new* 'social imaginary significations' that inform its institutions and orientations, there could be no autonomous society. The revolutionary project turns on the capacity to create radically new forms. Thus Castoriadis had to argue for the existence of such a faculty. Castoriadis' concept of the radical imagination is one of the most innovative and exciting elements of his oeuvre. However, he stops short of explaining *how* it works, instead emphasising what it does, and its role in the 'social historical'.

In my view, however, the 'reproductive' imagination is not at all secondary – at least as far as the social imaginary is concerned. Social imaginaries serve as the "invisible cement" (Castoriadis, 1987, 143) that binds a given society together, but this would only be possible if social meanings can be carried through space and time. Such stability requires the reproduction of meanings, which require the capacity to see things as other than, or much more than, their naked physical reality. Imagination is thus vital to the continuity of social imaginaries, and therefore to social cohesion. In this project, I draw out the dynamics of both forms of imagination, and show, ultimately, that the

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[7] For example, "it is perception molded by the imagination that gives us the outward world we know." (Langer, 1953, 372, cited in Geertz, 1973, p87)

radical imagination cannot be fully exploited in the project of transforming the social imaginary without proper understanding of the reproductive mode.

The third reason that makes imaginaries stand out as a compelling concept in an inquiry such as this is that it has garnered much attention in recent years. “Imaginaries” has found particular traction in feminist perspectives and sustainability discourse, and “social imaginaries” has indeed become a field in its own right (Adams et al, 2015). Nonetheless, an overarching conception that is explicitly developed as a model for ameliorative ends is still missing. The term imaginary is used frequently to describe something like the normative and experiential worlds of specific groups; of imagined future scenarios; of a particular mindset.

A recent book, *Social Imaginaries: Critical Interventions* (2019), refers to a range of kinds of imaginaries: “capitalist, constitutional, cosmopolitan, democratic, ecological, economic, feminist, global, historical, hypermodern, humanitarian, nationalist, political, politico-juridical, populist and religious.” [8] I take such imaginaries to be nested within the broader *social imaginary* – that is the web of meanings that binds a particular society together. It is this latter phenomenon that I will focus on. Still, “the field as a whole remains heterogenous” (Adams et al, 2015, 15), and this is perhaps why the authors refer to it as ‘paradigm in the making’. Adams et al concede that “What is needed is a more systematic approach” (Adams et al, 2015, 42). And yet, in their most recent work, Adams’ and Smith’s piece *The Social Imaginaries Field: overview and introduction* begins with the disclaimer that it “is idiosyncratic, rather than systematic” (2019, xxiii). Much of the literature on social imaginaries is dedicated exegesis on Ricoeur and Castoridis. It strikes me that such work is destined to be idiosyncratic rather than systematic, precisely because Ricouer’s and Castoriadis’ work is itself idiosyncratic. That is to say that both thinkers focussed on exploring in great depth several facets or nodes of social imaginaries, but not systematically presenting these nodes as a model.

In the present work, I focus on the *social* imaginary. As such, I will not be addressing Lacan’s or Sartre’s work on ‘the imaginary’, whose approaches differ too significantly from the social imaginaries oeuvre carved out by Castoriadis and Ricoeur, and more recently Taylor. The present work is most informed by Castoriadis’ thought, and I take the model and analysis that is presented here to be broadly Castoriadian. However, it is not intended to be Castoriadis scholarship: I have found it necessary to step back from Castoriadis in order to maintain clarity and holism. Castoriadis is a scholar who deserves much greater attention, and his ideas are very illuminating. But the

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[8] As an indication of the ubiquity of the concept of imaginaries, a search of Wiley’s online database yielded 115 results for work that included “imaginaries” in the title; Sage yielded 158, and Taylor and Francis 389. I searched for “imaginaries” rather than “imaginary”, although this is a commonly used alternative, because it cannot distinguish between the nounal and adjectival usage. As an aside, only <10% of Sage’s and 5% of Taylor and Francis’ were open access. This is striking given the overtly critical nature of the field of imaginaries.

problems with Castoriadis – at least for a project such as this one – is that his work is abstruse, riddled with cumbersome neologisms (most of which I try to avoid, except passing reference and translation!), and dense explorations into minutiae of specific details. The result is that a close reading of his works in full leaves one with a sense of the importance and pertinence of his ideas, and only a very misty picture of the nature of social imaginaries *per se* that is far short of an overarching model with broad application.

The model that I present is indebted to Castoriadis in a great many respects, but I do not believe that such a model can be discovered in his work, without a great deal of creative interpretation and borrowing from complementary thinkers. This is what I have done. I make no claims about whether such a model would be approved intellectually by Castoriadis, but I hope at least that he would appreciate the ameliorative and elucidatory intentions of this thesis. Indeed, some argue that Castoriadis overlooked social doing and action (see e.g. Adams, 2019) and, by extension, differences of lived experience within imaginaries (see e.g. Lennon, 2015, 84) owing to his preoccupation with developing an understanding of the non-determinate dimension of the social historical and the radical imagination (what Adams calls his 'ontological turn'). This is a shame, given his aforementioned emphasis on 'praxis'. It is my hope that this work, in presenting a model of the social imaginary, will help to bridge the gap between the theoretical and the practical. As social discontents are the motivation for this thesis, I centre my analysis of the contemporary social imaginary around actually existing oppressions, and thus hope to show how one and the same imaginary can produce significantly different lived experiences.

I turn to two contemporaries of Castoriadis, who had curiously little to nothing to say about each other's works. Ricoeur, who alongside Castoriadis has been identified as having "articulated [one of] the most important theoretical frameworks for understanding social imaginaries" (Adams et al, 2015, 15). I am particularly interested in Ricoeur's insights into metaphor to explain the dynamics of the critical imagination. I turn to Geertz for his insights into the role of symbol systems in culture; to Lennon for grounding the imaginaries in a phenomenological frame; to Haslanger for her grasp of structural analysis as necessary for critical projects; to Kant for an understanding of the "synthetic" imagination; and to Heidegger to explain how the imagination is schematised.

THESIS AIMS

The aims of the present work are two-fold. Firstly, I wish to demystify the concept of social imaginaries. Castoriadis uses the term elucidation. He achieved this in the sense of explicating in great detail certain facets of the social imaginary. On the other hand, his work is anything but *pel*lucid. As the figurehead of the field of imaginaries that is explicitly oriented towards social change, this lack of pellucidity at the heart of the field is very problematic. Subsequent work in developing perspectives on a range of imaginaries is interesting and necessary to counterweigh the epistemic favouring of the western male experience. However, it is my view that a range of

perspectives alone is not in itself sufficient for the application of "social imaginaries" beyond the academy. I am brought to mind of the metaphor of the blind men who each describe the part of the elephant that they happen to encounter, as if it were the whole. The problem is that without an overarching grasp of the elephant at the outset, we cannot correctly identify the individual parts or recognise their significance to the whole.

The success of the concept in its own terms depends on its ability to break out of the academy. If the various perspectives of imaginaries are not connected to an overarching concept then they risk being mere descriptions, rather than explanations. Thus, in an attempt to offer a systematic overview of social imaginaries as a whole, I aim to present a model of the system. As the model builds up, I increasingly show its pertinence to real world problems, and at the end, apply the model to an in-depth analysis of two of the most egregious social discontents: misogyny and speciesism. I accept that the field is diverse, and the field of imagination even more so. Thus I do not intend to capture the field in its entirety.

The second aim of this thesis is to present an ameliorative analysis of social imaginaries. I take the idea of "ameliorative analysis" from Sally Haslanger. Haslanger (2012) suggests that there are three different approaches to answering "what is x?" questions: conceptual; descriptive; and ameliorative. Conceptual answers look to existing concepts of 'x', and through comparison and intuitive judgement eventually aim at some kind of reflective equilibrium (2012, 385-6). Descriptive approaches seek to elucidate 'x' through drawing on available empirical sources in order to deepen our understanding of the domain of 'x' (2012, 386). Ameliorative approaches from the outset are concerned with asking, what does 'x' do? What do we want it to do? An ameliorative analysis introduces a new, revisionary conceptualisation as long as doing so furthers the stipulated goals of the inquiry. Ameliorative analysis is not bound to comply with our ordinary understanding or use of a concept: the target concept may be revisionary, provided that it furthers the goals guiding the analysis (Jenkins, 2016, 395).

For this reason, normative concerns are at the heart of the ameliorative approach (2012, 386). I take it that Haslanger is concerned with the generation of critical analysis around 'target concepts' that have ameliorative value to actually existing social discontents. In the case of the social imaginary, a *conceptual* approach might offer a comparative analysis of existing conceptions of social imaginaries, such as that undertaken by Adams et al (2015) and Adams (2019); a *descriptive* approach might entail bringing to light the actual experiences of a social imaginary of certain groups or developing an account of various groups' imaginaries (e.g. Irigaray 1993; Taylor, 2004); an *ameliorative* approach, such as this one, states its normative purpose up front, and then develops a – perhaps novel or even unorthodox – conception that can meet that purpose.

The purpose of this project is to produce a model of social imaginaries that can be used to help address the myriad social discontents, that are in my view connected, by 1) increasing awareness and understanding of the fact of the

social imaginary; 2) offering an in-depth analysis of the current imaginary and its core organising principle, so that 3) we may apply the insights about the imagination's role in either sustaining or disrupting the status quo effectively. A central contention of my project is that insofar as we are involved in instituting the social imaginary's core principle and as such reproducing the status quo, we will not succeed in transforming the social imaginary. Only when we understand what the social imaginary is can we uncover a given imaginary's core principle, and only then can we effectively resist the reproduction of the status quo, and engage in creating the social imaginary anew.

I want to suggest that ameliorative analysis has a strongly hermeneutic element to it. We can understand hermeneutics, following Kearney, as "discerning indirect, tacit or allusive meanings, of sensing another sense beyond or beneath apparent sense" (2011, 1). As we will see in the next chapter, that the social world comprises layers of meaning that are not congruent with the biophysical world is perhaps the foundational insight of social imaginaries. Certainly, there is much precedent for positing hermeneutics as proper to the study of the social imaginary.[9]

Indeed, it strikes me that Haslanger's ameliorative approach has much in common with what Kearney calls 'diacritical hermeneutics' (2011). In particular, ameliorative analysis and diacritical hermeneutics have an expressly 'ethico-political' dimension that seeks the critical uncovering of power relations and oppression (Kearney, 2011, 2); and further that diacritical hermeneutics has a 'diagnostic' and thus therapeutic (i.e. ameliorative) intention. My inquiry in this thesis incorporates several moves from diacritical hermeneutics: the criteriological, the diagnostic, the suspicious, the carnal.

Kearney identifies the criteriological as one of the dimensions of diacritical analysis, and he describes it as discerning among competing definitions (2011, 2) in a way that is redolent of Haslanger's description of conceptual analysis (2012). I take it that the criteriological may also include specifying the parts of the object of inquiry. As already stated, one of my goals in this thesis is to present a model of the social imaginaries, which will involve specifying the parts and their relation to the whole. This is the task of Chapter Two. A model serves as a gestalt, that "provide[s] *phronesis* with exemplary paradigms by which to measure, judge, and act." (Kearney, 2011, 2, emphasis original). In other words, ameliorative application of theoretical work requires criteriological guidance.

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[9] For example, Ricoeur pioneers a phenomenological hermeneutics; Geertz's 'thick descriptions' and analyses of cultures are a kind of 'ethno-hermeneutics'; Taylor offers a hermeneutic of modern social imaginaries (2004); and contemporary social imaginaries thinkers insist on the need for a 'hermeneutic-phenomenological' (see e.g. Adams, 2011, - 65; Adams et al 2015; Arnason, 1994)

The diagnostic involves recognising the problematical – especially with regards to the ethico-political – and as such affording clues to the remedy. This project is diagnostic insofar as it seeks to show how the various discontents of society are symptoms of a common, underlying pathology. In understanding the pathology, we can better identify the remedy. As such, this thesis is therapeutic (Kearney, 2011, 4).

Hermeneutics of suspicion is the term coined by Ricoeur (e.g. 1970) to denote the method of interpretation concerned with "unmasking covered up meaning" (Kearney, 2011, 2). I use this approach on two planes in this thesis: the abstract (social imaginaries per se) and the specific (a given social imaginary). Regarding the abstract, I use a hermeneutics of suspicion in my readings of Castoriadis and Ricoeur in Chapter One, seeking to reveal insights that are obscured by contradictions (c.f. Felski, 2011), and again in Chapter Four, in which I offer a creative interpretation of Haslanger (2016). It should be noted that I take suspicion to be neutral – I do not suggest that the contradictions or omissions are necessarily intended to conceal egregious ideologies, but rather that sometimes the work as a whole leads me to suspect (or "to scent" as Kearney puts it, 2011, 4) that there are further insights to be uncovered than immediately apparent.

Regarding the specific, in Chapter Four I conduct an analysis of the current imaginary, reading backwards from the "articulations" of the imaginary into the underlying structure and ultimately revealing the 'keystone concept'. I then discuss the keystone concept at length in Chapter Six. In both chapters the driver of my analysis is the hermeneutic of suspicion, in the sense of starting from "self-evident meanings in order to draw out less visible and less flattering truths" (Felski, 2012).

Lastly, Kearney describes the 'carnal' aspect of diacritical hermeneutics as "a sort of incarnate phronesis, which probes, scents, and filters" (2011, 4). This strikes me as a fitting description of our means of knowing the social imaginary which we inhabit. I discuss this particular kind of phronetic knowing as *grasping* (Chapter Two), which is "not knowledge in the purely cognitive or theoretical attitude... but *some kind of savvy.*" (Kearney, 2011, 4, emphasis added). The carnal is a fundamental dimension of the social imaginary – which can only exist insofar as it is embodied and enacted by its denizens.

KEY THEMES

This leads me on to the key themes of this thesis. I suggest, through a close reading of Ricoeur and Castoriadis in Chapter One that the social imaginary operates on two planes. The first is the symbolic, which can be understood

as the complex of meanings that are embodied in everyday social phenomena that I call 'articulations'. It is through the articulations that we are able to grasp the world. This grasping has a strongly phenomenological component: we grapple with the articulations that mediate our experience of the world, and in doing so, we (re-)institute the social imaginary.

As such, I want to claim that participation in the social imaginary bestows each of us with *radical responsibility*. The second plane is that of the hidden structures and the core principle, that I call the keystone concept, that organise the complex of articulations and that ultimately provide a given society with its cohesion and *coherence*. These two planes constantly interact with each other (via the imagination). The keystone concept that organises the articulations could not exist without continuous articulation; and likewise the articulations' object is institution of the keystone concept that undergirds the imaginary complex. As such, responsibility requires insightful analysis that reveals the 'invisible unnameable' (Adams, 2019) keystone concept (i.e. diagnostic hermeneutics, in Kearney's terms). Conversely, coherence is only possible insofar as the articulations embody and convey the 'message' of the keystone concept throughout society.

I Responsibility

While it is not my intention here to develop a theory of responsibility, I want to suggest that responsibility is a natural extension of the Castoriadian praxis (and thus the ameliorative approach), and therefore is proper to the field of imaginaries.

Praxis as responsibility:

Castoriadis' conception of praxis *is* a conception of responsibility: it is identification of the imperative of each of us to respond to the needs of others. For my present purposes what counts as a need; who qualifies as a proper object of responsibility; and what kind of response others' needs merits, are issues that must be bracketed for this inquiry. What matters is that insofar as we are able to respond to others, then we should. An imaginaries approach shows us that all of us are able to influence to some degree, however slight, the social imaginary in which we exist, and which gives rise to the structures of oppression. Furthermore, implicit in this conception of responsibility is the fact that responsibility inheres in the actor, not the act.

Given that I have framed responsibility as an activity (to respond), it may seem all too apparent that this would be so. Yet, it would seem to be that much of the time, our responses imply the opposite. For example, in relation to climate change, it is common for people to point to more powerful entities' failure to respond adequately as a legitimate excuse to not respond adequately themselves ("Tell China to stop; then I'll stop" or "it doesn't make a difference what I do, Exxon Mobil and Shell are the big emitters", and so on). Implicit in this kind of attitude is

the view that responsibility inheres in the problem (climate change); and *as such is divisible*. It would follow from this view that given that the likes of Exxon are far more culpable than any given individual, that that individual's responsibility is negligible. If, on the other hand, one locates responsibility in the actor, then responsibility multiplies. Thus, one's own responsibility is complete with respect to one's degree of power.

If, as I shall show, each of us of sound faculties has the power to influence the context in which harms are perpetrated and legitimated, then each of us has responsibility. Responsibility is the converse of power.

This argument is very salient to the contemporary environmental movement, in which there is an influential strand that persistently undermines the role of individual or personal action in response to eco-climate collapse, and instead seeks to lay responsibility squarely at the feet of the governments and corporations.[10] Such arguments marginalise the role of the individual and instead claim that change must happen at the level of the system. Such claims are rarely if ever accompanied by a clear theory of "the system" or "systemic change". It is far from clear that this is a good strategy: 40 years of reports, conferences, burgeoning environmental groups and 'sustainable development' have yielded very little systemic improvements. Furthermore, it is also far from clear why such a dichotomy would require one to choose either individual action or systemic action.

But what I am most interested in debunking here is the very idea that the individual and the system represent a dichotomy at all. A social imaginaries framework identifies the political corporate 'system' of capitalist democracies as a part of the broader social imaginary. The system is thus driven by the logic of the social imaginary and is instituted as an 'articulation' of that logic. All denizens of an imaginary participate in sustaining the social imaginary in the context which the political system makes sense.

Defendants of the dichotomy view the claim that placing responsibility at the feet of the individual is a neoliberal trick, because, the reasoning goes, neoliberalism diminishes the state by exalting the individual: individualism in short. But recognising the role of the individual is not the same thing as individual*ism*. Through the lens of social imaginaries, we see that the trick of neoliberalism is to convince people that individuals are not responsible – because if you remove responsibility, you concomitantly remove power.

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[10] For example: Mann, M (2019); and Leah Stokes "It's not about individual change. The big lever is policy...The lever for individuals isn't enough. The goal is not self-purification. The goal is institutional and political change." (Grist, 8th April 2020)

In what follows I hope to show how a great many – if not all – of our apparently mundane or trivial actions are articulations of the social imaginary. As such, they perform a fundamental and irreducible role in maintaining the social imaginary. And if the social imaginary in question systematically yields myriad discontents, then these articulations are their lifeblood. A very common example is the apparently benign use of metaphors such as bitch, cow, cunt, animal, dog, pig and so on. Most of the time the user has no overtly sexist or speciesist intention in mind. And yet, it is precisely the ordinariness and the ubiquity of such metaphors that create an overall ambience of the intrinsic inferiority of women and non-human animals. If we use such language, in a small but significant way we perpetuate the culture in which misogyny and animal abuse are normalised. No amount of 'political action' can obviate this effect. Conversely, when we refuse to use such metaphors we help to weaken the social imaginary in which they are so salient.[11] By the end of the thesis, I hope to be able to demonstrate convincingly that individuals' actions do matter, and that they matter politically, because they are constitutive of the social imaginary, and as Castoriadis saw, constituting the social imaginary is the primordial source of political power. The failure to do what we can to alleviate social ills through resisting the articulations of the social imaginary that institutes and rationalises these ills is a failure to respond politically.

II Coherence

The idea of coherence was recognised by Castoriadis as a central facet of the social imaginary that accounts for a given society's particular character.[12] Castoriadis identifies what he calls 'central significations' that provide coherence but do not treat the issue systematically. The backbone of this thesis is its systematic inquiry into the 'organising principle' of the social imaginary, in order to understand the pathology that underlies the many social discontents that permeate our current predicament. As such, positing the keystone concept is arguably the most important contribution of this thesis. The keystone concept is a novel contribution to the field of imaginaries, and moreover it provides us with a framework for understanding the social imaginary as a coherent whole, which as I have argued has been lacking in the field to date.

[11] As I will be arguing, speciesism and sexism are perhaps the two most salient (that is, ubiquitous) manifestations of the current social imaginary.

[12] In this thesis, I present the idea of the keystone concept as the phenomenon that explains the underlying *coherence* of apparently disconnected articulations. These articulations encompass an array of egregious practices that are ubiquitous in contemporary Britain (and other contemporary and historical societies and cultures) and can be shown to have common underlying structures. It is not my intention to posit a singular, overarching imaginary that is sufficient to explain the identity conditions of a given society.

The keystone concept also affords a much deeper understanding of the current social imaginary, which in turn will allow us to respond to social discontents more effectively.

WHAT IS THE "CURRENT SOCIAL IMAGINARY"?

This thesis is concerned with articulating a model of social imaginaries per se. But in order to do so, I analyse the current social imaginary. But what exactly is the current social imaginary? Simply put, it is the one which I, in contemporary UK, inhabit. But globalisation and economic hegemony have meant that we see versions of this social imaginary throughout the world. We might refer to it loosely as the 'Western imaginary', but of course each country's social imaginary has its own culture and flavour, where old imaginaries interact with the Western social imaginary. The UK and USA share a similar imaginary – entitlement is central in both. But whereas in the UK, our sense of entitlement is anchored in a historical imperiousness that we have never (tried to) rid ourselves of, in the USA it is perhaps anchored to a sense of American exceptionalism. This means that the articulations and the 'schematic pathway' will vary somewhat between these two societies, but their underlying logic is common to both. Because imaginaries emerge "on the ruins" (Castoriadis, 1987, 143) of other cultures, even virulent hegemonies like the western social imaginary cannot completely colonise a society. As such, delineating exactly what I mean by the contemporary imaginary is not possible. It refers vaguely to those Western liberal capitalist cultures. As such, the substantive analysis in this thesis refers most pertinently to the social imaginary of the UK, but various parts of it will likely be recognisable in other parts of the world.

At times I will refer to the status quo, particularly in reference to its reproduction. While the status quo refers to the way things are in a social imaginary at a given time, these two terms should not be understood as synonymous. In other words, the 'status quo' (i.e. cultural hegemony) is not a viable alternative concept to the social imaginary. We can understand the status quo as comprising the articulations of a social imaginary at a given point. But, as we will see in Chapter Three, articulations by no means exhaust the social imaginary: they are fungible expressions of the keystone concept. As such, a complete overhaul of the articulations of an imaginary would certainly shake up the status quo, but it would not necessarily alter the social imaginary.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter One

In order to frame my inquiry in terms of the existing field of the social imaginaries I start by turning to the work of Castoriadis and Ricoeur. These two thinkers, as we have seen, are the foremost figures of the field. Although

the field has been established in its own right in the last few years there has so far not been an attempt to offer a holistic conception that has ameliorative utility. As we saw, the most recent work to come out of the field admits that it is "idiosyncratic" in nature. Thus, there does not yet exist a more comprehensive and thorough-going analysis of the issue than that offered by Castoriadis and Ricoeur.

Despite the overlaps in their thinking, their work has apparently little similarity. In this chapter then, I offer a close reading of some of their key texts, and in doing so, suggest that there are indeed some very significant common ideas.

I suggest that the notion of non-congruence, posited by Karl Mannheim and then picked up by Ricoeur, is both foundational for Ricoeur's ideas on social imaginary and has a corollary in Castoriadis' idea of 'defunctionalisation'. Curiously though, Ricoeurian scholarship has, on the whole, ignored non-congruence. In brief, non-congruence refers to the gap between the biophysical world and the world of symbols and meaning that necessarily supervenes on the former for human society. I suggest that there are in fact two moments of non-congruence discernible in both Ricoeur and Castoriadis, and that this interpretation helps to reconcile some of the contradictions in their writings. These two moments are: 1) the gap between the biophysical and the symbolic, and 2) the gap between the symbolic and the structures that organise the symbolic into a coherent whole. These two moments of non-congruence speak to two planes of the social imaginary: the symbolic and the structural, which in turn correspond to responsibility and coherence, respectively.

Despite revealing these important interpretative insights, my close reading also reveals considerable confusion and contradiction in both writers' thought. This is because neither writer takes a systematic approach to the elucidation of social imaginaries. As such, Chapter One also makes clear the need for a conception of social imaginaries as a whole.

Chapter Two

The aim of Chapter Two, in sharp contrast to Chapter One, is to *simplify* the concept of social imaginary. Doing so will give the reader a clear outline of the concept at the outset, which will then be filled in in the subsequent chapters. In order to help demystify the concept, I explain social imaginaries as a *system*. Following Donella Meadows, I show how the parts of a system are analogous to the various parts of social imaginaries. This allows me to present a model of social imaginaries, and it also indicates which parts need to be explained in order to show how the social imaginary operates. In particular, I emphasise the presence of 'organising principles' (that relate to systems' coherence) and responsibility in systems thinking.

This is a simple and straightforward chapter, but it serves an important role: in simplifying in terms that we might already be familiar with, I am able to turn, in the remainder of the thesis, to an in-depth exploration of social imaginaries, with a clear picture of the whole in mind. After all, it is easier to understand descriptions of the parts of an elephant if one first has a clear picture of what an elephant is!

Chapter Three

Chapter Three presents the idea of the social imaginary as a complex of articulations. Articulations refer to the everyday phenomena that 'carry' imaginary meaning. All of us interact with articulations throughout everyday life. Articulations are like currency. The social meaning of a particular coin is imagined by those who interact with it, and this meaning supervenes on a physical coin. But this meaning – and therefore its monetary value – only persist insofar as we continue to imagine it does. Thus, when a coin goes out of mint, the physical coin continues, but is no longer expressive of a particular value (it may become obsolete or gain collector's value).

Although the literature on imaginaries broadly recognises the existence of 'articulations' (variously called symbols or signifiers/signs), a sufficient account of their nature and role has not been offered. I believe that unless we understand the articulations, we cannot properly get to grips with the social imaginary. Indeed, as I argue they are the very means by which we "get to grips" with or "grasp" our social milieu: social understanding has an irreducibly phenomenological element, and the articulations are the imaginary's epistemological media. The dispositions and the keystone concept that are carried by the articulations are only accessible via the articulations, and therefore we must pay great attention to the articulations if we are to understand the social imaginary at large. As well as discussing the epistemology of the articulations, I also discuss the nature of articulations, suggesting they have a "contingent ontology". This is to say that they are real, but their existence is contingent upon the meaning structure that they embody. Conversely, that broader complex – in virtue of which the articulations exist – is itself dependent on the ongoing currency of the articulations to remain salient: if denizens no longer use specific articulations, they start to erode the structures that keep the imaginary in place. The more salient – that is familiar, and pertinent to the keystone concept – that an articulation is, the more significance it has in the imaginary structure. This is important, because it points to the ways in which denizens can begin to change their imaginary: by identifying and resisting the most salient articulations of a given imaginary, denizens can weaken the hegemony of that imaginary.

However, if articulations gain their salience from their relationship to a complex of meaning, then there must be something in virtue of which this coherence among the articulations obtains.

Chapter Four

Having discussed the nature and role of the articulations, I then turn to considering the underlying structure of the complex, that can account for its coherence. Returning to the discontents of society, and framing them as symptoms of a common malaise in urgent need of a robust diagnosis, I consider Castoriadis' idea of a "central imaginary signification", that has no further referent (that is, it does not *denote* anything beyond itself), but is connoted in social phenomena (the articulations). Castoriadis suggests that the central organising principle is the condition of possibility for the imaginary at large, for a given society to be what it is. I take this to be an ontological condition: without that specific organising principle a society would not be what it is. I suggest that Castoriadis, however, fails to offer a method for discerning the "invisible...". Part of the problem, I believe is that Castoriadis asks "upstream" questions ("what is the further referent of this signification?") and concludes that if there is no further referent that this is the central signification. However, if we are attempting to discern the condition for its instituting symbols, we have to inquire "downstream": would this society be what it is without this signification?

The question then arises, however, how to discern the identity of the organising principle? I turn to Sally Haslanger's account of social structures, and offer a novel reading, in which she can be shown to posit an organising principle. I then propose a method of reading the underlying assumptions of 'surface' articulations until an ontological principle reveals itself. The analysis comprises two parts. The first is "systemic" in that it analyses the specific content of our actually existing imaginary. I then turn to a "structural" analysis, in which I discuss the abstract structure of imaginaries per se that is revealed in the systemic analysis. I suggest that the organising principle can be thought of as the "keystone concept", serving a role analogous to keystone species: their existence is vital to the integrity of the whole. The keystone concept, which I suggest in our present imaginary is 'entitlement', permeates the imaginary, down to the articulations, by way of tiers of dispositions, tenets, and schemas. I call these tiers the "keystone structure". At the end of the chapter, I discuss the implications of responsibility that emerge from the analysis.

Chapter Five

In Chapter Five, I turn from the diagnosis of the root cause of the social discontents, to the issue of remedy. If, as I have argued, the articulations institute the keystone concept, the question of how the articulations carry and convey the keystone concept throughout the entirety of the social imaginary is yet to be explained. But if we can account for this, we come closer to understanding how to arrest the keystone concept. To account for the dynamic of reproduction of the social imaginary, I turn to what I term the "synthetic imagination". The synthetic imagination is what Kant calls the productive imagination and involves matching the phenomena of experience to existing concepts or categories. Thus, understanding consists in synthesis, with imagination as the foundational faculty. I suggest that we can understand the keystone concept as fulfilling the role of the Kantian 'category'. However, where Kant claims that such categories are transcendental, I suggest that, at least in the social imagination, they should be understood as trans-subjective. This is to say that they exist prior to any given

individual, but that they are socially fabricated, and change as society changes. Kant introduces the notion of schematism to show how two disparate domains – phenomena and mental categories – can be bridged in the imagination. I turn to Heidegger's notion of disposition to provide a schematism that is pertinent to the social imagination. Both the articulations and the keystone concept, I suggest, are ultimately dispositional. In light of this Heideggerian lens, I suggest that the keystone structure that was revealed in Chapter Four schematises the keystone concept and the articulations, and that the tiers of the keystone structure can be understood as dispositions. I suggest that this schema can be understood as Heidegger's "fundamental attunement", which is a positive capability that represents a fundamental drive to integrate with society.

In the second part of Chapter Five, I discuss the opposite faculty: the radical imagination. The radical imagination is first and foremost the capacity to resist the "positive capability" of the synthetic imagination. Rather than assimilating experience in terms of the social imaginary's keystone structure, it is a "negative capability", in the Keatsian sense of withstanding uncertainty. The radical imagination thus offers a "rupture", as Ricoeur puts it, with the status quo. It is endangered by the creation of the "hermeneutic space", which occurs in moments of "semantic shock" (Ricoeur). I discuss the function of the hermeneutic space and consider the various ways in which semantic shock can occur.

I then discuss the two forms of the radical imagination – the critical and the creative. The critical function is the capacity to scrutinise accepted wisdom, to resist the synthetic imagination. Out of the critical, can – in the right circumstances – emerge the creative imagination. I turn to the ideas of Harold Rugg along with Ricoeur and Castoriadis. In the project of ameliorating social discontents, both facets of the radical imagination are necessary. However, the literature on the imaginaries focuses exclusively on creative function of the imagination, with the exception of Ricoeur's and Castoriadis' passing comments on subversion. This chapter sets out the theory of social reproduction and disruption. In Chapter Six, I seek to apply these ideas, in combination with the insights into entitlement of Chapter Four, in examining real world problems.

Chapter Six

In this chapter, I seek to follow the logic of the keystone concept and the keystone structure through a systematic analysis of arguably the two most prolific social discontents: speciesism and sexism. My contention is that unless we understand social discontents as the result of the same underlying pathology – in the present case, entitlement – then any apparent gains in redressing any given domain of oppression will be undermined if other areas are allowed to flourish. Thus, we must resist all such expressions of entitlement if we are serious about dealing with the worst social oppressions, and replacing the social imaginary. In order to make this point more clearly, I analyse speciesism alongside sexism, following Kate Manne's analysis of misogyny in *Down Girl* (2018), thus revealing the structural similarities of the two phenomena. This analysis also sheds more light on the nature of entitlement, and I suggest that it can be understood best in the current social imaginary as autonomy appropriation. I suggest

that speciesism is the most perfect form of entitlement, and therefore provides the locus of what Meadow's calls a "leverage point". The leverage point is the point of intervention in a system which can affect enormous change throughout the system. It follows that veganism is the single best intervention in the current imaginary. I demonstrate this claim with reference to the synthetic and radical imagination, suggesting that veganism does not have 'schematic pathways' in the current imaginary, and therefore is able to resist the synthetic imagination, and engender the critical imagination and potentially the creative imagination.

Chapter Seven

In this concluding chapter, I draw together the elements of the thesis as parts of a system, once again. I emphasise the significance of the keystone concept, and how important this is for understanding the flows of the social imaginary. It is the keystone concept that explains the synthetic imagination, which is the faculty that accounts for the perpetuation of the social imaginary, but which has been largely overlooked in the literature. And it is only through understanding the dynamics of the synthetic imagination that we can understand how its opposite faculty, the radical imagination, operates. The imagination constitutes the positive and negative feedback flows of the social imaginary, and as such, understanding their dynamics is vital if adjustments and interventions are to be made effectively. I finish by suggesting some possible future directions of inquiry.

Chapter One: The Social Imaginary in Castoriadis and Ricoeur: Finding Common Ground

Cornelius Castoriadis and Paul Ricoeur are two of the foremost theorists of the social imaginary. Adams et al (2015) also include Charles Taylor, author of *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2014). However, to my mind, Taylor's approach is substantively different to that of Castoriadis and Ricoeur, in that the latter were concerned with the nature of social imaginaries per se, whereas Taylor, with the exception of a few short pages, was concerned with explaining the history and nature of a specific imaginary. As this inquiry is first and foremost concerned with social imaginaries per se, I shall concentrate on Castoriadis and Ricoeur here, although I refer to certain insights of Taylor's in Chapter Three.

Despite being the pioneers of the field, neither Castoriadis nor Ricoeur offer a coherent model of imaginaries, instead presenting various facets of the social imaginary. The ideas of Castoriadis and Ricoeur provide rich insights into imaginaries, and yet reading their works can sometimes leave the reader confused. In the case of the former, this is because he writes in convoluted sentences liberally scattered with neologisms that attempt to convey complex abstract ideas without the assistance of an overall 'map of the terrain' for context and reference. In the case of the latter, it is because the imaginary is clearly only a secondary interest, the inferred background suggested through the concepts of ideology and utopia, which despite being the focus of his later work, remained relatively underdeveloped.

It is also interesting that these two compatriots, who were writing contemporaneously on closely related matters had very little dialogue.[13] Furthermore, on the face of it, their writings are surprisingly divergent. That said, a synoptic reading of their contributions reveals some fascinating areas of overlap. The areas of complementarity help to cement a sense of what the imaginary consists in, while their divergent areas of emphasis reveal supplementary dimensions.

In this chapter I seek to present the ideas of these thinkers – which on the surface seem quite different – in terms of two themes that I suggest are vital for both thinkers' ideas. I then use these themes to interpret their more complex or confused ideas. The aim is to present a coherent picture of their ideas, which is perhaps missing from

[13] The one known exception was a discussion between the two on a variety of areas – characterised by disagreement – on Radio France. (Ricoeur and Castoriadis, 2017).

the primary texts themselves, and to show the complementarity between their ideas. At the end, we will be in a position to draw out a tentative definition of social imaginaries.

My approach in this chapter is informed by Kearney's diacritical hermeneutics, in the sense that it attempts to discern "indirect, tacit or allusive meanings, of sensing another sense beyond or beneath apparent sense." (2011, 1).

The hermeneutics of suspicion is one form of diacritical hermeneutics (Kearney, 2011, 1). Ricoeur distinguished between hermeneutics of faith and hermeneutics of suspicion (1970; 1981 in Josselson, 2004). The former is a restoration of meaning conveyed as a message (c.f. Hermes); the latter is a demystification of disguised meaning. My approach here is somewhere between the two: although I seek to demystify the meaning of these writers that is shrouded in convolutions and contradictions, I do so not with suspicion of concealment, but with *faith* in their insights.

A hermeneutics of faith is "trying to re-collect and reorder meanings inherent in the material" (Josselson, 2004, 6). Yet in order to reorder, "attention is directed...to the omissions, disjunctions, inconsistencies and contradictions" (Josselson, 2004, 14-15), in other words, the hermeneutics of suspicion! But Josselson notes that suspicion is a misleading term in this context (2004, 15): one does not have to presume that an account is intended to disguise, but just that extra effort of discovery is required. The idea is that an alternative framework for decoding is necessary, but locating such a framework may be problematic. It seems to me that a close reading combined with an in depth knowledge of the oeuvre and broader intentions of the writer in question is sufficient to conduct "a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously" (Geertz, 1973, p. 239.).

What follows then, is arguably a kind of Geertzian 'thick description': it is an account of the minutiae of these two thinkers' ideas, warts and all, with reference to a broader context. This context, I suggest, is provided by the arguably analogous ideas of non-congruence in Ricoeur and defunctionalisation in Castoriadis. What emerges is a central insight that will guide the rest of the present inquiry: the presence of *two* planes of meaning discernible in the social world. The first is the realm of symbols that comprise everyday social life, and the second is the realm of structures that organise the symbols into a coherent whole.

This chapter exemplifies a further form of diacritical hermeneutics that Kearney did not articulate. In scrutinising the notion of non-congruence, and positing two moments, I prise apart the concept in a manner that "separates or distinguishes" parts of the concept that is the literal task of diacritics.[14]

NON-CONGRUENCE

The idea of non-congruence was posited by Karl Mannheim, who first considered the hitherto unrelated ideas of ideology and utopia together. Mannheim recognised that the key feature of both ideology and utopia was that of non-congruence: divergence from social reality.

Mannheim, according to Ricoeur, recognises the valuable move that Marx made in identifying ideology, not as a 'local error' but as a structure of thought belonging to a particular group. But Mannheim thought he should therefore have extended the critique of ideology – as a distortion of reality – to the critique of ideology itself. Mannheim thus recognised ideology as a facet of social life itself, indeed both ideology and utopia are unified by "a common background of non-congruence" to social reality (Ricoeur, 1991a, 256). Although Ricoeur develops his own notions of ideology and utopia, specifically one in which the positive, functional role for ideology is posited, he is nonetheless open in his admiration of Mannheim's insights and his 'intellectual honesty' (1991a, 257). In fact, Mannheim's significance for Ricoeur's thought in social imaginaries can scarcely be overstated – for it is through the gap suggested by the idea of non-congruence that a glimmer of the social imaginary emerges.

The gap of non-congruence is suggestive of the mediated nature of ideology and utopia, which are "mediated, structured and integrated by symbolic systems" (1976, p. 512). In other words, "ideological 'distortion' of social reality is only possible if social reality is always already symbolised (and symbolising)." (Adams et al, 2015, 23).

Arguably non-congruence, which I believe is so central to the development of Ricoeur's ideas here, finds a counterpart in Castoriadis' idea of 'defunctionalisation'.

Castoriadis develops the idea of defunctionalisation both in the sphere of the imagination (psyche), where it pertains to representations, and to the social imaginary realm in which it pertains to institutions. The two, of course, are related because the social and the psycho-imaginary are themselves inextricably bound – indeed this is perhaps the central insight of the field of social imaginaries.

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[14] See https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=diacritic

Castoriadis introduces 'the Institution and the Imaginary', one of the key chapters in his magnum opus *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, by arguing against a purely functionalist view of institutions (1987, 115-117). Castoriadis believes that whilst it is undeniable that institutions fulfil their overt functions, they cannot be reduced to them, and that their functions do not exhaust their meaning. He goes on to talk about "the gap [the functionalist view] presents just where it should be focussed: what are the 'real needs' of a society, the needs institutions are there merely to serve?" (1987, 116). The core of his insight is that social needs of humans depart significantly from the merely biological. As such, the rationale behind the functions of social institutions are defunctionalised – they cannot be reduced to or explained by mere reference to the biological. This is as true of institutions like fine art; religion; aristocracy and monarchy, as it is for the private psychical representations of the individual imagination. In his later work, Castoriadis argues that psychical representations are defunctionalised in that 'representational pleasure' is given priority over 'organ pleasure' (1994, 146; 1997a 151) – the extreme example of which is being prepared to die for one's ideals.

So, we can see in the notion of defunctionalisation "a gap" (1987, 116) between biological/physical reality on the one hand, and imaginary (social) reality on the other. This is a gap, therefore, of non-congruence. Indeed, Castoriadis uses very similar language in describing the phenomenon of defunctionalisation when he challenges the "strict correspondence" (1987, 116) between the facets of institutions and 'real' needs.

And just like in Ricoeur's sense of non-congruence, the gap introduced by defunctionalisation is filled by the symbolic.

Through the lens of non-congruence/defunctionalisation, we see striking similarities between these two thinkers' ideas: both recognise of a lack of 'strict correspondence' between reality and social meaning, and both identify the symbolic as filling the gap.

I shall now explore this idea in more depth, through positing that there is evident in both thinkers' ideas two moments of non-congruence.

RICOEUR

Ricoeur's comments on the precise nature of the social imaginary, and its relationship to ideology and utopia are not without contradictions and aporias. I suggest that the reason for this is that his overriding interest is with ideology and utopia as extensions of the imagination; the social imaginary as a realm unto itself is explicitly inferred through non-congruence, but not developed. In fact, it is not clear that Ricoeur recognises the social imaginary as a realm, but rather a facet of imagination. Thus, to make sense of his ideas, a certain amount of interpretation is necessary.

The central aporia concerns precisely what is meant by non-congruence. One the one hand, Ricoeur suggests that opposed to reality is ideology, which is the realm of the social imagination that is characterised by "representations, ideas, and conceptions" (1991a, 301) as opposed to the realm of the real, of 'actual production', of the 'way things actually are' (1991a, 301). This suggests that he believes that non-congruence is the lack of convergence between the imaginary and the real. And again, in his essay 'Science and Ideology' he claims that non-congruence is the "common background in relation to a concept of reality" (1991a, 256) of ideology and utopia. Yet we may pause to take issue with the very idea of a 'concept of reality': in 'Ideology and Utopia' he asserts that reality stands apart and in contradistinction to the imaginary realm of ideas. So, we are left uncertain of Ricoeur's meaning here: does he mean to suggest that there is a realm of reality mediated by the imagination that represents our *conception* of reality, or does he mean, in line with the 'Ideology and Utopia' comments, that reality is 'as it actually is', unmediated? It is a puzzling phrase, because if the former is intended, it would seem to fall into a hermeneutic circle: how could one verify the reality of one's conception of reality?

Conversely, in a third essay, 'Imagination in Discourse and Action', that appears in the same volume, he suggests a different locus for non-congruence: "individuals and collective entities...are always already related to social reality in a mode *other than that of immediate participation*..." (1991a p.177, emphasis added). There is an aporia implicit here: if we only relate to the "social reality" indirectly, how exactly can we be sure that we have correctly identified it as non-congruent? And then again, we must ask: non-congruent with what? On the one hand we have a realm of mediated interaction, comprising a set of "imaginative practices", including ideology and utopia, that constitute the "analogical tie that makes every man my brother" (1991a p.177), in other words, the social imaginary. On the other hand, we infer that there is some kind of immediate, true social reality that consists somehow of something other than individuals and collective entities. In other words, it is frankly unclear what this social reality is, if it is not the social imaginary.

A more satisfactory interpretation then might be to assume that Ricoeur means to imply that social reality is coextensive with the social imaginary. In support of such an interpretation are claims such as that the "social imagination is *constitutive* of social reality." (1986, 3, emphasis original), and allusion to the "prior background of the symbolical constitution of the social bond in general" (1991a,179). From this point of view, it seems that social reality and the social bond are comprised of symbols, that, somewhat mysteriously, he refers to as "the

figures of non-coincidence, which are precisely those of the social imaginary." (1991a, 177). In other words, imaginative practices, such as ideology and utopia, themselves are comprised of certain already existing symbols.

Furthermore, Ricoeur posits that ideology and utopia are aspects of the social imaginary, when he describes them as "among" a "certain number of imaginative practices" (1991a,177) that constitute the social imaginary.

I suggest that we can make sense of these aporias by positing two moments of non-congruence in the Ricoeurian schema. Ricoeur himself claims that "non-congruence...may assume various forms" (1976, 17), indeed suggesting scope for my proposed interpretation.

Moment One

The first moment pertains to the gap between the world of physical and biological realities and events on the one hand, and symbolically mediated meaning that constitutes social reality on the other. This is to say that social meaning does not correlate exhaustively to the bare facts of the world. As Geertz, to whom Ricoeur turns on the matter of symbolic action, comments, humans "build dams or shelters, locate food, organize their social groups, or find sexual partners under the guidance of instructions encoded inflow charts and blueprints, hunting lore, moral systems and aesthetic judgements: conceptual structures molding formless talents" (1973, 56). As Ricoeur puts it later in *Interpretation Theory*, "symbols hesitate on the dividing line between bios and logos". (1976, 59).

One example of this is the idea of gender: it correlates approximately with male and female, but also includes connotations of gender-specific roles, and values and so on. For example, a mother breastfeeding in public is not merely a physical-biological act, it carries with it a host of meanings: it could be an overtly feminist response to prudish social norms. A study in 2001 found that women reported feeling vulnerable when breastfeeding in public, and fared better when supported (Sheeshka et al, 2001), and a study from Accra, Ghana found that women may bottle-feed instead to overcome problems of embarrassment and stigmatisation (Boatemaa Coomson & Aryeetey, 2018). In other words, the symbolic load of social actions is such that they may alter the nature of the underlying bio-physical behaviours.

This layer of non-congruence serves an important function – it is the basis for the possibility of social meaning and significance. This creation of social significance is the necessary condition of sociality: meaning is the currency of the "analogical tie that makes all men my brother", as Ricoeur put it (1991a, 177).

The other thing to note at this stage is our condition of "thrownness". Ricoeur is sensible to this fact of the deep layers of symbolic sedimentation that precede any given collective's arrival. He describes this condition in another discussion as the "inherited potentialities in which Dasein is thrown" (1991b, 114).

This primary moment of non-congruence, which posits a realm of imaginary symbols is essential to understanding the social imaginary. We can only infer this first moment from Ricoeur's thought because he does not offer a substantive account. He does, however, allude to it in the following terms: "under these systems of legitimation [ideology] we discover the *symbolic systems* constitutive of action itself." (1994, 309, emphasis added).

Two possible reasons for the omission of a thorough account of the social imaginary present themselves. The first is that, for Ricoeur, ideology and utopia are the social world counterparts to the reproductive and productive imagination (and I shall say more on this is in the next chapter), and that he believes that imagination is *process* not a state. (1991a, 182; 315). We can infer therefore that Ricoeur does not in fact recognise the social imaginary as a realm, but as the process by which meaning is posited through symbols, language and action, and it has two opposing, but in the final analysis, complementary modes, ideology and utopia. It is confusing that Ricoeur uses nouns throughout to describe what is essentially procedural, rather than adjectives that modify processes (i.e. ideological or utopian). So, when he talks of the social imaginary he does not mean it in the nounal sense in which it is most commonly used, but in the adjectival sense (similar to Lacan or Sartre). This might explain why he does not pay attention to it - it is not a realm in its own right, but a set of processes, of which utopia and ideology are two essential parts the study of which, he believes, is sufficient to an understanding of the social imaginary process, and a thoroughgoing account of the symbolic as such is not warranted.

The second possible reason is that Ricoeur accepts Geertz's view of the symbolic nature of ideology, and thus tacitly defers further explication of the nature of the symbolic to him.

Before turning to Geertz, it is worth considering for a moment the salience of some of Ricoeur's own thoughts on the matter of symbolism that occur in other discussions. In 'Symbolism and Evil', Ricoeur famously claims that "the symbol gives rise to thought" (1967). What is interesting about this line, for our present discussion, is that it seems to anticipate the two moments of non-congruence that I claim encapsulate the relationship between reality, the imaginary and ideology. The first moment is implicit in the notion of the symbol: it refers both to the "sphere

of entities to which the predicates...can be attached" *and* to a "referential field for which there is no direct characterisation" (2004, 299). The second moment lies in the implied gap between symbol and thought: conceptual frameworks supervene on the symbolic to make sense of them. As we shall see, the role of conceptual frameworks is fulfilled by ideology.

It is to Geertz then that we shall now turn. There is evidence that Geertz also recognised an essential element of non-congruence (although he does not express in it in such terms), when he writes: "Between the basic ground plans for our life that our genes lay down – the capacity to speak or to smile – and the precise behaviour we in fact execute – speaking English in a certain tone of voice, smiling enigmatically in a delicate social situation – lies a complex set of significant symbols under whose direction we transform the first into the second, the ground plan into activity" (1973, 57). Geertz has much to say about the symbolic constitution of culture – which he understands in the broadest terms, and may be understood as analogous to the social imaginary – but his definition of the symbolic is in fact buried in a footnote halfway through *The Interpretation of Culture*. He says, "I use "symbol" broadly in the sense of any physical, social or cultural act or object that serves as the vehicle for a conception", a view that he takes from Susan Langer[15] (1973, 491). Geertz, who uses symbols and signs interchangeably, refers to symbols as "construable signs" (1973, 15) that constitute the basic currency in his semiotic account of culture.

For Geertz, everything one encounters in the social realm is heavily loaded with meaning, and he refers to the "multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit." (1973, 11). It is this knotted multiplicity of meanings that warrants a hermeneutic approach to culture.

It is in the thick of social doing, of quotidian behaviours especially, that symbolic meaning is revealed. He says, "Human behaviour is...symbolic action – action which, like phonation in speech, pigment in painting, line in writing, or sonance in music, signifies..." (1973, 11). Symbolic action should be broadly understood to encompass more than just overt social behaviours, but also internal, psychical machinations: "our values, our acts, even our emotions are cultural products" (1973, 57). Thus, in Geertz's conception of the culture – the social imaginary – the line between an 'individual' and her cultural milieu is difficult to distinguish: each is dependent on the other.

For Geertz, the symbolic organises human life. He talks about "symbol systems" in terms of which our lives are "patterned". These "Culture patterns – religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological - are "programs"; they provide a template or blueprint for the organisation of social and psychological processes." (1973, 235).

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[15] Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, (1957, 60-66).

These systems are such that they constitute, for Geertz and unlike for Ricoeur, a realm in their own right, “though ideational, it does not exist in someone’s head; though unphysical it is not an occult entity” (1973, 11).

To summarise, the first moment represents the sum of available meanings, associations and implications – which together comprise a nexus - that arise in a given instance of the social imaginary. The task of a Geertzian hermeneutics, then, is to delineate and document in ‘thick description’ as much of the symbolic load as possible. But this task is always delimited by the ‘lens’ of the observer: one is never outside of an imaginary, and thus one’s powers of interpretation are always informed to a greater or lesser extent by or through the prevailing tropes of one’s imaginary, and the lack of insider knowledge of the thing studied. This interpretive lens is that implied by the *second* moment of non-congruence: ideology.

Moment Two

The second moment of non-congruence refers to the gulf between a social trope and the *interpretation* of this trope. Ideology, for Ricoeur, is the means by which collectives and their members render the impersonal realm of social symbols meaningful, to allow for meaningful engagement in and through the social imaginary. Ricoeur implicitly refers to this second moment as the “distance that never ceases to grow between real practice and interpretations” (1991a, 178). In the *Lectures*, Ricoeur quotes a passage from Althusser in which he refers to ideology as “not a simple relation but a relation between relations, a second degree relation.” (1986, 135)

Ricoeur tells us that ideology’s modus operandi is “simplification, schematisation, stereotyping” (1991a, 178) in aid of its main function: integration of the group, and the positing of group identity. As Geertz observes, “complexities are possible, if not practically, without end, at least logically so” (1973, 7), and this is why a process of simplification is necessary. This second moment is perhaps analogous to ethnographic analysis as “sorting out the structures of significance.” (Geertz, 1973, 10). In other words, ideology works through sifting through the morass of symbolic meanings, reducing them to manipulable and graspable ideas and organising group identity (meaning and purpose) in light of these ideas, projecting our “everyday interests...upon the horizon of the world” (1991b, 133).

Thus, gender tropes, like women being naturally meek, nurturing, vulnerable and intellectually weaker are taken to be facts of sex, rather than socially imagined designations. These tropes obscure the many overlapping traits between men and women, the countless examples where they do not correlate to experience, as well as cultural variations. But ideology renders complex patterns simple and navigable. To take another example, economic growth has ideological status in its ability to systematise and simplify complex economic forces, it becomes

shorthand for ‘good’ or ‘healthy’ or ‘progress’, without having to take account of what constitutes growth and what its critical limits (e.g. planetary boundaries[16]) might be. However, in its ability to signify social progress, it takes on an important role in social identity.

Ideology provides a group with “fundamental directions” (Ricoeur, 1991a, 314). So, ideology then is the map through which the signs of the symbolic world can be read and navigated. Beyond providing a means of interpreting the terrain (a map), ideology provides a sense of purpose. Thus economic growth is the map through which the terrain of economic – and thus social – organisation of society is rendered meaningful, and it is also the destination for journeying in that terrain: the purpose of going to work and accepting wage freezes and inflation is economic growth. One might surmise that when the consequences of ideology impact the living standards of those whose lives it orients that its fundamental legitimacy might be brought under scrutiny. But, as Geertz observes, it is precisely “a loss of orientation that most directly gives rise to ideological activity.” (1973, 238).

Ricoeur was clear that ideology, in its healthy functioning, performs an invaluable social role: it provides the social identity necessary for social cohesion. This cohesion is the result of providing a framework that makes the symbolic world *coherent*. Economic growth, for example is the common factor that coheres tropes such as austerity, arms deals with dictatorships, consumer spending and so on. But Ricoeur’s other central claim for ideology was that it had a pathological tendency too: too easily would ideology lose sight of itself as ideology, mistaking itself for ultimate truth. In the above example, in mainstream discourse economic growth is almost never critically discussed, its value or purpose is never questioned, but rather it is assumed to be valuable in its own right, as if its status as an ultimate value were self-evident.

Ricoeur refers to “a certain lack of transparence” (1991a, 178) by which we might understand ideology’s failure to recognise its interpretive and derivative nature. He claims that this pathology emerges from “reinforcing and repeating” simplified tropes. This act of repeating something has the effect of creating familiarity and acceptability, and puts “beyond question” (1991b, 133) that which it asserts as real. The act of reinforcing meanwhile helps solidify the sense of identity that ideology produces.

To summarise so far: we are thrown into a world replete with multiplicities of complex symbol patterns that already exist. However, in order to engage with this world, the complexities need simplifying. The results of this

[16] See Rockström et al, 2009.

process of simplification is ideology: a framework for interpreting the symbolic world and rendering it coherent, and through which social identity is forged.

To understand the meanings behind the symbolic realm and their ideological interpretations it is necessary to dig down into the contextual associations of the social imaginary, in a way that was only really possible through what Geertz, after Ryle, calls ‘thick descriptions’ (1973).

From Ricoeur and Geertz then, emerges a picture of the plane of symbols that is interpreted (simplified) through the structuring plane of ideology that gives symbolic meanings coherence, thus providing a collective with its identity. We see that ideology is prone to oversimplification, to obscuring its interpretive nature. As such ideology becomes dogmatic, and impervious to reason and critical reflection.

CASTORIADIS

Castoriadis also posits an analogous idea to non-congruence, that of defunctionalisation, as explained above, and in doing so also recognises the importance of the symbolic in constituting social life. But unlike Ricoeur and Geertz, Castoriadis differentiates between symbols on the one hand, and significations on the other. And it is in this distinction that I think we can also detect two moments of non-congruence in Castoriadis’ thought as well.

Moment One

The first moment for Castoriadis lies between the natural world and bio-physical actions on the one hand, and the symbolic meaning they acquire for us on the other. As such, social institutions as much as subjective representations are, as he puts it, ‘cathected’ (e.g. 1997a), that is invested with particular meaning. For Castoriadis, the symbolic refers to “the capacity to see in a thing what it is not, to see it other than it is” (1987,127). He uses the terms symbol and signifier/signified synonymously (e.g. 1987, 117; 122). He gives the example of “a property title, a bill of sale is a symbol of the socially approved ‘right’ of the owner...” (1987, 117) and of course, the property in question will have symbolic meaning, just as the notion of a right is also symbolic. However, like Ricoeur, Castoriadis seems uncertain about the symbolic. This uncertainty pertains to the ubiquity of symbols.

Castoriadis begins by claiming that there are certain acts that are not symbolic, and he gives the examples of "work, consumption, love, child-bearing, war" (1987, 117). This seems to be at odds with the claim that appears on the same page that, "everything in the social historical world is inextricably tied to the symbolic." (1987, 177), and with the later assertion that the biological substrate of humans is antifunctional and afunctional, "Human sexuality is not functional, nor is war." (1997a, 357). By this Castoriadis is recalling his claim that human life – as individuals and collectives – cannot be reduced to mere bio-physical functions alone: their meaning can only be understood symbolically. Elsewhere, however, he claims the symbols through which humans forge society and navigate the world are endless, "one could never stop enumerating them." (1997a, 377). Adams observes that "the symbolic...is enigmatically related both to the being of the world and the social imaginary in a more reciprocal relation than Castoriadis explicitly argues." (2011, 132). As with Ricoeur, a certain amount of extrapolation and interpretation is necessary.

The symbolic realm of signifiers and signifieds is always already existing: any given society exists among the symbolic repertory – as Charles Taylor puts it (2004) – of previous societies. Of this symbolism, Castoriadis notes that society does not have free run of meaning, "it cannot draw its signs from just anywhere" (1987, 121). This is to say that meaning is not arbitrary but possesses a level of rationality (1987, 125). However, symbols are "full of interstices and of degrees of freedom" (1987, 125).

Moment Two

Where the first moment comprises the gap that exists between the stuff of the world – both natural and artificial – and the meaning it conveys, the second moment consists of the gap between the symbols of the first moment and collective *significations*. Castoriadis notes the "distance" between a society as institut*ing* significations, and what is otherwise already institut*ed* – i.e. symbols and signifiers of the first moment. (1987, 114, emphasis added). In this observation of distance, Castoriadis seems tacitly to have perceived this second moment of non-congruence.

Castoriadis mentions three kinds of significations, the perceptual (relating to things in the world), the rational (relating to cognition and concepts) and the imaginary (relating to the purely creative) (1987, 139). For the purposes of clarity, I think it is not necessary to strictly observe this tripartite distinction: it is far from clear that significations are anything other than a complex mix of the three, as Castoriadis himself notes (1987, 139). Arnason puts it as follows, "the three factors interpenetrate in complex and often ambiguous ways. Imaginary significations shape patterns of perception as well as frameworks and horizons of rationalisation..." (2014, 34).

As this quote implies, it is the *imaginary* dimension that is most relevant here – and to Castoriadis' work in general. This is because it is only the radically imaginative capacity of the humans and human collectives that can account for each society's distinctive patterns of symbols implied by non-congruence. This distinctiveness is what he refers to as a society's *ecceity*.

These imaginary significations differ from symbols and signifiers/signifieds, not in that they are of a different nature – as we shall see – but that they are of a different order. Castoridis' novel and insightful move here is to question what lies underneath the "symbolic networks" (1987, 136) of social institutions that constitute the first moment of non-congruence. That is, he forces the analysis further, asking "why this system of symbols and not another? What are the meanings conveyed by symbols, the system of signifieds to which the system of signifiers refers?" (1987, 136). He recognises that for meaning to occur, the signs have to point to something that does not signal something beyond itself (1987, 137). These are the organising principles that make sense of systems of symbols. They are inferred from the fact that symbols derive their meaningfulness from something: "Significations... are not there *in order to* represent something else, [they] are like the final articulations the society in question has imposed on the world, on itself, and on its needs, the organising patterns that are the conditions for the representability of everything that the society can give to itself" (1987, 143, emphasis original).

THE FUNCTION OF SIGNIFICATIONS

Significations, like ideology for Ricoeur, serve the purpose of organising and structuring the complex world of symbols. Each society, Castoriadis claims, posits its imaginary significations in an attempt to give itself identity, through which to make sense of the world. He says: "Every society up until now has attempted to answer a few fundamental questions: who are we as a collectivity? What are we for one another? Where and in what are we? What do we want; what do we desire; what are we lacking? Society must define its identity, its articulation, the world, its relations to the world and to the objects it contains, its needs and desires. Without 'answers' to these 'questions', without these 'definitions' there can be no human world, no society culture – for everything would be undifferentiated chaos. The role of imaginary significations is to provide an answer to these questions, an answer that, obviously, neither 'reality', nor 'rationality' can provide." (1987, 146-7).

Thus the second moment of non-congruence is for Castoriadis, just as for Ricoeur, one of *coherence*. Castoriadis explicitly recognises the importance of coherence, and its relationship to significations. He defines coherence in this context in the broadest sense, noting that even apparent contradictions, tensions and crises occur in response to the essential unity, the identity of a society (1987, 47-48). Drawing attention to the presence of coherence, he asks "what makes this society hold together; what makes the rules (legal or moral) that govern the behaviour of

adults coherent with their motivations; what produces a well-defined structure of the human personality in this culture; what makes this culture susceptible to certain neuroses and not to others; what makes all of this connect up with a view the world" (1987, 46-47). The second moment is the imposing of an "organisation, a structure" (1987, 47). In a later text, Castoriadis also comments that coherence is an internal constraint of the radical imaginary – to which imaginary significations belong. He specifically draws attention to the coherence that exists between imaginary significations and their corresponding institutions (including symbols and signifiers), to which we will turn shortly: "This is the enigmatic unity and substantive kinship between artefacts, beliefs, political regimes, artistic works, and of course human types of belonging to the same society and the same historical period" (1994, 335).

We can see from the above then that for Castoriadis the coherence that produces patterns and sets of symbolic networks and institutions serves the ultimate purpose of social cohesion: it helps society come to know itself as a group; and conversely it is the result of a society finding its unique social-historical identity. Castoriadis claims that giving itself an image of itself is an "essential moment" of the "choice of objects and acts etc, embodying that which, for it, has meaning and value." (1987, 149). This choosing of objects implies of course that this array of objects and acts already exists, thus tacitly revealing the two moments of non-congruence that I am claiming. Indeed, Castoriadis claims that the creation of significations is "*bildung*...Setting to order" (1997a, 343). This setting to order is "built on the ruins of earlier symbolic edifices" (1987, 121). Significations act as the "invisible cement holding together this endless collection of the real, rational, and symbolic odds and ends that constitute every society, and as the principle that selects and shapes the bits and pieces that will be accepted there" (1987, 143). Castoriadis adds an interesting aside on this point in a later text: the word religion in fact derives from "religere: to bind [*lier*] not only the members of a collectivity but everything, absolutely everything that presents itself, and to bind the former with the latter." (1997a, 343).

What exactly are significations? Castoriadis notes that they do not have a precise place of existence (1987, 143), and that they can "be grasped only indirectly and obliquely" (1987, 143). I suggest then that significations are like the wind. We can see evidence of the wind in its howling, rattling of doors, shaking and swaying of branches, but what we perceive in these moments is not the wind itself, but evidence of the wind. Because significations are ultimate, they do not have any one final form – because every form points to something else. Castoriadis gives the example of God. Although we are capable of grasping the concept of God, it is nonetheless impossible to say what kind of a thing God is. For Castoriadis, God is the paradigmatic signification. He says, "Imaginary social significations are those that are truly primary, denote nothing and connote just about everything – it is for this reason that they are so often confused with their symbols" (1987, 143). God and economic growth are significations that exist to make sense of the rest of the symbolic realm we inhabit; they are both beyond question, somehow possessing sufficient explanatory power in themselves; and neither possible to pinpoint per se, but both are abundantly clear throughout the social imaginary. It is in this way that they "denote nothing and connote just about everything".

We can start to see, then, that the hermeneutics of significations and symbols are diametrically opposed. Where symbols must be interpreted backwards (what underlies this meaning?), significations must be read the opposite way, in terms of their manifestations (what instantiations of this signification exist?). The former simplifies, in that many symbols are explained by one signification. The latter cannot explain, but merely exemplifies by pointing to several examples. Thus, the following distinction is possible: the hermeneutic method of symbols is explanatory; whilst for significations it is exemplificatory.

Significations are exemplified by corresponding symbols in the social imaginary. In particular, Castoriadis makes extensive use of a particular form of symbol: the institution. Institutions can be understood as the symbolic hubs of particular significations. For example, the church (or a church or temple) is the institutional hub of God: it is where the effects of the signification, God, are organised in the imaginary realm of society. Churches, as hubs, have a network of associated symbols which, in various ways and to varying degrees, reveal God. Of course, with 'central' significations like God, their effects are identifiable throughout the social realm, in all kinds of other institutions, for example schools and theatre. However, certain institutions are explicitly dedicated to the explication of certain significations.

Each institution is evidence of an organising signification but does not exhaust that signification. The institution is a vehicle, or a body for a signification. Incorporation, as the incarnation of a signification, encapsulates the idea, and indeed is made use of in theology (Eucharist as corpus Christi; Krishna as an avatar of Vishnu). But unlike the human body, which is coextensive with the human individual, the institution does not exhaust the signification: its failure would not spell the collapse of the signification. Nonetheless, the institution is existentially connected to significations: they must be instituted, and this can only happen through the creative power of significations, which are instances, as shall be explored in the next chapter, of the radical imagination.

As said, institutions are symbolic hubs that permeate the social realm and serve to organise and structure collective life. They pertain to such diverse phenomena such as democracy; university; Christmas; etiquette; gift-giving; religion and so on. Castoriadis also develops the idea of 'legein' and 'teukhein', which can be understood as two complementary human powers of instituting. In brief, they represent, respectively, the capacity for language and social doing, very broadly construed. These two powers can be understood as the vital links between the social imaginary and the individual. For although institutions exist in their efficacy in their own right, they are still, in some senses, dependent on the ongoing institution by denizens of the imaginary for their existence and efficacy. In this sense, there is perhaps a connection to Marcel Mauss' 'living institutions', which Arnason describes as "patterns of action and thought imposed on the individuals but also subject to changes in the course of historical events." (2014 103).

The work of Caroline Criado Perez (2019) is instructive at this point. She found that women are systematically excluded from social life because society is designed using male data sets. As such, social artefacts - from car seat belts to industrial safety gear - do not offer women the level of protection they offer men, even when they purport to be unisex. These examples illustrate that patriarchal tropes do not have to 'live' in the minds of individuals - even unconsciously – for patriarchy to exist and to continue to do so. As Arnason puts it, this "complex of relations [is] irreducible to shared norms or intersubjective understandings" (2014, 102).

The artefacts of the social imaginary institute the patriarchy signification. However, these artefacts did not create themselves, but were instituted through the powers of *legein* and *teukhein*, which systematically ignore female data sets. Furthermore, if the institution of driving were to be abandoned, the seatbelt that institutes patriarchy independently of individual intentions, would cease to be efficacious, would cease to institute patriarchal norms.

All of this is to suggest that the imaginary is not just a process, but a *trans-subjective living realm* that necessarily supervenes on social life, that is in fact one of the necessary conditions for social life, but that is intimately and existentially related to the actions of its denizens.

In the preceding discussion of the institutions that exemplify significations, we can begin to detect a certain circularity, "the circle of the created and the elements of the creation" (Castoriadis, 1997b, 184). Once instituted, the manifestations of significations that were once radically new, become familiar, and hackneyed. As institutions with accompanying symbols, they become part of the symbolic landscape that is largely deterministic. A central idea that informs much of his work is the ongoing tension between the determined and the indeterminate. Castoriadis stood apart from the structuralists of his day who believed that an examination of the structures and systems of a given society was sufficient to explain behaviour: in other words, human action is determined by the structures in which they occur. But Castoriadis recognised that this was only partially true. For one, as we have seen, he reasoned that there was an imaginary element that undergirds social structures rendering them meaningful. Furthermore, Castoriadis recognised that each society is *sui generis* – unique, and only really meaningful in terms of its own significatory frames of reference. From this fact, Castoriadis inferred the radical imagination/imaginary, the central characteristic of which is that it is nondeterminate. Nondeterminism is the quality of being neither thoroughly deterministic/determinable, nor thoroughly indeterministic/indeterminable. The fact of genuine creativity is evidence of the former, and the fact that there are patterns, structures, logic, coherence, in evidence throughout the human social realm, testifies to the latter.

This tension is important for the present study for two main reasons. The first is that it helps explain the apparent circularity of the two moments of non-congruence. That is, the symbolic realm is already there and to some degree limits what each society will make of it (determinate; moment 1), and that in representing the world to itself in its own image the realm of significations creates society anew (indeterminate; moment 2), but it can only do so through making use of the stability and coherence of organising institutions (determinate; moment 1). The dynamics of this circularity will be discussed in more detailed later chapters. For now, however, we should note how the circularity of meaning creation and institution in the social imaginary necessitates a hermeneutic approach. We have already observed the opposing hermeneutic methods appropriate for the interpretation of symbols and institutions on the one hand, and significations on the other. Castoriadis himself was keen to stress that hermeneutics was not proper to the study of imaginaries. The reason for this is his desire to stress the creative element at work here: for Castoriadis, the radical imaginary was genuinely *ex nihilo* – its effects could not be anticipated or deduced, and therefore could not be a matter of interpretation. However, by his own admission, "there can be no radical imaginary except to the extent it is instituted" (1997b, 184), and its institution is a 'gathering together' of the 'symbolic odds and ends' that already exist. The world is so densely strewn with the symbolic 'ruins' of other societies, that there exist countless permutations of meaning available under the framework of the significations of a given imaginary. As we have seen, significations are only available to us through interpreting their corresponding symbols and institutions. Adams observes that interpretation is "integral to the interrelations between world creation and imaginary meaning" (2011, 132).

As such, it would seem that a hermeneutic approach is the only means through which to begin to make sense of not just specific societies, as with the ethnography of Geertz, but of the structure of imaginaries per se.

The second reason is that it gives rise to the political project that is the impetus for all Castoriadis work, and which in turn informs the rationale behind this project too. He believed that the element of the radical imagination – the capacity of nondeterminism – was what made collective political autonomy possible. By autonomy, Castoriadis meant the capacity of a collective to self-determine, as opposed to the condition of heteronomy, in which the locus of power determining the circumstances of life does not intersect with those who experience those conditions. Autonomy requires a "self-reflexive, self-questioning turn" (Arnason, 2014,103), which in turn depends on an understanding of the imaginary realm as imaginary: as instituted, and, importantly, as changeable.

In presenting the respective, and divergent, treatments of the imaginary of Ricoeur and Castoriadis through the theme of non-congruence, I hope to have been able to show the significant overlap between their conceptions. Both Ricoeur and Castoriadis can be shown to recognise an already existing world of symbols that supervenes on, but is ultimately not reducible to, the bio-physical world, and that I have referred to as the first moment of non-congruence. Both, furthermore, recognise a second moment of non-congruence in which the existing symbols are systematised (or schematised), offering a given collective a framework through which to interpret the world. This

framework acts as the organising principle, as such giving *coherence* to the complex web of existing symbols; binding the group together. Both recognise the central role of the imagination in the constitution of the imaginary. From these two moments, we can extrapolate a basic structure of social imaginaries: that it comprises two planes of meaning. The first is the realm of symbols that permeate daily life, that mediate our social lives. The second plane is the hidden realm of structures that organise these meanings, giving society its coherence and character.

Furthermore, we can see that these two planes operate on a circular feedback loop: the organising structures reflect the symbols that already exist, whilst the symbols themselves reflect the organising structures. From this then, we can start to see a space for our two core themes: responsibility and coherence. Responsibility is afforded by the lability and efficacy of symbols that each of us interact with and through in the first plane, whereas coherence is implied in the organising principles of plane two. I explore these two planes in depth in Chapter Three and Four, respectively, and in Chapter Five discuss how the different modes of the imagination accounts for them. The insights yielded through a close reading of these two thinkers have provided us with foundational insights into the nature of social imaginaries, but not with a clear picture of the whole. As explained in the introduction, a sense of the whole is essential for a full understanding of the parts, and so in Chapter Two I turn to providing the skeleton of the social imaginary by depicting it as a system.

CHAPTER TWO: APPLYING SYSTEMS THINKING TO SOCIAL IMAGINARIES

Conceiving of imaginaries in terms of systems thinking is helpful for two reasons. Firstly, it helps us simplify (Reynolds, 2011) an inherently complex issue, and secondly, it indicates the elements that we might expect imaginaries to comprise, and this will provide us with the skeleton, in the sense of a complete set of parts, of social imaginaries. In other words, a systems view gives us the outline of a *model* for social imaginaries. If we can look to systems thinking for elements, our task is then to provide a substantive account of these elements and their inter-connections. In this chapter, I use the systems thinking approach outlined by Meadows (2008), and show how the various elements of systems models that she identifies have correlates in the social imaginary. At the end of this chapter, the reader should have a sense of the whole of the social imaginary, and a solid foundation from which to fill in the substance of those elements. The aim of this chapter then, in giving an overview, is to simplify the task of conceptualising imaginaries, recognising that – as the previous chapter made abundantly clear – such simplicity is, on the whole, lacking in the field of social imaginaries.

The aim of an overview, and the clarity it seeks to bring, serves a bigger purpose: when we use models to elucidate systems, we are doing so not to pretend to represent reality as such, but to get a grip on the whole such that we can seek to make improvements. As Reynolds puts it, such systems thinking is "used for pro-active interrogative and analytical work, rather than a contrivance at representing 'reality'." (Reynolds, 2011, 12). As such, I take it as fundamental to the project of amelioration that a simple model is provided.

I choose to use the account provided by Meadows' in her book, *Thinking in Systems* (2008) that was published after her death, because it is both ameliorative and simple. Furthermore, because her work has been extremely influential within the field of sustainability, and because she explicitly acknowledges the role of paradigms in systems interventions, I take Meadows' to be a fitting teacher in this field. That said, Meadows' definition of systems and her account of their elements is broadly acknowledged as representative of systems thinking (see Arnold and Wade, 2015). If there is one aspect of Meadows' account that stands out, it is her emphasis on virtues and responsibility.

Reynolds discusses three "frameworks" of 'critical systems thinking', which I take Meadows' contribution to be part of. Critical systems thinking, according to Reynolds, involves an emphasis on "whole systems judgments", particularly in reference to its epistemological dimension (2011, 14). This is particularly apposite for the present

study, because the social imaginary can be understood holistically – and indeed provides understanding – through the presence of a central organising principle, as I will argue in Chapter Four. The three frameworks that Reynolds identifies are: understanding, practice and responsibility. Even though they are mutually reinforcing, in this project, I primarily use an *understanding* framework. This is because, as I have said, imaginaries have not been adequately conceptualised in an overarching model. Reynolds and Howell (2010, 17) describe the understanding framework in the following terms: "Making sense of, or simplifying (in understanding), relationships between different entities associated with a complex situation. The prime intention is not to get some thorough comprehensive knowledge of situations, but rather to acquire a better appreciation of wider dynamics in order to improve the situation." This description encapsulates both the ameliorative and the elucidatory intentions of this project.

That being so, the motivation behind the project is avowedly applied and 'emancipatory': the purpose of the conceptualisation offered here is to draw out how it can be applied in practice, and the acute ethical and political implications that follow.

Meadows distinguishes between the structure of systems and their behaviour (2008, 1). The former pertains to elements and dynamics, and the latter to their trends and changes over time. This inquiry focusses on elucidating the structure of imaginaries but recognises that a deeper understanding would be gained from taking a historical perspective in order to map changes over time.

I am focussing on the *social* imaginary, the broad conceptual/normative paradigm that provides social meaning, guides social interaction, and binds members of a society together. I take it that all groups can – and do – have imaginaries, and that there are myriad 'nested' imaginaries *within* the social imaginary. For the purpose of simplicity, I will stick to the social imaginary, whilst taking a 'systems'[17] view that acknowledges that there are no definitive boundaries. The social imaginary exists in relation to other social imaginaries, to nested group-imaginaries, and to natural systems – including the biosphere and the human body, for example. All of these relationships will have impacts on a given social imaginary, and a full explication of a given imaginary would never be possible.

[17] It should be noted that I am specifically referring to systems thinking in this chapter, and not to any actual systems, even when I refer to systems thinking simply as 'systems' for short. Systems thinking is concerned with mental models (or maps or metaphors) that help understand something of how actual systems work in practice. The very notion of a system is, arguably, a facet of systems' thinking – in reality, all processes that demonstrate systems behaviours have no clearly discernible hard edges that can be known as discrete systems.

However, I also take it that the social imaginary is bigger than the sum of the parts of nested imaginaries (c.f. Meadows, 2008, 11). So, even though each denizen of a society is a member of a group imaginary – a school or institute, a religious organisation, a political party and so on – the sum total of these imaginaries would not be enough to bind all denizens together. I take it that all citizens of a society can relate to each other in some basic ways that those outside of that society would not be able to. Furthermore, it is not just a hypothetical scenario that I could meaningfully converse with a stranger from the other-side of the country: national governance and media, as well as (popular) culture more broadly, necessarily operates at a society-wide level. This is the particular phenomenon on which my inquiry centres.

In what follows I shall firstly give an example of a common kind of system that can also be said to be imaginary: games. I will then pick the example of 'Monopoly' to use throughout the chapter to help spell out the connections between systems thinking and social imaginaries. I turn to evidence in Meadows and Castoriadis that points to the soundness of interpreting social imaginaries through a systems lens. I then give a brief overview of the parts of systems that systems thinking identifies. The main body of the chapter discusses the various facets of systems and their social imaginaries' counterparts in terms of *coherence* and *responsibility*, respectively. Under the heading of coherence, I will show how imaginaries demonstrate the elements of systems, whilst emphasising those systems' parts that are particularly important for its coherence (namely, purpose and flows/feedback loops). Under responsibility, I will explore the ideas that Meadows discusses pertaining to purposeful interventions in systems (for example, leverage points, virtues and locating responsibility.

There is one particular model of a system that I think serves as a useful metaphor for the social imaginary – and indeed is arguably a kind of micro-imaginary: games. Wittgenstein (1953) famously used the example of games to show that we can have a concept of something that defies precise definition. Although I take it that there will inevitably be exceptions, it seems to me that many, if not most, games can be understood as a closed system. There are a set of parameters – rules – that govern the relationships between the elements of the game, that apply for a strictly delimited period. But unlike other temporary activities in which specific rules apply for the duration, like for example, voting at the ballot box, the purpose of the game at hand is entirely *intrinsic* to the game. Voting is a rule and time bound activity, but its purpose is to assist in democratic governance. Voting is the means, democracy the ends. A game, conversely, contains the means *and* the ends. This is to say that games represent micro paradigms, and this might explain why it is so hard to understand a game via description alone. A game is a world: with actors and agents, relationships, rules and limits, purpose, pitfalls, often chance, sometimes skill, and a gamut of emotions.

A game is, in essence, an imaginary: in order to play we must *imagine* the goal of the game as our raison d'être, we imagine that the particular counters *are* the players, we imagine that the rules really do matter, they really do limit our activity: if we fail to imagine these things, we are not able to play the game. We have all had experience

of playing a game alongside players who make a show of not caring, of refusing to 'play along'. Games exemplify what Castoriadis calls, in reference to social imaginaries, "meta-contingency" (1997, 315): to those on the inside of the game, the purpose and the rules are absolutely necessary, but to the those on the outside, the game looks entirely – often preposterously – arbitrary and contingent. And so it is with the social imaginary. But games are, of course, playful: the closed system is there to be re-interpreted, to be elaborated, the rules to be transgressed and re-imagined. This is the central paradox of a game – it is at once rule-bound, *and* the domain of free-play. And similarly, this, as we shall see in Chapter Five, is arguably the central paradox of the imaginary: it is both governed by the synthetic imagination that allows for its stability and reproduction, but must also be open enough to recognise its problems, and challenge its own assumptions, which is the role of the radical imagination. Castoriadis stands out as the thinker who acutely recognised this paradox, that he expressed as determinacy and non-determinacy, respectively (he uses the terms, "ensemblistic-identitary" and "magma", respectively, 1987).

So we can see that games are micro-imaginaries, and they are also systems[18]. We can take the example of 'Monopoly' to make this point more clearly. Monopoly comprises 'stocks': the players' counters, property, money, and certain perks. It comprises interdependent relationships between the stocks: players own property, property value depends on its location and the amount of buildings it boasts, but the actual value depends on chance encounters (whether another player ends up paying you rent; whether you have to pay income tax and so on). In order for play to happen, there are various 'flows': money circulates between players, the bank and free parking; players take it in turns to play; and chance elements can interrupt flows of goes or cash. These flows create feedback loops. The stock of money is finite, no extra money is brought in. The accumulation of wealth concentrates wealth, which is a positive feedback loop. In order to mitigate, or at least slow down, this positive feedback loop, there are certain balancing elements, such as chance cards that redistribute cash or opportunity, which act as a negative feedback loop.

IMAGINARIES AS SYSTEMS

In the previous chapter, I emphasised the role of coherence in finding meaningful structure in imaginaries. Coherence is what renders something a collective or organisation, rather than just as mere aggregate. And it is in the idea of coherence that we see the first overlap between imaginaries and systems: Meadows opens chapter one of *Thinking in Systems* with the following observation "A system isn't just any old collection of things" (2008, 11). She goes on to offer the following definition: "A system is an interconnected set of elements that is *coherently*

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[18] Meadows gives the example of a football team as a system (2008, 11), and also uses the idea of a game as a metaphor to explain systems, "look beyond the players to the rules of the game" (2008, 12).

organised in a way that achieves something." (2008, 11, emphasis added). Meadows also gives examples of social groups and societies as systems, and furthermore discusses the idea of social paradigms in the context of systems (2008, 162-165). So, from the perspective of a systems thinker, imaginaries would seem to fit the definition.

Castoriadis explicitly refers to the networks of meaning that are integral to the cohesion of social groups as "sanctioned symbolic systems" (1987, 117). He also claims that "systems consist in relations of symbols to signifieds" and that a "symbolic system must be handled coherently" (1987, 122), indeed he goes so far as to say that "a society *is* a system of interpretation" (1997b, 9, emphasis original). Similarly, Geertz speaks of culture as "an interworked system of construable signs" (1973, 15) and "specific systems of symbolic meaning" (1973, 55), and Ricoeur refers to the domain of social imagination as "a system of social action" (1991, 300).

Later on in the *Imaginary Institution of Society*, however, Castoriadis appears to cast doubt on the idea of imaginary as system, on the grounds that it implies that all parts are definable, all relationships are in theory knowable and determinable, and that a system could be decomposed and recomposed without alteration (1987, 176 ff). We might suggest that Castoriadis' apparent hostility here to the societies-as-systems view may stem from his view that "the distinguishing feature of such models is their tendency to construe society as a closed system" (Klooger, 2009, 48). When one understands that the idea of radical indeterminacy at the "social-historical" level is crucial to Castoriadis' intellectual and political project, we can understand his mistrust of modelling imaginaries as a closed system.

Yet such sweeping claims for the reach and nature of systems is hardly reflective of the view of systems that Meadows puts forwards. She recognises that all systems are merely models, and are as such only *partial* representations – systems are deeply interconnected with each other, one can go so far in stipulating parts, but to know the whole would be impossible (e.g. 2008, 172; 2001). And neither does Meadows speak only of closed systems – which would lead to the sort of determinism that Castoriadis recoils from. Such closed systems would seem to be a facet of "hard systems thinking", which takes a positivist, rather than interpretivist approach and focuses on homeostatic, closed, controllable systems (Reynolds, 2011, 39). It is an interpretivist approach that Meadows takes. For her, systems are sets that comprise complex inter-relations between parts, that are dynamic and change over time, and are coherent, rather than random.

Castoriadis uses the term 'magma' in an effort to emphasise the fluid nature of the social imaginary, whilst also recognising its regularities. I think that Meadows' view of systems is perfectly compatible with Castoriadis' notion of magma. Part of the nature of the magma is the interrelationships between its elements: "Every phenomenon is an *inter*phenomenon" (1984, 167, emphasis added). Rosengren develops the magma metaphor in the following way: "Magma allows for change through the digging of new channels, through blocking or diverting streams, through the break-up of barriers, but not through getting rid of the existing magma altogether." (2014, 72).

Unknowingly, Rosengren has captured in his description of magma the dynamics of flows and feedback loops that are hallmarks of systems!

Lastly, Castoriadis cautions that the ruination of a "theoretico-practical system" (i.e. a social imaginary) follows from mistaking such systems as able to "enclose the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" (1997, 113). This is a sentiment that Castoriadis shares with Meadows, who is equally keen to emphasise that a system is but a model, and could never hope to capture the full picture – not least because the boundaries that enclose the model are to some extent arbitrary. She says: "Our models fall far short of representing the world fully." (2008, 87).

My intention with introducing systems here is to illuminate the parts of imaginaries that will then guide and structure my inquiry. I am not concerned here with adding anything to the discussion on systems (except that an interesting example of systems is the social imaginary), and my engagement with systems per se will remain brief: my intention is to clarify imaginaries through appealing to the structures of relevant adjacent concepts, not to convolute the matter by making segues into other terrains.

As we saw with our example of Monopoly above, a system comprises a set of interconnected elements, known as **stocks**, that exist in **hierarchical structures,** undergirded by an **organising principle**. The elements of a system are not stagnant, but rather compromise a dynamic gestalt, despite changes to specific parts. The dynamics of the systems are controlled by **flows** – the inflow or outflow or parts that provide overall stability, or else disequilibrium in the system. The stability of the system depends on the kinds of feedback loops that mediate the flows and the stocks. A balancing feedback loop creates stability, and is achieved by a **negative feedback loop**: if there is too much inflow, the outflow counterbalances this. A **positive feedback loop** is one which is given to growth, and is wholly or partially closed off to outside influences. This can make for a robust system, but such robustness is not necessarily healthy (e.g. in the exponential growth seen in cancer cells and population sizes). A system exists to fulfil **a purpose** or function. Meadows distinguishes between purpose and function by suggesting that purposes pertain to animate or conscious systems, and functions to inanimate and non-conscious systems (2008, 15). Thus, even though a heap of sand comprises parts and flows, its existence is arbitrary and random, and there is no underlying function – or rationale – to its existence.

COHERENCE IN SYSTEMS AND IMAGINARIES

Stocks

In the social imaginary, stocks are often known as symbols (e.g. Geertz, 1973; Ricoeur, 1991, 179) and signs/signifiers (e.g. Castoriadis, 1987;), which I discussed in the previous chapter. Geertz describes speaks of "an accumulated fund" (1973, 55) of symbols, and Taylor of the "repertory" (2004, 25), both of which terms seem to capture the notion of stock.

Just as a good grasp of the various stocks of a particular game will enable you to play it competently, so too does a good grasp of the stocks of a particular social imaginary enable you to participate in that society: the better your grasp, the more meaningful your participation. The stocks of a system are also its most visible element: it is through the stocks that we get a measure of the system as a whole – whereas other elements, like purpose and flows are often not directly experienced. The stocks then are in some sense representative of the system as a whole. The notion of representation is captured in social imaginaries in the ideas of signifiers and signs: the social phenomena in question have hidden depths of meaning. Castoriadis speaks of "the 'figures' that render society visible to itself" (1987, 130). It is because of their *expressive* character, that I refer to these social phenomena – the 'stocks' of the social imaginary – as 'articulations': they articulate the core ideas of the social imaginary. As Lennon puts it, the imaginary is a world "expressive of possibilities for living affectively and effectively within it." (2015, 11). I discuss the nature and epistemological functions of articulations in Chapter Three.

The stocks in Monopoly comprise the stuff – material and otherwise – that are necessary for the game to be played. These include the counters, the bank notes, the property title cards, the board, the property sets and so on. The individual elements of systems' stocks are often interchangeable – if any of the elements are lost, they can easily be replaced without serious impact on the system itself. Thus, if you lose "the boot" counter, you could replace it with a coin or a thimble for example, and the game would be unaffected. Indeed, sometimes *all* of the elements of the stock can be replaced and still not significantly affect the workings of the system. Thus, Monopoly branches out of its original London location to regional locations, even fictitious ones; the paper money could be lost or the denominations changed; the values of the property could be changed.

The fungibility of stocks in a system, which is perfectly evidenced in the case of games, points to the role of the elements of stock as *representatives*. Elements are, in other words, merely instruments that are used to conveniently represent nodes in a complex that has a broader purpose. As representatives, they are place-holders (c.f. Haslanger, 2016) that can easily be replaced, and their value is determined purely in relation to their ability to fill that place. This kind of extreme instrumentalism gives rise to ethical problems when the stocks of a given system comprise *subjects* – ends in themselves. Slaves were viewed precisely in this way: as fungible stock, with no intrinsic value. Non-human animals are still overwhelmingly treated, literally, as *live*-stock, and wild animals are often dismissed merely as specimens within ecosystems: their value is determined solely in relation to the robustness of the overall 'stock' of the species.

In the next chapter I discuss how the social imaginary articulations supervene on objects. As such, meanings can come and go, where their host remains. Ordinarily, however, we do not perceive an articulation in this bisected manner: as a physical substrate and *then* a social meaning. Rather, both are perceived together in seamless unity. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, to perceive something in the world is "to see an *immanent* sense bursting forth from a constellation of givens" (2012, 23, emphasis added). The idea of meaning being immanent to the articulations characterises our experience of the social world. But I suggest that the meaning is not immanent to a specific object, but rather to the complex which contextualises that meaning and gives it salience. I discuss these issues in Chapter Three.

The task of ameliorative analysis as for diacritical hermeneutics is separating the object from its meaning, especially when that object is a subject. But the greater task, it would seem, is to engender such capacity at large. One of the ameliorative purposes of this study, as mentioned in the introduction, is to render the social imaginary – with its fictions and fantasies – broadly intelligible *as such*.

As we saw in the definition of systems above, the various parts of the total stock are interconnected. In Monopoly, the various counters that move around the board are related to each other in that they each represent a player, the counters are related to the property when they 'land' on the space, the properties are related to each other, in terms of areas, value structures, development potential, and likelihood of being landed on and so forth. Indeed, to say that the parts of a system are interconnected is tautologous: what makes a system *is* a set of interconnected parts (in dynamic relation), what makes something part of a system is that it is interconnected with the other parts. If none of the pieces of a game of Monopoly were connected to each other, there wouldn't be a game of Monopoly. The interconnection of parts in a system is such a truism that it can seem insignificant. But, where parts are connected in a system or complex, there must surely be some underlying structure that exists in virtue of which these interconnections obtain. We know that in Monopoly the boot, the ship and the hat are connected to the sets of properties in various colours: but what is it that makes this so? To link this back to the insights of the previous chapter: a system's stocks are related to each other in virtue of cohering structures, in the way that a social imaginary's plane of symbols is rendered coherent through the plane of underlying structures and principles.

This leads us on to the next tier of systems, that Meadows calls 'hierarchy', and what I think of as structures. To jump ahead of ourselves, I suggest that the structures are what link together the stock (or articulations) with the ultimate purpose or goal of the system (which I will turn to next). Thus, in the case of a game of Monopoly, the ultimate goal is to gain such a monopoly over property and wealth that your opponents are squeezed out of the game. This objective, however, needs a set of structures in order to be realised. These structures, in the case of games, are known as the rules. Thus, in Monopoly, each player has one go at a time, by rolling the dice, moving the number of spaces, and then either ignoring, buying, developing, or paying rent depending on the ownership

status of the property. These rules create structures around buying and selling; developing; taking or missing turns, and so on.

Meadows points out that the purpose of hierarchies is that they stratify and simplify through the introduction of clusters of categories. She describes these hierarchical tiers as "stable intermediate forms" (2008, 83) that simplify through limiting the amount of information necessary at any given point. Thus, as we shall see later on, any given articulation (say, a gesture, a metaphor, a law) does not need to convey the whole ethos of the social imaginary (that would not be possible), rather it contains fragments of information that, when taken together, depict the whole ethos. In this way, the articulations are like pieces of a jigsaw: from looking at any given piece, you could not possibly extrapolate the whole picture, which only emerges when a critical mass has been assembled. Jigsaws can also be stratified into 'hierarchies': the individual pieces can be grouped into colours, shapes, edges and so on. In Chapter Four, I attempt to analyse the social imaginary to reveal the hierarchies, or structures. These structures categorise the imaginary into themes, that overall give a sense of the social imaginary as a whole.

When it comes to social imaginaries *per se*, the matter of organising structures and their relationship to practices and underlying meaning has not been fully elucidated, in my view. Castoriadis comes closest in recognising the fundamental importance of institutions, but he does not explain how institutions institute meaning (what he calls social imaginary significations). Several theorists use the term 'imaginaries' to discuss *specific* structures of social experience (e.g. Irigaray, 1993; Haslanger, 2012; 2016; Manne, 2018) and this diversity of actual experience within the social imaginary is something that Castoriadis' approach to social imaginaries has been criticised for overlooking (see e.g. Lennon, 2015 84). I would be inclined to suggest that this conception of imaginaries has more in common with a Bourdieuan 'habitus' (1977) than a Castoriadian social imaginary. Although there are several points of overlap, I think the emphasis of these concepts is quite different. But the confusion over the term imaginaries has flourished because it is frequently employed, but seldom carefully defined.

The distinction between habitus and imaginaries that I wish to draw can be demonstrated by the following vignette. There are several people out and about in a local park. At first glance, they may look as though they are doing broadly the same thing (enjoying the fresh air at leisure). But in the eye of their habitus, the experience of each starts to look quite different, and this is because their habitus determines which part of their experience is salient – what holds their attention. A man walking, gazing for extended periods into the trees, may be an avid birder, and for him, the sights and sounds of the birds he encounters provide the focus of his attention while out in the park. A woman walking alone may decide against taking the path through the woods – even though she would prefer to take it, and it is more direct – because of concerns of safety. She enjoys the fresh air, and listening to music, but she always keeps one earphone removed, and glances around her regularly. Her experience is significantly dictated by the social structures in which women do not feel completely safe in public; in which a cultural fascination with violence against women engenders a fear for her own safety that is not necessarily reflected in statistics; in which rape of women by men is rarely punished. A man in a wheelchair has to stick to paths, as the wheelchair will not work properly on the grass, and thus his attention is focussed on negotiating the

narrow path when cyclists, dogs, groups of runners or teenagers saunter by, oblivious to the space they take up, and noting the pot-holed state of the asphalt. This account of three different perspectives – that would nonetheless be shared by others in similar situations – combining personal preference, experience and social structures – seems to me to be a fair representation of habitus.

But what is not captured in this account are the unnoticed schemas (collective, orienting attitudes, beliefs and affects) that each of these people with their various habitus accents share in common. In the park example, although their attentions are captured by the stipulations of their respective habitus, each of these people will unlikely have noticed, but will have accepted as absolutely normal, the cars parked alongside the park, which people have driven to reach the park; the fact of owning beings of other species, and holding them on leashes; of eating sandwiches filled with the flesh of other beings, served in 'disposable' plastic containers; the practice of mowing grass very short; of the lack of diverse flora and entomofauna in the park. These things are so ordinary that they may appear natural – just matters of facts – or mundane and trivial. Of course, they are not "natural", but the consequences of particular ways of imagining the world, and they are far from trivial: the consequences of these practices are far reaching and extremely serious. Furthermore, these background practices speak to shared schemas that unite people of a given imaginary (who may not share a habitus). Yet, while those things that are relevant to a specific person's experience are salient to their habitus, the things that may go unnoticed, that are unremarkable are nonetheless, very salient to the imaginary schema.

However, I think the criticism of Castoriadis is still valid. It has been noted that although he was sensible to a dual instituting faculty – what he called *legein* and *teukhein* (broadly corresponding to speech and action, respectively), he focussed especially on the former, rather eclipsing the latter. This is a significant omission. I suggest that 'doing' constitutes a very significant part of our capacity to imagine, and especially to co-create an imaginary world. I discuss this in Chapter Three, specifically through the idea of 'grasping', which conveys the embodied, phenomenological nature of social epistemology.

But there is another, more pressing reason to draw attention to social practices. It is not that I believe that Castoriadis denied that there were different experiences that arose because of imagined power structures, but simply that he did not invest time in working out the relationship between specific social structures and the social imaginary as a whole. I take structure to refer to "systems of interdependent practices/relations" (Haslanger, 2016): in other words, clusters of practices or articulations that give rise to the habitus experiences described above.

I believe, however, that if the idea of coherence is taken seriously, then the patterns of behaviour and meaning that permeate the social imaginary can be uncovered. And furthermore, these patterns make sense of specific structures of experience. Specifically, I believe that these structures *schematise*, in a Kantian sense, the organising principle of the imaginary – perhaps the most important claim that I wish to make in this thesis – and the myriad articulations that mediate our experience of the world (I discuss this schematism in conjunction with Heidegger's

‘dispositions’, when elaborating the ‘synthetic imagination’ in Chapter Five). Haslanger observes, “the social relations defining gender and race consist in a set of attitudes and patterns of treatment towards bodies as they are perceived (or imagined) through frameworks of salience implicit in the attitudes.” (2012, 7). In Chapter Five, I suggest that these structures are patterned in attitudinal categories that *dispose* us and direct us to conceive of and relate to the world in particular ways. These attitudes give rise to practices – many of which are deeply egregious and warrant urgent attention. This moral dimension informs the ameliorative nature of this inquiry, and is another very important reason for theorising the concrete structures that gives rise to these practices. Castoriadis overlooked these issues, and sometimes it takes feminist, race and animal rights theorists, for example, to shine a light on them: they are not incidental. The issues that I take to be most problematic include, patriarchy, racism, speciesism and ecocide. In this thesis I will touch on all these issues, but will focus especially on patriarchy and speciesism. In Chapter Four I turn to the task of revealing these patterns of practices and, in Chapters Five and Six, I show how they schematise the imagination and instantiate the heart of the social imaginary, respectively.

Organising principle

For large complex systems to exist, there must be a focal point around which they cohere. As Castoriadis argues, the social imaginary involves not only representing through symbol systems but a specific “*mode* of representing, a categorisation of the world, a *mode* of valuation, and a *mode* of being affected” (1997b, 23-4, emphasis added). He also notes that each society is *sui generis* - it has its own specific character (“ecceity”) (1987, 167ff). The working assumption of my own and of Castoriadis’ thought (and, less emphatically, Meadows’) is that there must be something in virtue of which such coherence is possible. As Castoriadis puts it, there is something that accounts for the “internal cohesion of the immensely complex web of meanings that permeate, orient and direct the whole life of the society considered” (1997b, 7).

Meadows mentions the notion of organising principles, but does not elaborate on the matter beyond observing that they can give rise to extremely complex forms and structures (2008, 80). She also specifically mentions organising principles in reference to the Enlightenment social paradigm (2008, 81). I take it that the organising principle offers the specific system the *purpose* that Meadows identifies as intrinsic to systems. Meadows discusses the fact that systems have purposes or functions, but does not make the link to organising principles. She also does not distinguish between specific and general purposes. For example, the purpose of games in general might be leisure and social cohesion, whereas the purpose of a *specific* game is intrinsic to that game – as I argued above. For example, the purpose of the game of Monopoly is to make other players bankrupt.

Later on, following Shapiro (1997, 73) and Haslanger (2016), I shall distinguish between 'structures' and 'systems', the former being the abstract generalised social structures, and the latter being concrete instantiations. I suggest that we can similarly distinguish purpose in this way. A system in the abstract has a meta purpose, whereas a specific system has an immanent purpose. Thus in the case of games *per se*, we might postulate that their purpose is leisure/pleasure as well as social cohesion. Indeed, I am tempted to believe that the purpose of games per se is to help us develop imagination skills for the social imaginary: co-imagining a matrix of meaning that guides action.

In the case of social imaginaries, the meta purpose, I believe, is to provide the means or the medium via which a society is bound together as a society. It is the "web" (Geertz, 1973, 5; Castoriadis, 1997b, 7), the "analogical tie" (Ricoeur, 1991, 177) that binds us to each other, and without which society would not be possible. In my view, this binding web is essentially hermeneutic: it is a matter of mutually understanding what is meaningful. This meaning is carried by the articulations, as we have seen.

The immanent purpose of any given social imaginary is the same thing, in my view, as its organising principle. Castoriadis posits the notion of the social imaginary significations to refer to the ultimate notions that give a given imaginary its particular flavour (e.g. 1987, 359). I develop the idea of an organising principle much more systematically, however, and go so far as to suggest that the organising principle constitutes the *sine qua non* for a given imaginary. Where the various parts of a system are often changeable without causing much disruption, I claim in Chapter Four that without the keystone concept, as I refer to the organising principle, a given society would not be the society that it is. It is the keystone concept that provides a society with its peculiar character, and because the integrity of the whole depends on its robustness, it serves as the *keystone* – in the way that a keystone species provides an ecosystem with its dynamic integrity. The keystone concept is instituted by articulations, and, I suggest, mediated (i.e. schematised) by the attitudinal structures I mentioned above. The tiers of attitudes and structures of practice all but obscure the fact of the keystone concept. It is not immediately perceivable. Haslanger (2012) observes that structural analysis is necessary to reveal things that a purely phenomenological account cannot. I believe that the keystone concept is one such example. It percolates through layers of attitudes, and by the time that it manifests in the articulations, it is not directly observable. At least, not at the level of ordinary lived experience. If we take a systematic analysis to reveal the patterns of structures, we can reveal layers of attitudes. And once we have uncovered the keystone concept of a specific imaginary it should feel intuitively correct – after all, it is that in virtue of which the imaginary as a whole derives its character, and that should be tacitly, if nebulously and ineffably, familiar to all denizens of that imaginary. In Chapter Four, I suggest that the keystone concept of the contemporary western imaginary is 'Entitlement'. Entitlement is a dispositional concept. It remains to be seen whether keystone concepts must necessarily be dispositional, but I suspect this to be the case: the keystone concept infuses the imaginary not just with a flavour, but with an orienting sense of purpose: as Taylor puts it, "a wider grasp of the whole predicament" (2004, 25).

We can illustrate this idea, once again, in the case of Monopoly: the immanent purpose is to crowd out opponents from the property market. But if the immanent purpose is changed, the overall system starts to look very different. Indeed, originally Monopoly was conceived of as a game to educate *against* the perils of capitalism: "the game was originally called 'The Landlord's Game' and was designed precisely to reveal the injustice arising out of such concentrated property ownership, not to celebrate it." (Raworth, 2017, 149). Originally, the game had two sets of rules, "prosperity" in which acquisition benefited all players, and "monopolist" in which wealth concentrated to the wealthy. These were to be played in turn to highlight the effects of different economic policy (Raworth, 2017, 149)[19]. So, both games and social imaginaries have an immanent purpose (the aim of the game; the keystone concepts of the imaginary, respectively), which does not just direct how things go, but also (and therefore) gives them their distinctive character.

From Meadows' account of stocks on the one hand, and the hierarchies that categorise them, on the other, we see that systems thinking has a bisection analogous to the two planes of non-congruence that I postulated in Chapter One. This gives us confidence in our postulation, and the insights of Castoriadis and Ricoeur who tacitly recognised a stratification intrinsic to the social imaginary system. Furthermore, we have understood why this second tier is so important: they act as stores of information, that rationalise the articulations.

The flows of a system are what gives it its dynamism. Flows can contribute to the stable reproduction of a system, or cause it to become out of balance. If we take the example of Monopoly, we can identify flows of players between games, and within games there are flows of money, property, and play (i.e. taking turns). The latter are all flows within a closed system: once a game has begun there are no new elements added. As in Monopoly, so in capitalism: wealth tends to concentrate, because wealth accrues wealth. In systems speak, this is known as a positive feedback loop: the flows in question tend to produce more of the same, and this can create exponential growth (e.g. in populations), or relative growth (e.g. of certain actors' capabilities), and usually tends to destabilise the system over time. Because wealth concentrates, Monopoly has certain rules that are intended to thwart the positive feedback loop – taxes, rent, 'Chance' and so on. These are flows that tend in the opposite direction and serve to balance the feedback loop.

The change of players between games is an open flow. Oftentimes, a change of players makes very little difference to the overall game. Monopoly has been played the world over, by countless people and yet each new game is

[19] Supporting my idea that games operate as quasi-imaginaries, Elizabeth Magie, the Landlord's Game's inventor, said "it might just as well be called the Game of Life, as it contains all the elements of success or failure in the real world." (cited in Raworth, 2017, 149)

recognisably a game of Monopoly. That said, the introduction of new players allows for the introduction of different playing styles – for example, house rules.

In the case of imaginaries, there are flows of articulations and denizens, and by and large these do not significantly alter that imaginary. I suggest, however, that we can think about the two modes of the imagination – the engine of the imaginary – as constituting the inflow and the outflow, respectively. Geertz, for example, explicitly refers to "the *flow* of ...social action" (1973, 19, emphasis added). Interestingly, Castoriadis' preferred term for the social imaginary complex of significations, *magma*, neatly captures the nature of the flow and flux of the social imaginary (he also uses it to refer to the endless flux of the radical imagination). He also describes the social imaginary sphere as "...pulsating processes. Phases of dense intense creation [that] alternate with lulls, sluggishness or regression." (2007, 75).

I suggest that it is the 'synthetic imagination' (a re-interpretation of the Kantian productive imagination), that I explore in Chapter Five, that allows denizens of an imaginary to co-imagine a shared world. This is an inflow, not just in the sense that it makes the imaginary larger (although it is indeed responsible for the proliferation and variety of articulations), but in the sense that it *strengthens* the imaginary. The synthetic imagination is the flow that produces a positive feedback loop: every time an articulation is encountered or used, the salience of that articulation, and moreover, its underlying attitudinal structure and the keystone concept, is re-enforced. This will make it more likely to provoke congruent responses, and thus perpetuate the cycle of the social imaginary. The power of the synthetic imagination for sustaining the social imaginary is incredibly important: this, more than any other faculty, is what accounts for the possibility of social cohesion. Whereas many writers – Castoriadis included – refer somewhat dismissively to what is commonly known as the reproductive or secondary imagination, I want to emphasise what an important role it plays. That said, like any positive feedback loop, it will eventually lead to the destabilisation of the system if it is not kept in check by balancing flows. It is my view that we can profitably conceive of society's current predicament in this way: the synthetic imagination does such a powerful job at reproducing the attitudes of the status quo, most especially attitudes around entitlement, 'proprietarianianism', hierarchy and instrumentalism (as we will see in Chapters Four, Five and Six), that it has not been able – or willing – to respond to the broader systems' challenges in which it is embedded, most especially ecological and climate systems, despite recognising the urgency of the threat.

In order to balance out the positive feedback loop of the synthetic imagination, the radical imagination must also be active. Where the synthetic imagination produces closure in the system, the radical imagination creates the conditions for an open system. I think of it as an outflow, because it works perhaps primarily as a disruptive force. The radical imagination is able to take a critical perspective on the imaginary, to recognise it *qua* imaginary, and to question its assumptions, attitudes and practices. It also represents the creative faculty via which radically new – that is, following Castoriadis, non-determined – social forms can emerge.

In my view, a healthy imaginary will nurture the radical imagination: it is vital that a society has the capacity for correcting for mis-directions, such as the woefully misdirected pursuit of growth on a finite planet, the plundering of ecosystems, and the enslavement of sentient persons. Ricoeur cautioned that the radical imagination, what he called "utopia", was inclined to a pathology of its own: that it was prone to over-fantasising (1991a). I would not agree with this concern, however. Unlike the synthetic imagination, the radical imagination involves cognitive effort, which is difficult if not impossible to sustain to the point of pathology! In this sense, we might think of the relationship between the synthetic and radical imagination as analogous to that of what Kahneman called 'system 1' and 'system 2', heuristic and deliberative thought, respectively (2012). We depend upon the expediency of 'system 1', because 'system 2' is too cognitively taxing to be constantly in operation.

Furthermore, as Castoriadis saw, the radical imagination is not untethered: there are a host of constrictions that limit it (1997a, 332-337). Ricoeur implies, however, that ultimately 'utopia' is a form of social imagination, and as such is ultimately disposed towards social cohesion, even if it may reject a given instantiation of social cohesion. He says "What decentres us is also what brings us back to ourselves ... there is no movement toward full humanity which does not go beyond the given: on the other hand, elsewhere leads us back to here and now." (1991a, 314). I discuss the two modes of the imagination in detail in Chapter Five, and in Chapter Six show how they are relevant both to our current imaginary, and the project of transforming it.

Through the idea of systems flows, we can see how the stocks and the organising principle (the immanent purpose) of a system are connected: the flows are there to give the dynamism and momentum that helps orient the stocks in the service of the immanent purpose. And similarly, we will see that it is the imagination that provides the dynamics of the social imaginary, connecting the articulations with the keystone concept.

The above discussion reveals the progressive elements of a system; the stocks, their hierarchies and the organising principle, which are in turn connected through the flows. As such, we also know what to expect in terms of the system of the social imaginary: the articulations (Chapter Three) are stratified by tiers of attitudes and the keystone concept (Chapter Four), and these two planes are dynamically connected through the imagination (Chapter Five). This is the process through which the social imaginary system *coheres*.

RESPONSIBILITY IN THE SYSTEM

Meadows (2008, 145 ff and 166 ff) identifies a (non-exhaustive) set of what we might think of as virtues for systems thinking. I shall discuss a few here that are pertinent to the ideas explored later on in the thesis.

'Use Language with care...' (2008, 174). Meadows observes that much of the information that comprises system stocks are constituted by language. The words we use contribute to the tone and the agenda of the system: "a society that talks incessantly about productivity but that understands, much less uses the word 'resilience' is going to become productive and not resilient." (2008, 174). We can think of language as just one form of social imaginary articulation – although it is a particularly potent form. In Chapter Three, I discuss a variety of articulations, and show why they matter, and the ways in which they institute the character of the imaginary. For example, I examine the connections between the speciesism and sexism latent in slurs like 'cow' and 'bitch'. Even if they are used without malice or sexist or speciesist intent, they still serve to uphold and legitimate a society in which speciesism and sexism are rife.

'Expose your mental models to the light of day' (2008, 172). By mental models we can understand the assumptions or heuristics that we carry with us to navigate the social world. These maps also give the world its particular affective character and salience. But seldom do we reflect on these mental models: do our assumptions really hold water? I suggest that in order to critically appraise the ideas that undergird the social imaginary, we need to create a 'hermeneutic space' (see Chapter Five) – a disruption to our ordinary synthesising of experience in terms of existing tropes. This is one of the primary features of the radical imagination. In terms of diacritical hermeneutics, it allows us to bifurcate the articulations and their meanings, to expose the social imaginary as such, and to cultivate the mental space to reappraise. This illuminating of our mental models then works as a negative feedback loop, it offers the counterbalances necessary for systemic health. In Chapter Five, I discuss the critical function of the radical imagination.

'Pay attention to what is important, not just what is quantifiable' (2008, 175). There is a strong tendency in neo-liberal culture to prioritise the measurable, which is in turn taken as a proxy for value. As Meadows puts it, "if something is ugly, say so. If it is tacky, inappropriate, out of proportion, unsustainable, morally degrading, ecologically impoverishing, or humanly demeaning, don't let it pass. Don't be stopped by the 'if you can't define it and measure it, I don't have to pay attention to it' ploy. No one can define or measure justice, democracy, security, freedom, truth, or love. No one can define or measure any value. If no one speaks up for them.... they will cease to exist." (2008, 176-177). In terms of the social imaginary, Meadows seems to be describing the way in which the articulations (broadly understood) institute the ethos of a culture, and the idea that, moreover, each of us has a role in contributing to that culture. Furthermore, the lesson of social imaginaries here is that even though it is not possible to measure or quantify this ethos – its affective and normative feel - it would be a grave mistake to think that it was not of utmost importance. I will be demonstrating the role of the keystone concept in

creating the ethos (or character) of a social imaginary, and how such meaning is concealed from everyday experience. In other words, that which *could* be measured is undergirded by that which cannot.

‘Go for the Good of the Whole’ (2008, 178). This injunction is redolent of Castoriadis’ notion of ‘autonomy’ (see introduction), which recognises that the good of individuals depends on the health of the collective. In a time of coronavirus, of eco-climate collapse, the importance of putting the health of the whole above individual desires or short-term convenience is made painfully clear. The health of the imaginary requires denizens that have honed their radical imagination faculties to counteract the closure engendered by the positive feedback loops of the synthetic imagination. I discuss the radical imagination in Chapter Five, and again, in more concrete terms in Chapter Six. But the social imaginary is a living system that exists in virtue of its denizens: our actions – even small ones, matter for the collective good. This is why understanding where responsibility lies in the system is so important.

This leads me to the final point. Meadows discusses the idea of ‘leverage points’ – the areas of effective intervention in a system (2008, 145 ff) – and to my mind, recognising this is perhaps the most powerful form of engagement within the social imaginary, and thus its most important locus of responsibility.

Depending on what effect one wants to see, the leverage point will vary. If one wanted to intervene to rebalance a system that had a vigorous positive feedback loop, one would look to the flows that might disrupt it. In the case of Monopoly, as mentioned already, elements of chance, of taking goes in turn, of taxes, of rules around when one can develop property and so on, serve to re-balance the positive feedback loop of wealth accumulation. But the balancing in this instance is only temporary: ultimately Monopoly depends on this feedback loop to determine a winner and the end of play. In the case of a social imaginary that has an overly dominant synthetic imagination that serves to reinforce the status quo to the exclusion of flows of inter-system information, the radical imagination can be cultivated to keep the imaginary open to new circumstances and to change where necessary. If, however, one wants to significantly disrupt a system with the view to transforming it, then one must seek to identify leverage points that can most effectively and efficiently disrupt the status quo. In the case of sickness, treating symptoms is a way to mitigate its effects, but it is not an effective leverage point in terms of overcoming the illness in many cases. The most effective way to do that is to locate the source of the illness, and target that.

Meadows offers a list of leverage points in order of effectiveness. She notes that replacing elements of the stock is among the least effective leverage points (2008, 148). As we saw above, if we change the pieces of Monopoly (the money, the names of the properties and so), very little disruption to the game is caused. At the top of her list, Meadows places goals and paradigms, and the transcendence of paradigms (2008, 162-165). In the example of illness, the paradigm would be its aetiology, in the case of Monopoly (and indeed capitalism) the paradigm is

wealth accumulation at the expense of competitors. In the case of the social imaginary, the paradigm is the organising principle – the keystone concept. As mentioned above, I believe that the keystone concept is that in virtue of which a given imaginary is what it is. And thus, if the keystone concept is weakened and replaced, the imaginary is therefore transformed as well. Thus, if our purpose is the transformation of the imaginary then the keystone concept must be the focus of intervention. However, this is not so straightforward. I explained above that the keystone concept is concealed from ordinary day to day experience and thus requires systematic analysis to reveal it. This is the overriding purpose of this inquiry: the uncovering of the keystone concept and the explication of how this knowledge can be used as a leverage point. I explore this issue in depth in Chapter Six.

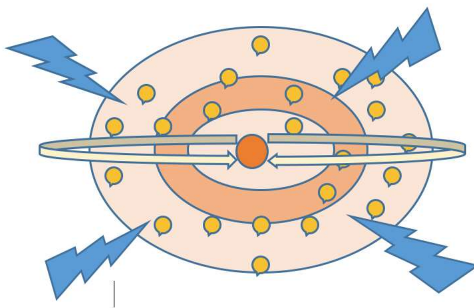

Figure one: Social imaginaries as system

THE IMAGINARY AS A SYSTEM

Key:

= Articulations. These are the **stocks** of meaning that comprise the social imaginary. They allow people to grasp their social milieu.

= The complex of the articulations of the imaginary. The **system** as a coherent whole.

= The **hierarchies** or structures that organise articulations in sets of practices – for example racist, sexist and speciesist structures.

= The **organising principle**, in virtue of which a social imaginary coheres. I call this the 'keystone concept.'

= The synthetic imagination: this is the dynamic by which the social imaginary is reproduced. It creates a **positive-feedback flow** of articulations/keystone concept.

The aim of this chapter has been to provide an initial overview of the terrain of social imaginaries, in terms of their constitutive elements. This sets us up with the bones of a model (figure 1), that will be helpful to keep in mind as we turn now to consider each of the parts in depth.

I considered imaginaries as systems in terms of our core themes: coherence and responsibility. Coherence is central to systems qua systems, and is accounted for by the presence of a system's purpose. I found it useful to distinguish between the meta purpose (i.e. of a system in general) and the immanent purpose (i.e. of a specific system). In the case of imaginaries (and also perhaps for games), the meta purpose is social cohesion. I suggested that one of the defining features of systems such as games and social imaginaries is the presence of immanent

purpose. We also saw how the presence of positive feedback loops (inflows) provide the essential dynamism of this coherence. In the case of the imaginary, it is the synthetic imagination that drives the social imaginary, and that connects the world of articulations with the underlying keystone concept. We also saw that the health of a system will sometimes require disruption, and this is the role of negative feedback loops. In social imaginaries, this (outflow) is provided by the radical imagination. We saw also that the bipartite distinction that we uncovered in Chapter One – the two planes of non-congruence – is in evidence in Meadows' conception of systems comprising stocks and hierarchies.

Meadows' account of systems is particularly appealing because she recognises (explicitly and tacitly) the role of responsibility in the health of systems. I have touched on a few of these areas above, but will be drawing out the implications for responsibility as we progress. In my view, this is a central part of the ameliorative nature of this project. Having built up a picture of social imaginaries as a whole, I turn next to consider the nature and function of the articulations, the plethora of phenomena that mediate our interaction with the world.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SOCIAL IMAGINARY AS A COMPLEX OF ARTICULATIONS

"The shape of the world is an interweaving of the visible and the invisible." ~ Lennon[20]

World in Fragments opens with Castoriadis asking a seemingly simple question, "What is it that holds a society together?" (1986, 5). This is a motivating question for Castoriadis, and one that I attempt to provide some answers to in this chapter and the next. At issue is the notion of coherence, that we explored in Chapter One and saw again in Meadows' account of systems thinking in Chapter Two. Castoriadis is driving at that "analogical tie" that Ricoeur (1991a, 177) identified as perhaps *the* identifying feature of the social imaginary. I put forward the view that the social imaginary is comprised of "articulations"; a vast pool of social phenomena which "carry" and share social meaning, and through which an imaginary's denizens can navigate their way through the social milieu in which they are embedded. These articulations are the currency through which our actions, as well as those of fellow denizens and operating institutions of the imaginary *have currency*. Articulations are the means of social understanding, and they are essentially manipulable and labile. In this chapter then, I seek to present a picture of the nature of the articulations that provide the web of meanings that binds a society together. In Chapter Four, I probe the coherence that underpins this web of meanings further.

I first offer a description of what I understand by 'articulations', highlighting that an in-depth exploration of the nature of the articulations is missing in the literature, although their existence (or equivalent ideas) is broadly acknowledged. I will then analyse some concrete, common examples that will help to show their significance and ubiquity. By the end of this section, we should have a sense of the articulations as the 'stuff' of everyday life that 'carry' social meaning.

I then move on to consider the nature of articulations. I start by enquiring what it means to 'carry' meaning, and turn to Merleau-Ponty to elucidate this further. I find that there are three discernible dimensions to Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'the invisible in the visible': a sense of duration (the past and future enfolded in the present); the possibility of re-configuration; and responsiveness. I suggest that it is this latter dimension, which introduces

[20] (2018, 121)

a key role for the subject as an imagining denizen in the life of the articulations, that in fact accounts for the two former dimensions.

I then turn to Castoriadis' notion of the 'ensemblistic-identitary' to discuss how the articulations can endure over time and reconfigure. I suggest that identity can endure through change through the notion of a 'sufficient remainder' – an enduring element that is sufficient for continuous identity. We can make sense of this by showing that identity is in significant part a matter of identi*fiability*. This then introduces the role of the subject who imaginatively responds to the articulations.

I then explore the epistemology of identification of articulations, which I suggest we can think of as *grasping*. Through an account of the phenomenology, I show that the relevant context of the ensidic is the whole complex of articulations, rather than any singular articulation. From this the frame of reference shifts from a singular imagining subject, to an imagining collective. From this perspective, we see that we in order to grasp our social world, we must *respond* to the imaginative responses of others insofar as they are constitutive of the articulations, and responsibility therefore inheres in our participation in our social world. Ultimately it is down to us whether we take up or else let go of the articulations that comprise our social world. At the end of the chapter, we should have a good sense of what Lennon means when she says: "The shape of the world is an interweaving of the visible and the invisible" (2018, 121).

WHAT ARE THE ARTICULATIONS?

The term 'articulations' refers usually to verbal utterances, but I am using the notion in a much broader sense to mean instead *any* expression or embodiment or representation of the underlying meaning structure (c.f. Chapter One) and organising principle (keystone concept) that have recognisable social value and meaning, and that together comprise social understanding. I use 'articulation' (or 'the articulations') to refer to what Castoriadis describes as "the choice of objects and acts etc., embodying that which...has meaning and value" for a given society (1987, 149).

I analyse the keystone concept in more detail in the next chapter, but for now, it suffices to say that they are those central or ultimate ideas, held usually below the level of consciousness, that undergird the actions and the trajectory of the social imaginary, and that provide it with its underlying logic. I am not referring to 'logic' in the

strict sense, because the articulations are ultimately contingent, as we shall explore later, but in the sense of *rationale*. To link back to Chapter One, the articulations are *coherent* with Keystone Concepts.

Castoriadis himself, as I touched on in Chapter One, posits two analogous concepts: the social imaginary significations, and the signifiers. The former are analogous to the keystone concept, and the latter to the articulations. Why, then, is there a need to introduce different words for analogous concepts? The reason for doing so is twofold. The first is that although they are present in Castoriadis' thoughts, their precise relationship is not clearly articulated; Castoriadis uses a variety of similar words, apparently interchangeably, to refer to similar but distinct ideas that makes his meaning hard to follow – symbols, signifiers, signifieds, institutions, and occasionally figures and articulations. The terms I have chosen specifically reflect core Castoriadian ontology, while allowing me to make central points about them that lie beyond the Castoriadian insights.

The broader literature on imaginaries recognises this symbolic realm as perhaps the core element of social imaginaries, but there is little exploration on the exact nature of what I am terming articulations. Instead, we find allusions to "patterns of meaning and significations which structure experience and conditions such encounters and structures" (Lennon, 2015 74), "significations that are carried by and embodied in the institution of a given society" (Castoriadis, 1997b, 7).

Geertz refers to "structures of signification" (1973, 19), "cultural artefacts" (1973, 57), "public images of sentiment" (1973, 89). Taylor speaks of a "repertory" of collective actions that "carries the understanding" (2004, 25). Later in this chapter, I pay particular attention to the idea that meaning is carried in social phenomena, linking it in particular to Merleau-Ponty's sense of the 'invisible in the visible' and trying to unpack this further through Castoriadis' notion of the 'ensemblistic-identitary'.

Articulations are the expression and the medium of the keystone concept, and the media available for the expression of ideas is extensive. They could be corporeal, such as gestures, poses, gait, attire; or linguistic, such as words and metaphors, tone, syntax. They could be normative, like etiquette, values, virtues, customs and rituals. They could be aesthetic, such as works of art, films, novels, and design. They could be ideological, such as concepts like freedom or property or growth or God. They could be institutional, like political protocols, or school curricula, or design standards. Of course, there will be much overlap, substantively speaking, between different kinds of articulation. This is to be expected: they are all ultimately, if tenuously and often opaquely, connected to each other via the keystone concept. Both Geertz (1973, 7) and Taylor (2004, 25) highlight that in theory, the extent of these articulations is limitless, although neither explain how this is so. I suggest that this can be understood through paying attention to the ontological implications of "carrying" meaning, which I shall explore shortly.

Firstly, however, I wish to describe what exactly is meant by articulations through a discussion of some concrete examples.

EXAMPLES OF ARTICULATIONS

Gait may seem idiomatic of a person's unique life experience, and to some degree this is certainly true, especially when freak accidents or traumas cause lasting physical or psychological damage. But often gait – and demeanour more generally - is used to express certain tropes about men and women. The notion of 'swagger' is especially associated with men, rather than women, and conveys the way in which men take up space in the world. It is an expression of entitlement. We may consider circumstantial gait, such as the hurried, tensed and hunched form of a woman walking alone at night. The matter of feminine comportment has been deftly analysed by Iris Marion Young (1980). On the issue of gait, she observes "Women generally are not as open with their bodies as men in their gait and stride. Typically, the masculine stride is longer, proportional to a man's body, than is the feminine stride to a woman's body. The man typically swings his arms in a more open and loose fashion than does a woman and typically has more up and down rhythm in his step." (1980, 142).

Young stresses that the kinds of inhibited embodiment that is the experience of women is a result not of physical or biological or mysterious feminine 'essence', but rather "have their source in the particular situation of women as conditioned by their sexist oppression in contemporary society. Insofar as we learn to live out our existence in accordance with the definition that patriarchal culture assigns to us, we are physically inhibited, confined, positioned, and objectified." (1980, 152).[21] This source is "a given socio-historical set of circumstances, despite the individual variation in ... experience, opportunities, and possibilities, has a unity ...[that] is specific to a particular social formation during a particular historical epoch. (1980 139).

In other words, the manifestations of female oppression, such as restricted motility, low level but pervasive sense of threat, and objectification and so on, are artefacts of a specific social imaginary. They are part of the complex

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[21] On this point, it might be objected that whether or not gait is biological or cultural is not knowable – human biology always exists within culture. And yet, we can look to significant variations of gait between sub-cultures and other societies to suggest that Young's insights are at least plausible. We might also suggest that the influence of her paper is because it resonates with women's experiences. See Ellemers (2018) for an interesting review of stereotypes, their (lack of) scientific evidence and their impacts.

of articulations. It might, at first blush, seem a stretch to categorise something like the particular swing of arms while walking, or lilting of hips, as an 'articulation', of expressing a particular idea. Indeed, the vast majority of the articulations of an imaginary are second nature: they are not interrogated and scarcely brought to mind, we are often not conscious of doing them at all, and if we are, we are inclined to mistake 'second nature' with something like 'natural law'. And yet, these gestures are coherent because they express patriarchal ideas such as men constituting the 'human standard' and as such inhabiting the world in mode of mastery (freedom, control, readiness, expansiveness and entitlement), and women as existing in relation to men (as secondary, in de Beauvoir's terms), as unentitled and legitimate objects of male entitlement (c.f. Manne, 2018).

Indeed, Young is aware that the manifestations of cultural oppression of women inhabit the imagination: "a space surrounds [women] in imagination which we are not free to move beyond". In this quote, Young tacitly puts her finger on the connection between the imagination and our socio-cultural worlds – the social imaginary. [22]

That these modes of comportment become second nature render them easily mistakable for natural facts: women are taken to be less confident, weaker[23], less able and less suitable for 'manly' tasks like DIY, sport and driving. Occasionally, we see instances of women in the public eye subverting these norms, consciously or otherwise, and receiving an onslaught of abuse – in the main by men. That men feel entitled to chastise a public figure for their comportment is evidence of a broader sense of entitlement and entitlement as power over.[24] Greta Thunberg has attracted a great deal of criticism for a range of transgressions, because she is a young, shy woman who dares to speak the truth to power, who enjoys a platform and a respect that far outstrips what most men will ever achieve. These criticisms often comprise "stereotypically feminine labels which are traditionally used to silence women's public speech, and undermine their authority." (Vertigan and Nelson, 2019). Our actions both embody the social imaginary in which they make sense and, by doing so, reinforce the central ideas of that imaginary. It is this circularity that renders our personal actions so powerful and, as such, ethically charged.

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[22] This issue of the social formation of the experienced body is developed explicitly in terms of imaginaries for example by Gatens (1996) and Lennon (2015).

[23] Of course, women are largely physically weaker, but ideas of weakness and strength are very often extended to emotional robustness as well. Men are victims of this characterisation too: emotional strength is taken to mean un-emotional, or somehow unaffected. This might account for why fewer men seek help or support for mental health problems than women. (see e.g. Doward, 2016).

[24] Laura Bates has compiled a book based on the everyday experiences of women and girls that contains a great many examples of the ways in which women and girls' comportment in public is policed (2014).

Examples of linguistic articulations include the metaphors “bitch” and “cow”, for instance, which interestingly intersect speciesism and sexism, and thus reveal the connections between these two modes of oppression.[25] Both of these terms are commonly used to describe objectionable or hateful women. These are absolutely gendered slurs in that they are never applied to men (at least, in UK usage). Both metaphors use female animals as insults, thus revealing the deep speciesism in the current imaginary (there are of course endless examples of metaphors in which animals are used as insults: chicken, pig, dog, catty, snake, ass, donkey, monkey. With very few exceptions, for instance in the case of ‘leech’ in which the meaning derives from an objective quality of leeches (sucking, feeding on a host), the meaning of the metaphor does not correlate with an objective quality of the domain animal).

The most salient connection between bitch and cow is that both are significant as breeding animals – by which I mean not simply that they have female reproductive capabilities, but that these capabilities are exploited and controlled by humans. The idea that women should not have control of their own reproductive capacities is a traditional patriarchal conceit: controlling reproduction is also a very effective way of restricting women’s economic and political freedoms.[26]

But at a deeper level, the control of another being’s reproductivity is a move to control life, both in the sense of the biological body being the premise of sentient life, and controlling the fact of life itself. This is patriarchy exercising its god complex (omnipotence), and it is evident as much in draconian abortion laws of Catholic states as it is for the controlled and forced (and very often brutal) breeding of domestic animals. Thus, the metaphors bitch and cow are not just expressions of the idea that women are less than human because they are less than men, but that men are entitled to control the fact of life, and as such animals and women are subjects of male sovereignty. When we reflect on the deep implications of the casual and often-used slurs, that are used as much by women as by men, we see that the currency of such metaphors is extremely potent in a patriarchal society, reinforcing the notions that animals and women are legitimate objects of exploitation. There are two main points that arise from this that are especially relevant here. Firstly, is the insight that articulations are *ethically* thick, so to speak, because they perpetuate and instantiate the normative timbre of a society. Thus, even if the use of these metaphors may feel flippant to the speaker, they carry a cultural weight that serves to justify all manner of ethically compromised consequences. The intention – or otherwise – behind the use of articulations, then, is not locus of their ethical appropriateness, rather the locus is their cultural salience.

The second point of note is the way in which the articulations *intersect*. I use this term in the sense developed by Crenshaw (e.g. 1991) to mean the overlapping of oppressive structures experienced by certain groups. In Chapters

[25] See e.g. Dunayer, J. (1995) on the connection between speciesism and sexism in language.

[26] An extreme example of this is powerfully demonstrated in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1996).

Four and Six I explore in depth the ways in which oppressions share a common social pathology (explained in terms of the schematic pathway).

The imaginary comprises articulations, which are very often what we do, how we respond, the words we choose and so on. They imbue seemingly the most casual of actions with an acute political and ethical dimension: when we act we communicate an imagined interpretation of the world. As Taylor puts it, the articulations are "the ways people imagine their social existence" (2004, 23). Another key point emerges from the foregoing, then: that imagining refers as much to embodied phenomena, as to the "ghostly happenings in the head" (Geertz, 2000, 232). To borrow the words of Merleau-Ponty, we might say that the articulations carry "an immanent sense bursting forth from a constellation of givens." (2012, 23). But more than carry meaning, they also possess a (contingent) reality of their own, in their capacity to alter denizens' reality. The potency of articulations to cause real and lasting negative impacts (and sometimes even death) has been demonstrated unequivocally by the research of Caroline Criado Perez (2019) into gender data gaps. This has resulted, to take just one of thousands of examples, in car seat belts being designed to fit the default male which continues to be used as a proxy for a human driver, despite the fact that they do not properly protect women, and therefore result in higher female mortality in car accidents (2019, 186-8).[27]

The examples of articulations discussed above are all 'live', in that they are recognisable within our contemporary imaginary. But of course, gestures, metaphors, memes come and go out of fashion: what was once salient to society can become obsolete – they lose their currency. The metaphor of currency is especially useful for demonstrating this point: the monetary value of a coin supervenes on the metal disc, so long as the broader society still recognises that coin as such. When a coin goes out of mint it ceases to have currency, and the physical metal disc that carried the currency remains just that. The same is true of articulations: their meaning is carried by physical phenomena, broadly understood, but only in so far as society in general acknowledges its currency – its salience. In the case of articulations, gendered slurs such as "harridan", which would have formerly been a potent insult, designed to enforce (see Manne, 2018) patriarchy, would cause very limited offence today, whereas alternative words that have similar connotations and function exist in its place. So, we see that although we may perceive an articulation seamlessly (not as substrate and then meaning), the contingency of articulations reveals this supervenience. This idea is expressed repeatedly in the imaginaries literature as meaning being "carried" by social phenomena. As Castoriadis puts it: "the web of meanings...are carried by and embodied in... institution[s]" (Castoriadis 1997b, 7) (see also, e.g. Castoriadis, 1987, 137, 304; 1997a, 329; Rendtorff, 2008, 103; Klooger, 2014, 122; Lennon, 2015, 46, 52, 54; Bouchard, 2017, 94)

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[27] This same design bias has also resulted in the distribution of PPE equipment in the coronavirus pandemic that does not fit – and therefore does not protect – women adequately, despite the fact that care workers are overwhelmingly female (Topping, 2020).

ARTICULATIONS AS 'CARRIERS' OF MEANING

We can turn to Merleau-Ponty here to elucidate what it means to 'carry' meaning. Merleau-Ponty speaks of "cultural instruments", which we can read as analogous to articulations, that "carry" social ideas (2012, 451).[28] Lennon sums up Merleau-Ponty's insights on the imaginary dimension of perception as the "*imaginary carrying...affective salience*" (2015, 52, emphasis original) and "*images which carry the affective charge*." (2015, 54, emphasis original). Merleau-Ponty is interested in conveying the sense that that which is present in experience – the visible – contains within it "an invisible inner framework" (1968, 215). The invisible element is the imaginary element. The idea at issue is the way in which we experience the world replete with significance and meaning. This significance is not a matter of perceiving phenomena and then projecting meaning onto it; rather it inheres somehow in the world. Merleau-Ponty saw that perception involved a tacit recognition of possibilities that are not necessarily present in perception. We perceive the rug continuing under the cupboard, the other side of the lamp that is turned away from us. He says that phenomena contain an "immense latent content of the past, the future, and the elsewhere, which it announces [i.e. articulates] and which it conceals." (1968, 114). It strikes me then that in Merleau-Ponty we can detect that dual structure of meaning that we encountered in Ricoeur and Castoriadis in Chapter One. For Merleau-Ponty these structures or "tiers" represent a "whole architecture" contained within phenomena (1968, 114). Not only do phenomena convey temporal dimension which "keep[s] hold of the past and an eye to the future" (Lennon, 2015, 42), they also carry the possibility of reconfiguration. Any given articulation is but "one of several concretions" (2012, 341) that are "assessable and reassessable in the light of the significations that others find there." (Lennon, 2015, 43). This is a crucial characteristic of articulations: they are essentially labile.

Lennon also touches on the responsive constituent of articulations: their significance touches us through the ways in which fellow citizens engage and interact with them. Lennon discusses two dimensions of affect in relation to our engagement with imaginary artefacts. Affect is the passive mode: their significance touches us; response is the active mode: we act expressly or purposely to them. This affect is also "carried in the imaginary texture of the world". (Lennon, 2015, 52). The articulations make up the social imaginary through our engagement with them: "the imaginary shape the world takes for us is constitutively tied up with ways of responding and acting in relation to it." (Lennon, 2015, 61). A Merleau-Pontian take on the articulations casts light both on their coherence and responsibility. The articulations carry "the invisible in the visible", as a gathering together, of possible forms. And it is in this very possibility of difference and reassessability that the role of responsibility emerges. How we

[28] And see also Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the musical significance carried by the sounds of the notes, and of words carrying "a primary layer of signification." (2012, 188)

respond to the articulations helps set the timbre of social significance. This responsiveness is responsibility, because of the ethical weight of the articulations that we saw above. From a Merleau-Pontian lens, we can say that the responsibility is not projected but inheres in the social imaginary complexes.

The picture that emerges, then, is of articulations as socially salient phenomena that are experienced as replete with particular configurations of meaning, insofar as the broader social horizon in which they exist "takes up", that is, upholds, their meaning. We can discern three dimensions of the invisible (the carried) in Merleau-Ponty: the temporal; the possibility of reconfiguration; and responsibility. Now we have a sense of what carrying means, and what is carried by the articulations, the question arises: how do the articulations carry significance?

To answer this, I now turn to Castoriadis' idea of the "ensemblistic-identitary" (ensidic) nature of institutions. The composite (i.e. ensemblistic) yet coherently recognisable (i.e. identitary) nature of institutions was the subject of incisive analysis of Castoriadis.

The 'ensemblistic-identitary' dimension of institutions

For Castoriadis, instituting has two "indissociable dimensions" (1997b, 11): the so-called ensidic and the radical imaginary. The latter refers to the faculty of the creative imagination that is capable of producing entirely new forms (*eidos*) at the social level as well as at the individual level. The radical imagination is open and non-determinate, and it is responsible for the generation of unique forms of social being, that manifests in 'central' significations. Castoriadis gives the examples of God and 'The economy' (see Chapter Four). The key point about them is that they are ultimate – there is no other referent through which they can be understood. These significations give society meaning, but to do so they must be *instituted*.

Institutions, unlike significations, have the opposite qualities to creativity: they are closed and determinate. It is in order to make this point that Castoriadis introduces the idea of ensidic logic: the point about ensembles and identities is that they allow *categorisation*. We saw in Chapter Two that categorisation, or 'hierarchies' of information as Meadows (2008) puts it, is essential for the efficient and sustainable running of a complex system.

The ensidic dimension enables this categorisation because it comprises discrete parts that allow for naming and distinction (i.e. identities); and grouping and (re-)assembly (i.e. ensembles). As such, ensidic logic provides rules.

Categorisation allows society to manipulate phenomena in regular, repeatable and expected ways. Castoriadis refers to this quality as "the fundamental schema of iteration" (1987, 225). And of course, a key point about institutions is that they reproduce themselves through the existence of rules and regulations. As Klooger puts it, "all social institutions involve an ensidic dimension, a dimension which presupposes the ability to determine objects, and to separate and recombine elements." (2014, 112).

I suggest that these insights apply equally to my broader notion of articulations as 'carriers', in the Merleau-Pontian sense. In creating regularity, the ensidic provides a sense of expectation. Expectation is the folding of the past and the future into the present moment. It is because we have an already existing knowledge of the rug that we perceive it running *under* the cupboard: even though this is beyond the visible, the visible contains the expectation of continuity because this is how we have previously experienced the world. Similarly, it is the composite nature of phenomena in combination with expectations that allows us to recombine ensembles into alternative "possible concretations" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, 341) and without losing identity. Indeed, I choose the term 'articulations' because its etymology captures the notion of parts and joints: articulations carry intersecting (i.e. adjoined) meanings. They are both identitarian in that they represent distinct parts and ensemblistic in that they represent the union/organisation or intersection of these parts.

These ensidic qualities, then, are what give society its coherence and stability: meaning can be replicated and reproduced throughout society, effectively weaving a web of meaning. But how is it possible for identity to remain through reassembly? Adams suggests that "Castoriadis tends to gloss over the question of the being of the ensemblistic-identitary logic" (2011, 65). However, I think we can look for an answer in the third dimension of "carrying" that I identified in Merleau-Ponty's account: the affective or *responsive* dimension.

IDENTITY AS IDENTI*FIABILITY*

If we think about identity as the *specific configuration of parts that endures* over time, then it is not the substantive elements that need to endure, but only the ways in the parts relate. We saw this idea in the previous chapter, with relation to the fungibility of stocks in a system: if the stocks of a given system are replaced with new ones that are controlled by the same flows in aid of the same purpose, then the identity of the system remains intact.

The question arises then, at what point is something the same (numerically) or something else? I suggest that a crucial part of identity is identi*fiability*. In other words, the nature or reality of social phenomena is partly

determined by our interactions with it. It is in this way that the social imaginary is a trans-subjective (c.f. Adams et al, 2015, 17; Adams, 2019, 32) realm – in which a clear distinction between subject and object is collapsed. And it is in this role of the denizen that we see Merleau-Pontian responsiveness: part of what it is for an articulation to be a 'form' is to be a thing that elicits a response. As Lennon puts it, "the imaginary shape the world takes for us is... *constitutively* tied up with ways of *responding* to and acting in relation to it." (2015, 61, emphasis added).

I suggest that we are able to identify something through time by the presence of a 'sufficient remainder'. By this, I mean a sufficiency of the relationship of parts that remains in duration in order to be identifiable. For example, if a tree is chopped down to a stump but regrows, we are still happy to say that this is one and the same tree. Even though we may suppose that, in terms of volume, the tree is more changed than unchanged, a *sufficient remainder* of the original relationship – in this case, of roots to trunk to branches, of roots to humus, of the roots to its geo-spatial position, as well as our existing notions of the nature of biological 'entities' – is numerically the same. Haslanger (2009, 315) uses the example of a candle melting or bending out of shape: the relationship between 7 and 5 (inches of candle) of waxing burning vertically down at a more or less expected rate, provides a sufficient remainder of the relationship of parts in duration.

The point to note here is that relationships of parts include certain expectations of things – i.e. it also includes the *identifiers' relationship to the context* of the thing identified. This is shown in ordinary examples of when a person we know well starts acting out of character. We may say, for example, "She is not herself at the moment". In this case, we are not saying that there is no longer identity between an old friend and her most recent incarnation, but that a significant part of the sufficient remainder is absent, to the degree that we struggle to recognise and identify. The turn of phrase is indicative: the perceiver's struggle to identi*fy* is intrinsically linked to the object's identi*ty*. Another example is car sickness: the mind cannot adjust to the rapidity of sensory input, frustrating a sufficient remainder and this creates a visceral feeling of disorientation: we cannot identify surrounding objects in terms of our expectations. In this case, we see that the capacity to identify in terms of expectations is intrinsic to a subjective sense of ordinary life.

This is important, as it starts to point towards the role of the imagination in social identity and social institution: part of the sufficient remainder of relationships includes subjective expectations, attitudes, affects and perspectives. Sufficient remainder is not only what allows for change in the self-same object over time, but also allows for the reincarnation of a given form in a different guise: a new 50p coin is minted; a school is demolished and rebuilt; a referendum is proposed on a new policy; I rearrange the contents of my study; a fast-food outlet serves a vegan-version of a sausage roll. In each case, a sufficient remainder of the former instantiation persists, and thus allows for effective re-formation and introduction of new parts while remaining essentially the same. This is what Castoriadis rather cryptically terms "self-identical unity of differences" (1987, 224). The differences obtain because the object at issue is a composite of parts that are unified in a configuration which is identifiable

because of a sufficient remainder of those parts. In terms of systems thinking, this sufficient remainder is often provided for by a thing's purpose or function. Indeed, I will argue that the sufficient remainder is provided for the articulations by the social imaginary's keystone concept which, as we touched on briefly in Chapter Two, constitutes its immanent purpose.

The conceptualisation of identity as something that endures over time and that contains the "possibility of recomposing" (Castoriadis, 1987, 177) in virtue of a sufficient remainder through which it can be *identified* demonstrates the centrality of the responsive subject. I want to turn now to consider the phenomenology of identifying through the notion of grasping.

UNDERSTANDING AS SALIENT KNOWLEDGE AND GRASPING

Behind the idea of identification is recognition, which introduces an epistemological dimension to the articulations. We can think of the social imaginary as a complex of articulations that holds society together through providing *social understanding*. By social understanding, I am specifically referring to a set of meanings – however nebulously held – that unites all denizens of a given imaginary. This is, therefore, a narrow version of social understanding. I acknowledge that groups in society will have further substantive understanding. The kind of understanding at issue is the lowest common denominator that ensures that each of us can converse meaningfully with anyone in the imaginary, even where no other factors are held in common. Meaningful exchange does not of course entail agreement, only sensibility and coherence. The more denizens have in common, the deeper and richer their mutual understanding: but only the basic layer is necessary for the social imaginary. This is not to say that the social imaginary will not infuse other elements of their understanding.

The social understanding then pertains to the epistemological nous that allows denizens full and meaningful participation in the socio-political-cultural world in which they are embedded. We might first attempt to distinguish knowledge from understanding - and by "epistemological nous" I mean understanding rather than mere knowledge. Understanding is often taken to be a more rigorous form of knowledge: one can know without understanding, but one cannot understand without knowledge (c.f. Zagzebski, 2001, 246).[29]

[29] I acknowledge that this claim significantly under-represents the ongoing debates in this field, but unfortunately a more thorough-going discussion of the differences between knowledge and understanding is not possible in the present work.

One can have propositional knowledge of the practices of a foreign country, for example, without making sense of them, without understanding. Understanding in this sense is a kind of enriched knowledge: it involves more than such a straightforward possession of facts. It also includes a tacit understanding of the normative value, function, and context of such facts. A brief example of this is the footballing mantra "It's coming home". During the England team's fortunate run in the 2018 men's World Cup, this mantra gained increasing cultural currency. Such was its salience that variations of it were also meaningful: during the World Cup, one could have approached a native on the street and asked: "Is it coming home?" Whilst they might have thought one odd (for approaching strangers does not have much currency in the English imaginary!), the question would have been understood perfectly well as meaning, "is England going to win the World Cup?". A visiting foreigner, conversely, might have been puzzled and asked, "is *what* coming home?". Upon hearing the explanation, they would be amply justified to ask "but why does that mean that?". And the interlocutor would be stumped: it simply does not matter why "it's coming home" means "England is going to win the world cup", all that matters is that we all know it does. We would of course cite the 1996 song "Three Lions" in which the phrase was coined, and the immortal nostalgia for the 1966 World Cup win, upon which that song was based. The foreigner might then well think that the English were either delusional or extremely hubristic for making such claims. But this would be because the foreigner might also not be conversant with another significant phenomenon of the English imaginary: its penchant for irony, and self-deprecating humour. I would also suggest that there is evidence of the current imaginary's keystone concept of entitlement (as I argue in Chapter Four) in this formulation as well: to say that "it" (the object – a thing to be possessed, conquered) is coming "home", suggests that it rightfully belongs to England, that England owns it and has rights to it. In other words, it speaks to the tacit English sense of entitlement.

To understand the meaning of "it's coming home", then, is to recognise skeins of meaning "knotted into one another" (Geertz, 2000, 11) at once: a nostalgia for past times (1966; 1996); nostalgia for nostalgia (2018 for 1996 for 1966); a weary expectation of failure that is revealed in overt optimism; an ironic acceptance of that fact; a hidden lament about England's enervated 'glory' (from a global empire, to a global laughing stock – the World Cup coincided with increasing Governmental crises over Brexit). The real normative and affective meaning behind "it's coming home" and its associated articulations can only be truly understood from the position of being *inside* the relevant social context. These are the invisible 'folds' in the visible, the enfolding of the past and the future to create "immanent sense" (i.e. understanding) in the present.

This small example is meant to demonstrate that what we understand has meaning beyond logic and facts, that resides in a tangled composite of social imaginings of such salience that they have an affective salience that can only be understood through experience.

Understanding implies *salient* knowledge. As Lennon observes, the "salience and significance [is that] which renders intelligible [the world]" (2015, 11). This salience comprises two dimensions. Firstly, understanding implies knowledge not just of X (so-called "propositional knowledge"), but knowledge of how X relates to Y and Z. In other words, understanding is *contextualised knowledge*. It is this context that epistemologists are referring to when they claim that understanding pertains to the *objectual*, rather than propositional knowledge. Where the latter pertains to knowledge of some facet of X, objectual understanding pertains to a 'domain' or 'topic', which can only be understood in reference to other parts of that topic – that is, it is contextualised. Janvid offers the following examples of objects of objectual understanding: "parliamentarism, organic chemistry, nineteenth century African history, the free will problem, or Slovenian grammar" (2018, 372). As such, we can see that contextual or objectual knowledge is relevant to the study of articulations, which, as we explored above, involves the *specific relationships of parts*.

Kvanvig describes objectual knowledge as "an internal grasping or appreciation of how various elements in a body of information are related to each other in terms of explanatory, logical, probabilistic, and other kinds of relations..." (Kvanvig 2003, 192–3). Appreciation refers both to an *object* increasing in value and to a *subject* valuing some object. This double dimension speaks to the irreducibly trans-subjective dimensions of the articulations: that articulations carry responsiveness/affect. The second meaning of appreciate – the subjective attitude – brings us to the second dimension of salience: that, on top of perceiving relationships between parts, it is, moreover, a grasp of how the *grasping subject* relates to those parts.

There is an illuminating analogue in the terminology of the epistemology of understanding and social imaginaries - quite distinct academic fields. The literature of both fields is peppered with the metaphor of *grasping*. Kvanvig speaks of "internal grasping...of how...elements...are related" (2003, 192-3), Janvid of the "grasping involved in understanding (2018), Zagzebski of understanding as deeper "cognitive grasp" (2001, 244); Bloomfield of an "epistemic grasp" (2000, 36), and Riggs of understanding as a "grasp...of how its parts fit together...in the larger scheme of things" (2003, 20).

This latter quote by Riggs is especially redolent of Charles Taylor's pithy summary of the social imaginary as "a wider *grasp* of our whole predicament" (2004, 25, emphasis added), which he describes as "how we stand to each other, how we got to where we are, how we relate to other groups, and so on". In short, a grasp of the social imaginary is a practical understanding of the gestalt. Indeed, Lennon, in elaborating the social imaginary via Merleau-Ponty refers to "The gestalt...we perceive...when we move beyond mere 'visual data' to 'the sense, the structure, and the spontaneous arrangement of parts'", which we do by "*taking up* or *grasping the shape* of the world" (2015, 41, italics original; and see also 2018, 123).

Castoriadis speaks of how “the total world given to a particular society is grasped...” (1987, 145), and later the social imaginary as “a grasp of the world” (in Arnason, 2014, 37). Geertz, too, refers to cultural imaginaries as “a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures which [one] must somehow contrive first to grasp” (2000, 11), and explains that “grasping...is familiarity with the imaginative universe in which [one’s] acts are signs.” (2000, 14).

So, how exactly are we to understand “grasping” in the context of social imaginaries? The most salient aspects of this view are that they involve the grasper’s ability to manipulate her knowledge in *useful* ways (see e.g. Wilkenfeld, 2013, 1002 ff). That is, it is an inherently pragmatic view of understanding. What is manipulated are the parts that make up a meaningful articulation, so that they can be applied and modified in “salient counterfactuals” (Wilkenfeld, 2013, 1009). This is made possible because, as we saw earlier, the articulations, through which we participate in the social imaginary, comprise a specific set of category relationships that contingently supervene on certain objects. The parts can be blended and rearranged so long as a sufficient remainder persists. If we go to a restaurant for the first time, we expect to see some arrangement of chairs, tables, diners, menus, and so on. We would not just be surprised but confused and disoriented if we entered what we supposed was a restaurant and saw circus acts; child waiters; or dog or cat on the menu: these things would sufficiently violate our expectations of what ‘a restaurant’ is, to the degree that we would no longer grasp the situation. As we saw earlier, identity is intrinsically linked to identifiability. Such social nous informs much of the mundane aspects of life.

There are three challenges brought against this view: 1) Wilkenfeld (2013, 1009); holds that, for example, although a student has some grasp of a subject, in a room full of experts, she cannot be said to really grasp that subject; 2) it can allow for grasping even of mistaken beliefs (c.f. Grimm, 2003); and 3) Kelp argues that in theory one could have an “omniscient agent” who is yet passive, does not manipulate parts for efficacy (2015, 3811). The first two arguments can be addressed in the following way: that understanding involves a grasp of the relationship of parts adequate for participation and use. This is not to say, however, that all grasping involves complete understanding of all aspects of a complex. In most cases this is surely impossible: one can always understand *better*. Thus, it surely makes more sense to speak of the student’s relative paucity of understanding as less of a grasp, rather than no grasp at all (see e.g. Khalifa, 2013, 166).

Similarly, in the case of mistaken beliefs, we can understand this as involving a limited grasp of the overall context in which these limited beliefs are situated. Thus, although homeopathy, for example, may possess a certain internal logic which can be grasped for efficacious ends (for example, participation in a group; agentic and naturalistic response to malady), a global understanding of the scientific literature would lead to a more in depth grasp. Another example may be the belief that grass-fed cattle is an effective form of carbon sequestration, which has certain practical implications, despite only representing a partial grasp of the problem: a fuller grasp recognises that the sequestration is finite, and is undermined by continued grazing of methane-producing ruminants, and the

opportunity costs of grazing instead of planting trees (see e.g. Garnett et al, 2017). Thus, grasping incorrect beliefs is simply a form of incomplete knowledge of the context.

An account of grasping as appreciation of context shows us that understanding is not a binary, zero sum state, but a spectrum, whereby a complete understanding, were such a thing possible, would remove erroneous or unjustified beliefs. However, it also leaves room for erroneous beliefs that are nonetheless functional and instructive for the subject. Retaining this last dimension is necessary for a verisimilitudinous understanding of the phenomenon of social imaginaries: the Keto or Atkins diet can flourish as health fads, despite lack of evidence for long-term safety; FGM may flourish as a practice for reasons of tradition, despite the evident harm it causes.

The third challenge is, I think, incoherent, at least from the perspective of grasping as a matter of efficacious manipulations of the parts of one's social environment. That is, one cannot be a passive denizen of a social imaginary, nor can one be a passive agent nor a passive grasper: grasping comprises salient knowledge that is acquired through active participation in the world. This insight is captured by Lennon, who claims that "the imaginary shape the world takes for us is *constitutively tied up with ways of responding to and acting in relation to it."* (2015, 61, emphasis added).

Here, Lennon is putting her finger on a deep truth about the nature of grasping: that it is inextricably phenomenological because it requires getting to *grips* with – literally and metaphorically – some phenomenon in the world, enabling a more competent functioning in that world. Far from being purely cognitive, there is a strongly embodied element to grasping: it involves the deft manipulation of environmental phenomena in order to facilitate further action. The somatic, phenomenal dimension of grasping or grappling reveals also that our grasp of things can indeed be better and stronger, or worse and weaker. The better the grip, the more we are able to accomplish with it.

To mine the metaphor further, we can also see that *too firm* a grip is unhelpful: the idea is to have a good enough grasp of something to enable dexterous manipulation of it for our ends, but sometimes this involves letting go. This idea is demonstrated when we encounter a dog who wants to play fetch but is loath to relinquish the ball on return. It is also the key insight of the Buddha's allegory of the raft: we build a raft to help us cross the river, but once on the other side, there is little point in dragging it around with us: we must learn when to let go.

In terms of articulations, then, we run into trouble when we are too firmly attached to certain material manifestations. We see this in shifting gender norms such as ideas of what "feminine" means, or of typically gendered roles. When women take traditionally male roles they are sometimes met with resistance, which we can

interpret as the result of too stubborn a grasp of certain contingent articulations – like that presidents of the USA must be male, for example. Perhaps the most pressing example of this is society's recalcitrance in the face of overwhelming evidence of the unsustainability of animal agriculture (see e.g. Poore and Nemecek, 2018), despite the urgency of efficacious eco-climate collapse responses.

Part of the reason for the nimbleness of culture is that articulations inhabit new material forms quite rapidly. Another way to think about this is in the idea of rules: where we have a rudimentary grasp of something, following rules by rote is necessary for successful application, but if we understand why the rules are in place, and what their objective is, it becomes possible to bend or break or invent new rules or interpretations. We saw this playfulness inherent in the rules of games in Chapter Two and it is arguably also consistent with what Meadows' calls "dancing with systems" (2001). The phenomenology of grasping brings the responsive element of articulations sharply into focus. They are what they are in virtue of our collective grappling with them: as denizens we have the power to "take up" (Lennon, 2015, 41) or to let go: our actions are constitutive of the normative shape of the imaginary world.

Implicit in the idea of grasping and 'taking up' is the sense of the articulations being 'at hand' – which captures the strongly phenomenological dimension of the social imaginary. Lennon is perhaps the writer who best emphasises this embodied dimension. She speaks of the physiological pull of the social imaginary as "the call to our own bodies" (2015, 61), and observes that "the form [of the world] takes shape...*under our touch*" (2015, 14). Although Castoriadis does not develop the idea of embodied grasping, it is nonetheless apparent in his notions of '*legein*' and, especially, '*teukhein*'. The former represents "distinguishing-choosing-positing-assembling-counting-speaking" and the latter "assembling-adjusting-fabricating-constructing" (Klooger, 2014, 117). *Legein* and *teukhein* always appear together, and they are the foundations of all institutions – as such they are proto-institutions (Klooger, 2014, 123). Whilst it has been noted that it is lamentable that Castoriadis underplays the significance of the element of social doing (*teukhein*) (see Adams, 2011; and Arnason, 1991), the point at issue here is that *teukhein* should nonetheless be understood as "doing that which is productive" (Klooger, 2014, 123). In other words, then, Castoriadis tacitly understood that there could be no institutions – or, in our present parlance, articulations – without *doing*, which is necessarily embodied.

The notion of the 'at hand' quality of the world is captured by Heidegger's notion of "handiness" or 'handiness' (2010, 69). Heidegger applies this term to the things we encounter in our environment that exist 'in order to' (2010, 69). These items are chiefly functional: we encounter them as things with which to manipulate the world, and in turn navigate and orient ourselves. Heidegger terms these items 'equipment'. A salient point about pieces of equipment is that they do not exist by themselves but are part of an 'equipmental whole'. In other words, items exist as 'in order to' in reference to their relation to a broader project, or an 'objectual field' to relate back to the

epistemology of grasping. Greaves suggests that we can think of this as "tackle" (2010, 40) – both in the sense of a set of equipment for some particular purpose, and in the sense of handling and coming to grips with something.

It is not a big leap to see how something being *at hand* in reference to a broader context is a fitting description of grasping. Grasping entails a depth of knowledge of context that allows manipulation of that context. To grasp is to have something in hand. Heidegger is using the idea of handiness to describe the phenomenology of our encounters with the world, "with reference to which" the world has significance for us. It is important to note that this involvement pertains to any such currency that facilitates grasping – it is not solely the fact of material objects. As we saw above, the articulations are instantiated in all manner of material, physiological, and ephemeral ways. All of these are ready to hand, whether as a gesture, an intonation, a metaphor, a building, a custom, a norm, an affect and so on. What is meant by this is that they are available for us to use in order to engage with the world, and that their significance and use is constituted in reference to the imaginary whole.

The articulations are both grasped and assist in grasping. The more experienced and familiar we are with handling them, the better grasp we have of them, the better use we make of them. Grasping, as a matter of learning by doing, is essentially and irreducibly phenomenological and embodied. I can learn about the rules of tennis in a book, but it is not until I start to play that I, literally and metaphorically, get to grips with how to manipulate a racquet in the context of the court that I truly grasp the game.

RESPONSIBILITY AND COHERENCE IN GRASPING

Through exploring grasping, we see that understanding is deeply connected to the physical, embodied world. It is a matter of grasping the relationship of parts to the whole, and of one's own relationship to the whole. Grasping is also deeply intentional: it requires *things* to get a grip of, and these things are things in the world. Grasping is therefore necessarily a *shared* phenomenon, as it involves the stuff common to the world. And grasping not only is the process by which we come to be involved with the world, but it is also the process by which we *(re-)institute the world*: every time I get to grips with the world through the available articulations I am instituting the meaning they carry, and without this repeated instituting the meaning would cease to have salience. Thus, as social beings we shape the world we inhabit by the very act of inhabiting it. The notion of grasping links the articulations (what is grasped) to the complex imaginary (the necessary context of grasping). We make sense of the world through a grasp of how articulations fit with each other, and with the general character of the imaginary. Several important implications emerge from this.

Firstly, we can see that the social imaginary complex is the proper field of reference for understanding social meaning. In Merleau-Pontian terms, what is perceived, then, is the social imaginary as a whole, which enfolds invisible possibilities of counterfactuals, and is made possible because of the grasping disposition of the responsive imagining collective.

To take up the articulations example of gendered slurs again, it may be objected that men can also be on the receiving end of gendered slurs – words like 'dick' or 'prick' are almost always used to describe men. But this would be to miss the point: although they are gendered, they exist in a social imaginary complex in which men are socially privileged over and above (or indeed, *over against*, as I shall argue in Chapter Six) women. When we take slurs in the context of the articulations as a whole, we see that slurs against women carry a particularly potent, political and categorical dimension that translates into actually experienced negative implications. Men may experience slurs that are gender-specific, but they are often *only* person-specific without systemic implications, in that they lack a broader context of political and categorical salience.[30] A further implication of this point is that articulations can morph while retaining the same social meaning because their salience is derived from the complex of articulations as a whole. Never mind if 'harridan' is out of currency, the imaginary is replete with alternatives.

Secondly, and relatedly, the social imaginary complex is trans-subjective: it involves subjects co-imagining shared meaning through grasping (that is understanding, applying, and responding to) articulations. Articulations' salience derives from the continued institution of the 'invisible' meaning – the second plane of meaning – of the social imaginary. The responsiveness of denizens is therefore constitutive of "the shape of the world" (Lennon, 2015, 59) – the particular character a given social imaginary embodies. As Lennon puts it, "public legitimacy is necessary if our imaginary forms are to be disclosive" (2015, 12). In other words, coherence in our social worlds is a matter of salience with the broader social imaginary context: when we challenge its salient articulations, we can expect to meet significant resistance. I suggest that this is felt particularly keenly by feminist and animal rights thinkers and campaigners, precisely because their claims are *not* legitimated by the social imaginary, and I shall discuss these issues in depth in Chapter Six.

Thus, we have a picture of the social imaginary as a complex of articulations, which derive their meaning and salience in virtue of the context of this complex. It is this complex then that allows for *coherence* within the social imaginary and, therefore, social cohesion. It is because as denizens we share a set of articulations that we are able to navigate, orient, and generally grasp our social world. But this coherence is dependent on the responsiveness

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[30] To show this through an analogous example, we could not reasonably claim that 'limey' is a racial slur in the way that 'nigger' is: simply because the former slur does not exist in a context of systemic prejudice and injustice against white people, but the former exists in the context of systemic prejudice and injustice against black people.

of denizens: without whom the articulations could not be instantiated. This responsiveness speaks to the fundamental disposition of denizens to their broader social world, which in turn suggests an irreducible responsibility at the heart of the social imaginary. Lennon refers to our grasping of articulations "in light of the significance that others find there" (2015, 43). It is only in virtue of the "taking up" of articulations of oppression, of disregard for the natural world, of self-interest, for example, by others like us, that they retain their "public legitimacy" and ongoing salience. Alternatively, we have seen that a deeper grasp "of our whole predicament" (Taylor, 2004, 25), enables us to 'let go' of articulations if they are no longer useful or appropriate.

The epigraph of this chapter provides a pithy overview of the complex of articulations. Firstly, it conveys the trans-subjective dimension in framing the problematic as the 'shape of the world', suggesting that a grasp of the social world is a matter of context, and therein, of coherence. Secondly, we see the responsiveness (and implicitly, responsibility) of denizens as graspers who are themselves the 'interweavers' who knit together the shape of the world. Lastly, it conveys the sense in which skeins of meaning are latent within the immanent world (the visible) that we grasp and inhabit.

The question with which I opened the chapter, is immediately followed, in *World in Fragments,* by Castoriadis asking: "What is the basis of the unity, cohesion, and organized differentiation of the fantastically complex web of phenomena we observe in any existing society?" (1986, 5). I answered the first question "what holds society together?" by pointing to a web of articulations which allows us to meaningfully grapple with – to grasp – the social world. We have also seen in the notion of 'sufficient remainder' the idea that some core configuration of elements persists for meaning to endure despite changes to the articulations. Our task now is to try to understand what this might mean in the context of the complex of articulations. What is it that undergirds the complex of articulations that ensures continuity of society's distinctive character, of its coherence? It is to this question that I now turn in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: A Systemic and Structural Analysis of the Keystone Structure

"This grand, empty phantasm of mastery serves to counterbalance...grotesque accumulation..." ~ Cornelius Castoriadis[31]

As touched upon in the introduction, global society is facing a multitude of ills that are usually taken to be discrete problems: climate catastrophe; insect apocalypse and the collapse of biodiversity; inequality; misogyny; racism; speciesism; the degradation of democracy; global health crises. But are we correct to assume that these issues are separate? It would seem that if they are related to each other, then this might have significant implications for their treatment. In other words, are each of these problems distinct illnesses with their own pathologies and treatment protocols? Or are they, rather, distinct symptoms of the same illness? If we do not understand the pathology then we risk treating each malaise as a symptom, without getting to their root cause.

At the end of the previous chapter, I raised the following question posed by Castoriadis: "What is the basis of the unity... of the fantastically complex web of phenomena we observe in any existing society?" When the "fantastically complex web of phenomena" are parsed into fantastically urgent and egregious social problems, the importance of this question is brought into focus.

Castoriadis posited the notion of "Social Imaginary Significations" (SIS) as the ultimate explication of the coherence of social meaning. For Castoriadis, the SIS can be seen as the "invisible cement holding together this endless collection of real, rational and symbolic odds and ends" (1987, 143). He describes these 'central significations' as "the *final* articulations the society in question has imposed on the world, on itself, and on its needs, the organising patterns that are the conditions for representability." (1987, 143, emphasis added).

Castoriadis claims that central significations "*denote* nothing at all, and *connote* just about everything" (1987, 143). That is to say that they cannot be further analysed because nothing further is needed to explain them, whereas their logic - or flavour - pervades (connotes) all social phenomena. The SIS is always the explicator and never the

[31] (2007, 149)

explicated. As such, it can only be pointed to in terms of its qualities or manifestations. Castoriadis gives "God" as an example of a central signification.

This is a signification because it is not founded on any other principle. He says of social imaginary significations that "they have no precise place of existence, they can be grasped only indirectly and obliquely, as the gap.... [they are] impossible to define, the curvature specific to every social space..." (1987, 143). So, we can see that the SIS *need* the articulations (as I call them) in order to be *graspable*. Yet Castoriadis' elucidation here borders on the mystical. This matters, because if we cannot find a robust means with which to analyse the articulations and their organising principle, we cannot be confident of our diagnosis. The patient, that is contemporary society, is gravely ill and time is of the essence – a robust diagnosis is imperative.

I think that Castoriadis is correct to posit an organising principle. But his method of stipulating what that is is arguably not reliable. Firstly, he has not really offered a methodical analysis, and neither has he shown how exactly the SIS examples he gives represent the "condition of possibility" (1987, 143) of the social imaginary that they undergird. I take the 'condition of possibility' to be an *ontological* condition – the sine qua non. The ultimate question to be asked of such an organising principle (SIS in Castoriadis' case) is: "Would this society be what it is *without* this particular idea/attribute/principle?"

To pick up the sickness metaphor again, the 'acid test' for a diagnosis is whether the candidate disease can be said to explain the ontology of the symptoms: without the ailment, the symptoms would not exist. Yet Castoriadis does not scrutinise his suggested SISs in this way.

I wonder, however, if it is the case that 'God' is necessarily the central signification of a given imaginary. Castoriadis gives "God" (upper case) as an SIS per se, rather than in the context of a specific "social-historical" (as he calls the social imaginary).

Is it not often the case that not God (and God and Christ's core attributes, in the Christian context) but rather rigidly hierarchical social structures and, specifically, the notion of privilege (and power), that these hierarchies instantiate, that actually gives many theistic societies' their distinct character? Although God may not denote anything further, it is not necessarily the condition of possibility of a given society. It may be objected that the notion of God is essential to the priesthood and/or kingship that originate a society's hierarchy of privilege and power. My point, however, is that one could imagine such a society retaining its essential character if the idea of God were substituted for another esoteric power-conferring entity, but not if the notions and implications of privilege and power were removed. Thus, although Christianity has had significant influence on the cultural

history of the West, particularly in the arts and philosophy, my argument is that it seems that it is hierarchical power structures rather than Christian theology that more closely characterises the ethos of Christian societies.[32]

Whilst I am not convinced by Castoriadis' suggested SISs, I am persuaded by the notion of ontological principles as a means of explaining the coherence of the complex social imaginary. We saw in Chapter Two that Meadows identifies purpose (sometimes expressed as an organising principle) as a core feature of systems. I suggested that we can identify a meta and an immanent purpose: the latter being that in virtue of which a specific system behaves in the way it does.

Furthermore, in discussing leverage points (about which I will say more in Chapter Six), Meadows points to the system's 'paradigm', which is arguably analogous to its immanent purpose, as the most effective way to intervene in a system. We saw this in the case of games: while you can change the pieces of a game without changing the game, you cannot change the purpose of the game without changing the game. Its purpose is therefore the ontological principle in virtue of which a system is what it is and does what it does.

Similarly, in the previous chapter, we encountered the idea of a 'sufficient remainder' that allows a composite thing to retain identity. When we expanded our frame of reference to the social imaginary complex as a whole, we also shifted the locus of the sufficient remainder there. In other words, for articulations to be what they are, they must bear some relationship to some ontological elements in the social imaginary. The task now is to understand how to analyse this ontological, organising principle?

In this chapter, I start by turning to the ideas of Sally Haslanger on the matter of social structures, particularly as they serve to reproduce egregious social practices and norms. These ideas help us get to grips with the roles of social structures, but I find that Haslanger is not able to provide a method for analysis that can reveal the principle of coherence of the imaginary. However, I suggest a novel reading of Haslanger that can recognise the existence of such a principle. I suggest a method of analysis, reading back from the "surface" articulations to their underlying assumptions until an ontological principle reveals itself. The analysis takes two forms, firstly, a "systemic analysis" that offers a substantive account of the actually existing imaginary, and that culminates in positing the concept of "entitlement" as the underlying principle of our imaginary.

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[32] To make the argument the opposite way: one could imagine an eco-utopian society premised on connection to nature, respect for life, and egalitarianism that derived its ethos from a Gaia god-head. In this case, God – Gaia - might be said to be the condition of possibility of that society. Imagining a scenario in which God *is* the ontological principle of that society shows us how unrepresentative that is of theocratic societies.

I then turn to a "structural analysis" that looks at the abstract structure that is revealed by the systematic analysis. I find that there are five tiers (what Meadows would call 'hierarchies') of the imaginary. At the centre of this structure is what I call the 'keystone concept', in this case the notion of entitlement, that provides the integrity of the imaginary. The keystone concept in turn gives rise to 'the dispositions', 'the tenets', 'the schemas', and finally the articulations. I refer to this structure as the 'keystone structure'. Lastly, I consider the very significant implications for responsibility of this two-fold analysis. At the end of the chapter, we should have a good idea about how to account for both the coherence of the social imaginary, and the responsibility of denizens within it.

HASLANGER'S ACCOUNT OF STRUCTURE

Sally Haslanger (2012; 2016) has fruitfully combined critical analysis of specific social injustices with structural analysis – indeed, through positing the structural nature of social injustices, she is able to offer robust accounts that are socially useful. This is what Haslanger calls ameliorative analysis (that we encountered in the introduction): it aims at the *useful* elucidation of specific social issues.

Haslanger posits a view of the structures of society that I suggest can complement social imaginary analysis. She suggests that it is frequently the case that a structural analysis is in order to usefully explain certain situations. "The explanation of the workings of the structure will be the best way to explain the behavior of its parts." (2016, 118). She recounts the example of the Invisible Foot (e.g. Okin, 1989; Cudd, 2006, in Haslanger, 2016, 122-23), in which the female partner in a heterosexual relationship, in which both parties are of equal competence and experience, would stay at home to care for their child, and thus perpetuate the power inequalities between men and women. This is because men are more likely to earn more than women for the same level of competence, and childcare is prohibitively expensive. These are the structures in which child care decisions are made, and which explain those decisions more powerfully than, for example, an individualistic account (the woman naturally prefers a nurturing role). These structures, then, shed light on the way in which articulations derive their salience from the broader context in which they are embedded.

Haslanger takes social structures to comprise relations and practices. Practices, she suggests, are organised collective solutions that comprise "interdependent schemas and resources" that are mutually reinforcing (2016, 126; and 2012). Her notion of schemas is, I think, redolent of the affective/responsive dispositions of denizens that we encountered in Chapter Three: they are "culturally shared concepts, beliefs, and other attitudes that enable us to interpret and organize information and coordinate action, thought, and affect" and they are "variable and evolve across time and context, their elements are sticky and resist updating" (2012, 126). So these schemas are

the conceptual structures of how we imagine the world, and that materialise in the everyday social phenomena - what I call articulations and what Haslanger might think of as practices. By resources, Haslanger means "things of all sorts—human, nonhuman, animate, or not—that are taken to have some (including negative) value (practical, moral, aesthetic, religious, etc.)" (2016, 126). I take Haslanger to be referring to the goods that society wishes to value and pursue, and that sometimes present collective action problems that require "collective solutions to [resolve] coordination or access problems" (2016, 126), such as common pool resources.

In the spirit of an (ameliorative) hermeneutics of suspicion, that seeks to uncover further meaning than is immediately apparent (see Chapter One), I want to suggest that 'resources' here can be read in a different (perhaps even opposing) way, even if this is not likely what Haslanger has in mind at this point.

One way of expressing the relationship between Haslanger's idea of schema and resource *as social good* (e.g. common pool resource) is that the *schema organises the resource* in the sense that the attitudes and conceptions (i.e. schema) we have of a resource organise how we understand it, how we distribute it, how we use it, how we value it and so on. However, I propose an alternative reading of the relationship between schema and resource that instead posits that the *resource organises the schema*. By this I mean that the resource acts as the *central point* of the conceptual schema, and which provides the schema with its substantive normative content (its specific values, affects, orientations). In other words, resource on this reading is analogous to Castoriadis' SIS. The strength of this reading lies in the fact that without it, Haslanger's notion of schema does not tell us anything about *how* it is able to "organise information and coordinate action, thought, and affect". In other words, without an organising principle, in virtue of what is it a schema at all?

Without a central point that makes the elements of the schema cohere, those elements are an arbitrary aggregate that *could be otherwise*. And if the organising schema is contingent, then it cannot be said to constitute the "condition of possibility" for a given society to be what it is. It might be objected, quite reasonably, that this criticism involves holding Haslanger to a Castoriadian account, which is not warranted. While it is true that Haslanger is not concerned (explicitly) with social imaginaries (let alone with Castoriadis), it is the case that she is overtly concerned with social *systems*. As we saw in Chapter Two, systems are complexes[33] that require an organising principle (or purpose) to cohere. From this perspective, it is reasonable to require such a principle of coherence from Haslanger's account.

Furthermore, Haslanger regards schemas and resources as mutually reinforcing, which she describes as constitutive interdependence: "Schemas are constitutively defined by the resources they organize, and something's being a resource... depends on what schema interprets/organizes it." (2016, 127). Thus, just as the SIS is not graspable directly, but requires instituting, so we can suggest the organising *resource* depends on

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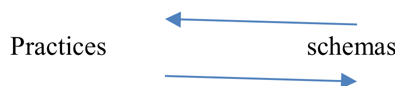
[33] And, indeed, Haslanger refers to structures as "complex entities with parts whose behavior is constrained by their relation to other parts" (2016, 118).

corresponding schematisation.

Thus, I suggest that we can read Haslanger's conception of social meaning as comprising central '**resources**' that organise **schemas**, which are patterns of attitudes that orient **practices**, which regulate and instantiate social relations, which in turn comprises social **structures** (2012; 2016).

Haslanger understands structures to be complexes that comprise relationships. Shapiro suggests that where systems are complexes of interdependent relationships, structures are abstract forms of such systems (Shapiro, 1997, 73). Haslanger takes this to mean that "we can abstract from [a] *particular* system to see it as instantiating a *more general* structure shared by other families." (2016, 118, emphasis added). The notion of a complex of interdependent relations corresponds closely to the idea of the social imaginary as a complex of related articulations that I put forward in Chapter Three. Following Shapiro then, we could take the current social imaginary as the *system* from which we could extrapolate the *structure* of imaginaries per se. Although Haslanger seems to view structures as particular clusters of meaning and practices, I do not see why we cannot posit social imaginaries, as I have conceived them, as *meta*-structures, in the Haslangan sense of structure.

We can depict Haslanger's notion of social structures as follows:



Haslanger uses common social practices as instances of injustice, which can then be analysed to reveal the schemas that they instantiate. A structural view requires treating practices – broadly construed – as nodes within broader structures. For example, in the 'invisible foot' scenario, the female is a node in the family structure; in the job market structure; in the domestic labour structure. Haslanger seems equivocal about the explanatory capacity of schemas. On the one hand, she tentatively suggests that it seems "plausible to say that schemas are what socially constrain us."[34] On the other, she fears that this will leave us with an inadequately individualistic-psychologistic account that cannot account for the social structures that lie beyond individual attitudes. I think that this worry is unfounded, however, because it is premised on the unnecessarily narrow interpretation of schemas as being essentially reducible to "individual psychology". To my mind, individual psychological attitudes (and beliefs, affects and so on) are not the same as "*culturally shared* concepts, beliefs, and other attitudes that enable us to... *coordinate* action, thought, and affect" (Haslanger, 2016, 126, emphasis added). In other words, the aggregate of individual attitudes does not amount to collective, shared attitudes.

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[34] By 'constrain', Haslanger means a set of parameters that both enable and limit what is socially possible. 'Socially possible' is not the same thing as physically possible. We might be physically able to resist certain oppressive or unjust constraints but doing so may not be practicable. So 'socially possible' should be understood as 'practicable within social constraints.'

Haslanger's notion of schema is not adequately accounted for by the dynamics of the schema: it is missing an account of how individual notions are also shared notions. I believe that this can be accounted for if one posits that structures are enacted, devised, formalised by social actors by applying shared schemas. On this view, individuals are *carriers* of *shared* schemas (just as articulations carry social meaning). The focus of interest should be on the substantive meanings carried, not on the (ultimately fungible) carrier. It is a question of looking at the message, not the messenger. Another way to debunk the notion that schemas are purely psychologistic is to ask whether they are discernible in social phenomena beyond human action. In my exploration of articulations, I hope to have shown that this is indeed the case. The case, for example, of seat belts offering greater protection to men is a case in point. Seat belts' unequal protection persists long after designers designed them around the default male; and the default male is more an omission that results in the systematic privileging of males. No one individual has to have sexist attitudes for sexist outcomes to prevail. It seems to me to be fair to say that seat belts therefore carry schemas (they are therefore *articulations*). Indeed, in an earlier paper, Haslanger in fact states that "schemas... are culturally assigned to actions, objects, events, and such." (2014b, 28). She argues that language "encodes" schemas (2014b, 28; see also 2014a, 31), which I take to be analogous to the way in which I proposed that articulations encode and carry social meaning. The confusion perhaps arises by conflating the role of the individual as a denizen, as a *grasper* of schemas, and individual*ism*, which posits that the individual determines the schemas. In the former, the individual plays a part in the social potency or salience of the schemas, through using them to guide and inform action and to interpret the social milieu they encounter. In the latter, the individual is given centre stage: individ*ualised* attitudes are taken as the primary determinant of the schemas.

Haslanger's ideas contain strains of Bourdieu's *Habitus*, in which the individual's personal experiences combine with broader social structures and constraints to produce their "habitus" (see Chapter Two for a distinction between habitus and social imaginary). I would think that personal experiences do have significant influence on our operation in the world. Such experiences likely determine attention – so what is salient to an individual person, based on their habitus, will hold their attention. But still, everybody in a given society shares an imaginary (which ultimately gives rise to the structures and the personal experience). These things are taken for granted to such a degree that they do not hold attention. They may be not salient in terms of the individual habitus, but they are yet extremely salient to the imaginary schema.

Furthermore, Haslanger's critical work seems to acknowledge the explanatory capacity of schemas. In taking specific instances of injustice and subjecting them to what she calls a 'focal analysis', I suggest that she is applying a non-psychologistic interpretation of schemas. A focal analysis takes a concept or interpretation as a frame – a touchstone – with which to compare certain manifestations of injustice (see e.g. 2012). She says, a "focal analysis explains a variety of phenomena in terms of their relations to one that is theorized, for the purposes at hand, as the focus or core phenomenon" (2012, 7). In *Resisting Reality*, for example, Haslanger analyses cases of racism and sexism via the core phenomenon of the "pattern of social relations that constitute men as dominant and women

as subordinate, of Whites as dominant and people of color as subordinate." (2012, 7). This approach has also been applied by Kate Manne in her illuminating analysis of misogyny (2018). Although Manne explicitly refers to Haslanger's analytical influence, she does not present her own work in terms of focal analysis. Nonetheless, arguably she does indeed use such an approach: in analysing instances of male aggression to women in terms of the core phenomenon of patriarchy's positioning of men's entitlement to dominate women, Manne is able to analyse the various methods of domination and to schematise misogyny as the "enforcement" wing of the law of patriarchal domination.

So, despite her hesitations in the 2016 paper, I would argue that in general Haslanger does not conceive of schemas as psychologistic, and in fact uses them in an explanatory capacity.

If schemas, then, can be used as the "core phenomenon" that makes sense of certain practices, is it possible to analyse the schemas themselves in this way? In other words, where schemas organise practices and thus constitute their core phenomenon, could the notion of resources as organising the schemas provide a core phenomenon that can makes sense of the schemas?

Whereas the core phenomena that Haslanger has used (e.g. male dominance) have been ready to hand through already existing critical feminist analysis, it is not necessarily the case that the core phenomenon that could explain schemas or articulations has already been made available. Indeed, if one is comparing a small number of phenomena (i.e. race and gender injustices), the core phenomenon, their mutual schema, is likely to be more readily apparent. This is not the case however, if one wishes, as I do, to analyse disparate articulations of the social imaginary in terms of their schemas, and disparate schemes in terms of their core phenomenon. So, how might we attempt to find the relevant core phenomenon?

I suggest that if we want to inquire into the meta-structure of the imaginary, and if we want to uncover the central 'resource' or core phenomenon at the heart of the imaginary, we have to start from the particular. Indeed, although Castoriadis does not conduct a systematic analysis into the structural relationship between the phenomena of the imaginary and the social imaginary significations, or into a given instance of a social-historical imaginary[35], he does in passing outline what such a systematic analysis might look like. He says, "We have, starting with the imaginary that abounds immediately on the surface of social life [i.e. the articulations], the possibility of penetrating the labyrinth of the symbolisation of the imaginary. And by pursuing the analysis further, we do arrive at significations [i.e. core phenomenon] that are not there in order to represent something else..." (1987, 142-143).

[35] I do not mean to suggest that Castoriadis ignores actual social examples of the imaginary. On the contrary, throughout his writings he offers illuminating analyses of specific societies and their respective imaginaries. I mean that his analysis is not systematic in the manner which I seek to achieve in this chapter.

This insight chimes with a comment by Meadows that systems' "Purposes are *deduced from behaviour*, not from rhetoric or stated goals" (Meadows, 2008, 14, emphasis added).

We saw in Chapter One that the hermeneutics of the SIS must be exemplificatory – we have to look to specific examples that exemplify in order to understand them. Thus, we must turn to the articulations and their social structures. We also saw, in turn, that a hermeneutics of articulations must be explanatory: we must explain why articulations mean what they do by uncovering their hidden (or 'invisible') meaning.

Following Shapiro's distinction between systems and structures, I shall now attempt a 'systemic analysis' of the current British social imaginary, which in revealing substantive insights into the tacit assumptions that underlie the 'surface' articulations, will also help to reveal some hints about the abstract structure of imaginaries too. Thus, after conducting the systemic analysis I shall finish the chapter by turning to a 'structural analysis'.

SYSTEMIC ANALYSIS

Starting with a broad range of pertinent articulations, I then try to explain those articulations in terms of tacit, underlying assumptions that they appear to carry. By pertinent I mean both pertinent to the ordinary lives of the denizens of an imaginary (they should be common, and pervasive within the imaginary) and pertinent to the ameliorative concerns of this inquiry (those egregious issues mentioned above that require urgent address).

These underlying assumptions should include attitudes, beliefs and affects that represent the schemas identified by Haslanger above (and analogous to the responsive dispositions identified by Merleau-Ponty and Lennon that we saw in Chapter Three). The elements of the schemas can then be coded and themselves analysed for underlying ideas, which can then be coded and analysed further. This regressive analysis can continue until a core phenomenon has been revealed. The core phenomenon should be able to make sense of, and provide a rationale for, the initial articulations. Furthermore, the core phenomenon should be ontologically core to the imaginary: would the imaginary be what it is without this core concept?

In what follows I shall conduct an analysis, according to this method, of the imaginary in which I am embedded. This is the 'British Imaginary', but I take it to have much in common with the imaginaries of many other Western societies that share cultural, political, and economic structures (see Introduction). My ultimate purpose in doing so is to reveal the central principle – and attendant structures – that can account for the coherence of the imaginary. But the analysis will also reveal substantive insights into the current imaginary that I hope will be of ameliorative use to the critical project of which this thesis is a part. Indeed, the true value of this inquiry is to reveal the dynamics of the imaginary so that we can understand how best they might be reworked. This has both systemic and structural (in Shapiro's sense) elements to it, but in the present inquiry there will be significant overlap

between the two because the structural can only emerge from an in-depth engagement with the systemic, and the application of the formal structures is intended specifically for the substantive systems at hand.

An overview of the entire analysis is presented in tabulated form in the appendix, and partially reproduced in the body of the chapter (see table 1). In this chapter I shall concentrate on the analysis of the various levels, and this will mean reproducing only a handful of the articulations, which are too numerous to reproduce in full in the body of the chapter. However, I felt that a broad sample was necessary in order to go some way to represent the scale of the imaginary, and to use several examples from a wide variety of domains. The articulations are organised into types, which are themselves organised into domains (i.e. articulation> type>domain). In total, I have analysed 135 articulations (see appendix).

I shall start the systemic analysis with the schemas, which I derive from the articulations (see appendix). In what follows, discussion of examples of articulations (or type of articulation) proceeds under the schemas in order to illustrate that schema. These appear in the paragraphs in bold. I then turn to analyse the schemas in terms of the tenets and dispositions they reveal, and suggest that 'entitlement' is common to the dispositions, and a plausible candidate for the core phenomenon. I then offer a substantive account of entitlement.

Table 1. Tabulation of the keystone structure of the current imaginary.

ARTICULATION →	SCHEMA →	TENET →	DISPOSITION →	KEYSTONE CONCEPT
GDP Celebrity Culture Advertising Conspicuous consumption	Worth Established Through Property (WEP)	Acquisitiveness Sovereign subject	Proprietarianism	Entitlement
Convenience culture Nimbyism Eating Animals	Priority of Self (POS)	Sovereign subject Instrumentalism	Proprietarianism Hierarchy	Entitlement
Corporate Lobbying Frequent Flying	Privatised Gains, Socialised Losses (PGSL)	Acquisitiveness Sovereign subject	Proprietarianism Hierarchy	Entitlement

Post-truth Externalities		Competitiveness		
Gender pay gap Domestic labour Rape culture	Women Inferior, Men Superior (WIMS)	Instrumentalism Competitiveness	Hierarchy	Entitlement
Racial pay gap Racial slurs Sweat-shop commodities	Non-whites inferior, whites superior (NWIWS)	Instrumentalism Competitiveness	Hierarchy	Entitlement
Human exceptionalism Animals as pets Animal labour Eating animals Animal testing	Animals inferior, Humans Superior (AIHS)	Instrumentalism Competitiveness	Hierarchy	Entitlement
Natural Capital Plastic lawns Insecticide Dominion	Nature Inferior, Humans Superior (NIHS)	Instrumentalism Competitiveness	Hierarchy	Entitlement
Wealth-creators Strivers/shirkers	Poor Inferior, Rich Superior (PIRS)	Instrumentalism	Hierarchy	Entitlement

Trickle-up policies Land grabs Rape culture	Superior take from Inferior (STFI)	Instrumentalism Competitiveness Acquisitiveness	Hierarchy Proprietarianism	Entitlement
Animals give their lives Unremunerated domestic labour	Inferior Give More (IGM)	Instrumentalism Competitiveness	Hierarchy	Entitlement

SCHEMAS

Worth established through property (WEP)

At the heart of this schema is the notion that property (including land, capital, ownership, possessions) is the predominant driver of wealth (as opposed to income[36]), and the idea that social status as well as power and influence, and therefore relative social value, is established via one's property wealth. I take WEP to be the assumption behind society's preoccupation with **GDP** and growth. News bulletins and policy focus on GDP as if it were a relevant indicator of the health of the country, and thus assuming that acquisitive power were synonymous with health/robustness. Similarly, policies of fiscal conservatism that result in austerity, which disproportionately affects the poor, have been justified in the name of GDP.[37] WEP is also evidenced in **advertising**, which seeks to engender a sense of missing out, of dissatisfaction, of inadequacy that a particular product can resolve, usually through offering elevated social status – popularity among friends, attractiveness to romantic partners, respect or favourability from one's children (see e.g. Pollay, 1986; and Leiss et al, 1990). In each case, the subject of the advert's narrative represents the social kudos of property. Either the person is ordinary and suffers the dreariness of the ordinary that is remedied through acquiring the target object, or the subject is an ideal person (represented through celebrities, or ethereal/dream like sequences and models) whose elevated status is suggested to be associated with their (fabricated) association with a particular product. WEP is further instituted by the phenomenon of **celebrity culture**, in which certain people are cherished more on account of their celebrity,

[36] And see Picketty (2013) on this point.

[37] Specifically, the ratio of debt to GDP. The implication of the narrative that debt must be managed to acceptable levels of GDP is that GDP must not be encumbered or tainted by debt. In fact, austerity has weakened GDP. (see e.g. Krugman, 2015)

part of which involves **conspicuous consumption** (see e.g. Trigg, 2001) and luxury lifestyles, than their notable achievements. Celebrity endorsements of elements of civil society (the climate movement; health campaigns; political parties) are extremely sought-after, because of the intrinsic value associated with celebrity, rather than a particular celebrity's particular experience or expertise in that area.

WEP is also, relatedly, associated with **consumer culture**, and for example, the conspicuous consumption of status symbols like exotic holiday destinations; large houses; large cars; latest technology.

Priority of Self (POS)

This schema speaks to the prioritising of individual preferences and choices, including the 'right to choose', over competing concerns (environmental and social). One example of this is **eating animals**. Many people purport to care about animals and are against animal cruelty – but only when that cruelty is perpetrated by the Other. That other could be racial Other (e.g. in the case of opposition to Chinese dog-eating and dog markets); or a class Other (like opposition to fox hunting and shooting; or cock fighting, greyhound racing; or trophy hunting); or individual Other ("lone wolf" who engages in gratuitous acts of violence).[38] The justification for eating animal products is often that the consumer happens to like the taste too much to forego it. This prioritising of personal taste even over acknowledged concerns of health, environment and animal rights is perhaps a paradigm case (I take up this point further in Chapter Six). Another well-documented example of POS is **nimbyism**, in which an individual may broadly accept the desirability of a social good (like wind turbines) but does not want to be inconvenienced with them personally. Nimbyist logic could also be applied to objections to other meaningful forms of climate action, like taxing or curtailing frequent flying and animal products.

POS is also apparent in what we might call **convenience culture**, which is manifested in avoidable car journeys and flights, the proliferation of disposable food and drink packaging.

Privatised Gain Socialised Losses (PGSL)

PGSL usually refers to the practice whereby private companies reap profits of their ventures but pass on any losses (also known as 'externalities') to society in general, often leaving governments to pay for the fall out. But this model is evidenced more broadly in society. Garret Hardin's 'The Tragedy of the Commons' (1968) was a seminal depiction of this scenario – each farmer profited privately from adding additional animals on common grazing land, but the loss in the quality of the grazing was shared between the collective - and thus private gains outweigh private losses (or so it seems). This dynamic is at work in many ubiquitous practices: the use of **private**

[38] See e.g. Francione and Charlton on the matter of single issue campaigns, which characterise "certain forms of animal exploited as different from, and worse than, other forms of exploitation." (2015, 8)

vehicles in towns and cities that take up a significant amount of space, reducing opportunities for green spaces, walking and cycling, as well as presenting serious dangers to health and climate. The same is true of **eating animals**, which accounts for a significant proportion of greenhouse gas emissions, through production emissions as well as opportunity costs of land for pasture that could otherwise be re-wilded (see e.g. Poore and Nemecek, 2018).

Arguably, we can also see **corporate lobbying** as PGSL: what is gained through political lobbying by large corporations are favourable operating conditions, conducive to higher returns for shareholders, but doing so through tax reliefs, access to media, and policy-makers corrodes the public sphere and undermines the functioning of democracy. It seems reasonable to view the democratic damages as socialised losses.

Another example might be the rise of **post-truth**. Post-truth is the phenomenon in which it is deemed acceptable or viable to eschew the truth in favour of deceit and fake news, or with highly subjective notions that cannot be gainsaid. In this dynamic, the perpetrator of a post-truth stands to gain from obfuscating the truth, but the cost is loss of trust and meaning in public discourse – an outcome that is extremely damaging for social life.

These three schemas, WEP, POS and PGSL, arguably all pertain to the private self as *acquisitor*. The next four schemas pertain to binary hierarchies. And the last two to the dynamics that are produced by, and in turn produce, these hierarchies.

Women inferior, Men Superior (WIMS)

The notion that women are inferior to men is the central idea of patriarchy, which has a long and widespread history in many societies. Despite certain progress in some areas, sexism and misogyny are rife, structural, and institutionalised (see e.g. Haslanger, 2016; Campbell, 2013; Manne; 2018; Criado Perez, 2019). Key examples include **rape culture** and the **gender pay gap**. Rape culture pertains to the widespread occurrence of sexual violence and aggression to women at the hands of men, it includes sexual abuse and verbal threats. It has been well-documented that women in the public sphere are particular targets of verbal threats of this kind (see e.g. Manne, 2018, 87 ff; and Bates, 2014); women who dare to take up public space and have a public platform face punitive threats of rape. Of course, rape threats are just one form of misogynist abuse, designed to enforce the patriarchal idea of male superiority over women (see Manne, 2018). The extent of rape culture was powerfully revealed by the #MeToo movement, which saw women across the world publicly acknowledge that they have been the victims of sexual abuse. The fact that rape is often insufficiently documented and investigated by police, leading to very few convictions is one of the reasons that a culture of rape can develop – men can rape with impunity (see e.g. Barr and Topping, 2020). When rape cases do go to trial, women are often blamed and men's testimony and well-being is prioritised (see e.g. Manne, 2019, 196 ff; Taylor, 2020; and Chapter Six).

The gender pay gap, in which women are paid less for comparable positions, is still a significant problem, including in large public institutions like the BBC. Furthermore, because of the broader imaginary context, women are more likely to be paid less because many of the highest paid jobs are typically male, women are less likely to

request or demand pay rises, and women are disproportionately society's unpaid carers (see e.g. Criado Perez, 2019, 76-77). This then helps perpetuate other structural injustices against women: often women will be required to do childcare unremunerated, because the male parent is much more likely to be better paid. As such, the male parent will acquire disproportionate power in the relationship, including through accruing pension.

Non Whites Inferior, Whites Superior (NWIWS)

This schema is apparent in the workplace, where few non-whites are in leadership roles and also manifests in **racial pay disparity** (see e.g. Topham, 2018). Economically, **sweat-shops**, which provide poor working conditions to employees in Asia so that the consumer costs are kept low for Western consumers, are premised on structural exploitation (see e.g. McKeown, 2017). **Racial slurs** proliferate, and indeed have been repeatedly used by the current UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who faces little accountability for doing so.[39]

Animals Inferior; Humans Superior (AIHS)

Racism and sexism do not commonly resort to overt claims for racial or gender superiority – such ideas remain tacitly hidden in structural racial and gendered oppression and in demeaning cultural slights. In the case of animals, however, the claim for human superiority over animals is often overtly stated as the ultimate justification for the ongoing systematic exploitation of the latter by the former. The bases for such claims are thin, and highly subjective and/or arbitrary. Human intelligence is often cited as the basis for **human exceptionalism**[40], but the kind of intelligence at issue is invariably the kind that humans excel at, takes little account of other – less understood – forms of intelligence, and no account of the many ways in which – at least at a collective level – humans behave extremely *un*intelligently. In this way, such claims seem highly subjective. Furthermore, the selection of intelligence, as opposed to, for example, the ability to jump high, fly, breath underwater, see in the dark, swing through trees, is arbitrary. By these metrics, the dice is loaded.

Humans' sense of superiority over non-human animals pervades social life: the food we eat; the 'management' of the countryside; the notion of 'pest control'; the ubiquity of **animal testing**, **exploiting animal labour**; and even apparently more benign practices like keeping **animals as pets**. Indirectly, we see this schema in the **anthropocentric** framing of climate change (see e.g. McShane, 2016); and the overwhelming extent to which

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[39] See for example this *New Statesman* (2019) report that documents Johnson's racial slurs. https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2019/06/boris-johnson-s-racist-insults-dog-whistles-and-slurs

[40] See Plumwood (2007) for a rebuttal of Raymond Gaita's (2003) claims for human exceptionalism, and the pernicious consequences of this ideology.

humanity has colonised the Earth[41] and in doing so wiped out vast swathes of nonhuman animals[42].

Nature Inferior; Humans Superior (NIHS)

The idea that humans as superior to 'nature' pervades social life, it is woven into the fabric of economics and revealed in the telling metaphors we use to describe nature. We speak, for example, of 'natural capital' and 'resources' thus rendering the natural world fungible currency that exists for human exploitation. These ideas long precede modern economics, however, found as they are in Christian mythology, especially the idea of 'dominion' (see e.g. Dobel, 1977)

On a more domestic level, obsessions with straight lines, of "low maintenance" gardens, with little wildlife, the use of weed killers and lawnmowers despite a collapse in insect numbers (see Sanchez-Bayo and Wyckhuys, 2019) the rise of plastic lawns and plastic topiary, which again speaks to a sense of the ultimate fungibility of nature, and the prioritising of convenience.

Poor Inferior; Rich Superior (PIRS)

The existence of poor and rich classes is taken as a matter of fact in liberal, capitalist societies[43], and indeed seems to be intrinsic to capitalism (see e.g. Picketty, 2014). The way in which richer classes are deemed superior is reflected in terms such as **"wealth-creators"** (see e.g. Sayer, 2015), and **"strivers"** in contrast with "**shirkers"**. The rewarding of bankers with larger salaries despite the financial crash, which precipitated years of austerity for the poorest, but overall gains for the richest (trickle up) again reflects this schema.

There is also a sense in which the lives of poor people are worth less than those who are richer – reflected in the unequal proportion of coverage of threats to white lives over others. We also see poorer people are disproportionately burdened with environmental pollution (see for example Hajat et al, 2015).

Superior Take From Inferior (STFI) and Inferior Give More (IGM)

I take these next two schemas from Kate Manne who convincingly draws out these dynamics in her discussion of

[41] See Bar-On et al (2018) on this point, who find that humans and their livestock comprise 95% of land biomass, compared to 4% wild mammals and 1% wild birds.

[42] This is often referred to as the Sixth Mass Extinction. See e.g. Ceballos et al, 2017.

[43] For example, Rawls (1971) inexplicably includes class in the Original Position.

misogyny (2018). I think they can equally be applied to other binary hierarchies. Manne shows that misogyny is in part constituted by men's sense of entitlement to certain 'female-coded' goods and services – from sex, to emotional care, to domestic services. Conversely, while men are entitled to take, women are also expected to give: to show themselves to be willing to provide emotional support, to **"smile" on demand** to strange men in public, to massage men's egos, for example. These same dynamics are at work in the other binary hierarchies we have seen. In the case of racial hierarchies, whites take the best jobs; they take the exploited labour of poorer, often non-white, nations; they take the 'natural resources' of poorer nations; and the colonial logic of taking is still at work in **sweatshops** and **land-grabs**, in the displacement of native peoples in the US, for example. In the case of rich versus poor, we can look to the establishment of **trickle-up** policies, in which wealth is taken from the poorest and redistributed to the richest. The rich are offered tax relief and exploit the 'social capital' of a nation with impunity, but when the poor take from the state, they are branded "scroungers".

When it comes to non-human animals, domestic pets are expected to give affection; or provide services like riding, guarding, laying. In an Orwellian twist of language, we speak of animals "giving" their lives as a proxy for their lives being brutally and unwillingly taken from them.

So far, I have examined the schemas in turn, using common examples that show the ways in which they are instantiated. Before moving on to the next tier of analysis it is worth pausing to consider the ways in which many of these intersect in everyday life. The example of eating animals intersects the schemas of animals as inferior to humans, of humans as entitled to take the lives and labour and products of animals, of animals as expected to give (up) their freedom, autonomy, family, and ultimately lives. In the case of the egg and dairy industries, we see an analogy of women as inferior to males –dairy cows and hens are exploited for their reproductive capacities. The impact of animal agriculture on the environment, in terms of water use, greenhouse gases and land use, and caloric waste is considerable, and thus also demonstrates the schema of privatised gains and socialised losses, and the prioritising of one's tastes over another's life is a paradigmatic example of the priority of the self.

Another example of intersecting schemas in everyday life is evidenced in roads and pavements. The former occupies far greater space than the latter, thus privileging the rich over poor, and men over women (because most drivers are male), private space over public space. We also see privatised gains and socialised losses, as well as prioritising personal convenience over broader social and environmental issues. Pavements are typically less well cared for in the winter (whereas roads are more likely to be de-iced), often not wide enough for people with mobility issues, parents (most often mothers) with prams and buggies (see Criado Perez, 2019, 29 ff), and are sometimes used by cyclists wishing to avoid the hazards of the roads.

TENETS

The first two schemas, as mentioned, pertain to ownership, broadly understood. Behind these schemas, I suggest, are the following two tenets: *sovereign subject* and *acquisitiveness*. In the remaining eight schemas, we also can see tenets of *instrumentalism* and *competitiveness*. I shall discuss these four tenets in turn.

- **Sovereign subject**: The notion of a self that takes centre stage, and whose own interests take priority over any other. There are also associations of control and manipulation that are reflected in the tenets of acquisition and instrumentalism. Unlike an 'atomised' subject, the sovereign subject is an insular entity that exists firmly within, and with reference to, its world. Matthews argues that atomism is deeply ingrained in the modern Western imaginary. Yet, she argues that the atomised self is both "bound in a web of causal ties" *and* that it is "ontologically autonomous...capable of existing in an otherwise empty world." (1991, 37) These statements seem to be contradictory: something cannot both be causally connected and ontologically autonomous. A sovereign subject is firmly embedded in its world: indeed, it derives its sovereignty from its context.

  It should be noted that 'subject' applies to more than just an individual person: it also includes pluralist entities that pursue private interests as its primary concern. Such entities are "dividual", and thus subject is a preferable term to "individual" here.

- **Acquisitiveness**: The notion of the intrinsic, and even ultimate good, of acquiring property. As such, life purpose is frequently framed in terms of acquisition. It is possessive in that it has an acute sense of "mine-ness", as might be expected from a sovereign subject. But more than just a preoccupation with having, it represents a voracious *getting*. In consumerist cultures, acquisitiveness often involves material goods, but it can equally apply to acquiring land; power; prestige; influence; lifestyle experiences; and control, for example.

- **Instrumentalism**: A readiness to make use of things or beings around us, and a willingness to view the world as at our disposal. Instrumentalism advances our own sovereignty (by getting us ahead), or alternatively can be justified by appeal to our sovereign interests. Instrumentalism does not necessarily require a failure to acknowledge the intrinsic value or personhood or its instrument, but merely the relative unimportance of that value compared to the instrument user's sovereign interests.

- **Competitiveness:** The notion that an object's value, and the subject's sovereignty, is derived in competitive relation to (that is, over against), something or someone else. It perhaps speaks more to a sense of prestige than scarcity: competition is hallowed and glorified (in sports and war for example), rather than regretted and avoided. The object of competition is acquisition, and competition is a means of sovereignty.

DISPOSITIONS

I suggest that we can understand the first two tenets, sovereign subject, and acquisitiveness, as comprising an underlying disposition of *proprietarianism*. The other two traits, instrumentalism and competitiveness, are suggestive of a disposition of *hierarchism*.

- **Proprietarianism**: This is the attitude which posits a sovereign subject whose *modus vivendi* is acquisition, as the fundamental unit of the social world. The proprietarian self is insular, but not "atomised" in the way in which individualism is often accused of being (see e.g. Matthews, 1991). Atomism is antithetical to proprietarianism: the insular self must be in the thick of its world, on which its autonomy and acquisitiveness feeds.

- **Hierarchism**: This is the attitude that posits everything exists in a relationship of greater or lesser value to everything else, and that this value is in part determined by instrumentalism (who/what is the instrument/instrument user) and competition (to acquire and acquire from, or to lose out and to lose out to).

KEYSTONE CONCEPT (CORE PHENOMENON)

The ultimate principle behind the articulations is revealed through analysing the two dispositions. I want to suggest that both dispositions turn on the notion of *entitlement*. In the case of proprietarianism, the subject as sovereign has license to acquire from the world at will. In other words, the key dynamic of proprietarianism is entitlement of the subject to acquire. In the case of hierarchism, which is marked by tenets of competitiveness and instrumentalism, the subject is free to acquire at the expense of others. Thus, I think we can identity two strands of entitlement. The first is entitlement *over* against: this pertains to proprietarianism, and can be summed up as the subject's right to *prioritise* its own (acquisitive) interests. The second is entitlement over *against*: this pertains to hierarchism, and can be summed up as the subject's right to take *from*, to benefit *at the expense* of others.

- **Entitlement Over *Against***

Entitlement as *taking away from* someone or something else is particularly evidenced by hierarchies of dominance and subordination: status is derived from deference, from structural inequality, from demeaning the Other. It may also be the impetus behind a pervasive drive to control nature, despite lacking any rational justification. An example might be councils strimming the wildlife back from verges, and citizens mowing the life out of lawns, resulting in barren, yellowing patches of exposed earth and struggling grass. There are no economic, efficiency, ecological or aesthetic gains in these kinds of activities that could render them rational. The only gain seems to be the fact of exerting control over nature and wildlife. The motivation then appears to be consolidating humans' hierarchical status over against nature. This kind of dynamic may sound like a glitch – an extreme, pathological deviation from a more benign cultural intention. This cultural intention – in other words, the picture of itself that society presents to itself – is one of liberty: of freedom, rights, tolerance, and respect, and represents the second

manifestation of entitlement.

However, arguably the first manifestation is intrinsic to the proprietarian mind-set: and proprietarianism is central to the liberalism of Hobbes (2009), Locke (2008), Nozick (1974), and Rawls (1971). At the heart of property is the notion of possession, and at the heart of possession is the idea of control: possession of property is the possession of control over that property. In fact, we may go so far as to say that property is, essentially, the object of control. Control, of course, is a matter of exerting influence over something or someone. Whether there are rational or merely status gains at stake (i.e. for the purpose of asserting priority and supremacy/superiority), control delivers these gains at the expense of the object of control. It may be objected that this does not explain inter-human relationships of subordination and dominance, because human beings cannot be property – humans are recognised as autonomous subjects. Arguably, even though this is at least nominally true (i.e. slavery and bonded labour persists), it was not long ago that some people of colour were legally the property of whites, and women were the property of their fathers or husbands. And the attitudes behind this entitlement dynamic still persist in many of the hierarchies that permeate modern (global) society – some of which were discussed earlier.

Indeed, the mechanisms of control still persist even without technical legal property rights. These mechanisms include: paying subordinates less; offering top leadership roles overwhelmingly to dominants (i.e. white men); structural barriers for mothers to financial parity and thus power parity with men within the home; epistemic injustice including the privileging of dominant voices with superior credibility and authority; the cultural coding of domestic and care work as female, which have significant economic and political opportunity costs; and casual racism, sexism and misogyny that serve to perpetuate the cultural and social status of subordinates. It should hardly be surprising that the true power of centuries of racial and patriarchal dominance of white men should lie not in the technical legal status, but in the extensive social vehicles (that is articulations) of control, and – most significantly – the attitudes of entitlement over *against* that drive them. Furthermore, legal ownership is still pervasive in many areas.

Of particular note are the ownership of animals and the ownership of land: in both cases, ownership represents a particularly egregious fantasy that denies their essential autonomy. I do not mean to suggest that the autonomy of land and animals is the same: the latter is analogous to the autonomy we (legally) recognise in human animals, and the fundamental removal of non-human animal autonomy is morally reprehensible for the same reasons it is in human cases. In animals, autonomy is linked to sentience, whereas in land autonomy is a feature of biodynamic, self-organising systems that result in calamitous outcomes when that autonomy is interfered with by humans. This is true whether of back yards with mown lawns; non-native species; diminishing habitats; fencing of horse-grazed paddock and of pasture lands; of pesticides; of removal of ancient woodlands and habitats. But animal autonomy is also significantly weakened by interfering with land autonomy. These issues are not side dishes in contemporary

society, they are present in the day to day lives of all of us. Each of us practices, directly or indirectly, entitlement over *against* animals and nature on a daily basis, whether we recognise it or not, whether we regret it or not. As such then, we are actively incubating the attitudes of entitlement over *against*. From this perspective, the continued control of subordinate humans is, again, perfectly explicable.

Matthews claims that Cartesian dualism produced a conception of matter – and therein nature – as "insensate, brute and blind, the inert and formless, the non-self, the Other, the External." (1991, 46-47). She shows how this then informed views of nature as something to "subdue" (Descartes), or nature as the enemy which we should "unite against, to storm and occupy her castles and strongholds, and extend the bounds of the human empire... to bind her to your service, and make her your slave" (Bacon cited in Matthews, 1991, 47). The intersections of oppression of nature and oppression of women here are all too clear, and the Baconian view has shades of the Fall in Genesis: man – in both senses – is pitted against the malignant, colluding forces of women (Eve), non-human animals (the snake), and nature (the apple). Matthews goes on to argue that Bacon's "ruthlessly exploitative attitude towards nature would of course be morally indefensible if nature were not viewed as inert, devoid of agency and interests." (1991, 47). In other words, it may be exploitative, but as there is no victim, it is not really ruthless. But it seems to be a bit of a stretch to suggest that language that anthropomorphises the object of exploitation on multiple levels can really be said to view that object as inert. One does not wage war against an enemy who has castles and frontiers to be colonised, who is female, who is to be enslaved in service if one really believes that enemy to be lifeless. In making this point I am drawing on a similar point made by Manne, who claims that misogyny is often, erroneously, explained away as 'dehumanisation', whereas many cases actually "hinge" on the recognition of humanity (2016, 133 ff). The point is that, rather than focussing on what purports to be a mechanistic view of nature, we ought to be focussing on the competitive qualities that this view also represents. Indeed, we could perhaps go so far as to claim that competition – that is entitlement to *take from*, self-hood as over *against* – is necessary for a picture of the sovereign subject. As we have seen, these conceptions depict 'man' as within nature, not somehow isolated and immune to the turbulence of the world. Competition accounts for the manner in which an individual exists within the world. Indeed, the notion of the inextricably competitive nature of human beings was at the very heart of Hobbes' 'state of nature'.[44] This view has been extremely influential, and it is the premise of much apocalyptic fiction, including cli-fi:[45] future imaginaries are therefore conflated with natural fact.

- **Entitlement *Over* Against**

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[44] The condition of "meer nature" is solitary and brutish *because* it is a "condition of war" (2009, 227), "where every man is Enemy to every man" (2009, 178)

[45] See e.g. Theroux (2010), Heller, (2012), and McCarthy (2009).

The second manifestation is entitlement *over* against, in which the subject's freedom to choose is privileged *over* other competing concerns or interests. In this case, the power to choose is the object of entitlement, and if it results in a loss to others, this is incidental rather than intrinsic. This is the kind of entitlement that informs decisions to privilege convenience or preference of the subject over other's concerns, even when those concerns are objectively graver than the subject's. It is plausibly the justification used to continue to pursue activities that are known to be environmentally damaging, such as flying. In most cases, flying is not considered urgent or necessary, and the flier's desire to pursue elite lifestyles prevails over the harms this causes. Such examples are easier to attribute to entitlement *over*, rather than over *against*, because there is no obvious or immediate victim, and the apparent harm caused *directly* is minimal. In the case of eating animals, which prioritises taste preference over another's life, appeals to choice are perhaps the most common justification (i.e. "don't shove your opinions down other people's throats"; "I respect your choice so you should respect mine"; "don't tell me what I can and can't eat"; "Nanny state!"). We might have reason to doubt that entitlement *over* against (by appeal to choice) is the true dynamic here, in that presumably most people do not believe that choice is an absolute right: society is built around laws, rules and regulations, as well as norms, that overtly restrict or tacitly guide choice. These are considered necessary for the overall good of the collective, or because not having such limitations would perilously endanger other autonomous beings. And in fact, most people support such limitations that protect non-human animals – gratuitously harming an animal is considered morally and legally wrong. The question arises then, whether people really believe that taste pleasure is not gratuitous, especially relative to life and violence, or whether, more sinisterly, eating and otherwise exploiting animals is actually a matter of entitlement over *against*. On this last point, I will limit myself to the following observation: that all oppressed human groups are in a relationship in which they are the dominant party compared with non-human animals. For the vast majority of people, entitlement over *against*, which I suggest is an irreducible constituent of our social imaginary, is only available via binary hierarchies with non-human animals and nature. Furthermore, in a finite world, the terms of acquisition might be said to be necessarily zero-sum, and therefore over *against*. Although we might want to suggest that, in a psychologistic sense, most people do not view acquisition as a matter of taking from, it is perhaps worth remembering that in liberalism's great tome, *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls includes class alongside biological categories that lie behind the veil of ignorance in the Original Position (1971, 137) – despite this thought experiment representing ideal theory! This suggests that notions of competition and hierarchy indeed run very deeply in liberal ideology.

I pick up the idea of entitlement again in Chapter Six, but for now I wish to turn to what the foregoing analysis reveals about the structure of the imaginary.

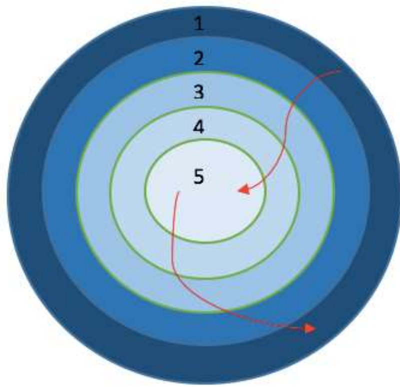
Structural analysis

The core phenomenon of Entitlement represents what I will refer to as the 'keystone concept': the central notion that serves to hold a society together in the manner of a keystone – that central building block upon which the integrity of the whole structure depends. Just as the integrity of an ecosystem depends on its keystone species, so

the integrity of a given social imaginary depends on the keystone concept. The keystone concept provides the complex of articulations with its principle of coherence, and the corresponding society with its "essential characteristic". I would argue that the keystone concept, then, should be understood as ontologically necessary for an imaginary to be what it is. I suggest that entitlement *does* encapsulate the flavour of our social imaginary, and that it can make sense of many articulations, including the ones we have discussed, and those in the appendix. Of course, there is much social action that arguably does *not* seem to articulate entitlement, but that said, very much of what may look ordinary or neutral can be parsed to show the links to entitlement, via the schemas, tenets and dispositions. I am inclined to suggest that the degree to which the articulations instantiate the keystone concept – and its associated schemas/tenets/dispositions – is also the degree to which they are *socially salient*. By salient I mean the degree of pertinence an articulation has to the overall character of the imaginary. I would suggest that the less pertinent an articulation is, the more fungible it is. Thus, the *complex* of articulations, as well as individual articulations, is also subject to the dynamics of the 'sufficient remainder' principle that I outlined in the previous chapter. In other words, those articulations that are not particularly salient, are fungible in that they are not part of the sufficient remainder. To put it the other way around, articulations can constitute a sufficient remainder of the social imaginary to the degree to which they are salient to the keystone concept. This is to say that the social imaginary must endure over time while retaining its essential character, and, I am suggesting, it does so in virtue of retaining a sufficient remainder of articulations that instantiate the keystone concept (i.e. are salient to it). To put that in terms of the current imaginary, those articulations that most saliently embody entitlement are the ones that most sustain the current imaginary.

I also demonstrated that there are certain dispositions and tenets that capture the idea of entitlement. When these percolate down to the articulations, certain ones will be emphasised more than others. Certain articulations convey proprietarian tenets of acquisitiveness and sovereign subject most acutely, while others might convey hierarchism. However, these tenets are more likely first to permeate the schemas, rather than be directly discernible through the articulations. A schema is a set of attitudes, norms and values that – as Haslanger observed – orient and organise social practices. In the current imaginary, the schemas include binary hierarchies; attitudes to wealth; and mechanisms of hierarchical enforcement. The schemas, then, include what are often understood as ideologies, a set of beliefs that are consciously held and orient the organisation of society, such as patriarchy and speciesism. The elements of the schemas are not necessarily consciously held by the denizens, but many of them nonetheless are more or less explicitly recognised in political discourse. Conversely, discussion and acknowledgement of the tenets and dispositions are limited to rather peripheral strands of critical analysis (such as environmental ethics; ecological economics; feminism and eco-feminism).

The structure I set out thus consists of five tiers, that can be represented as concentric circles, which we can term the 'keystone structure' (fig. 1). Whilst the foregoing discussion and tabulation presented the elements of imaginary structure as *linear*, this was merely an expedient to unpacking the articulations. In reality, the various parts of the imaginary are deeply interconnected, overlapping and mutually reinforcing.



1. ARTICULATIONS: The manifest social phenomena which institute the keystone concept (and/or its schemas/tenets/dispositions), and which provide the denizens of a given imaginary the currency required for participation in and understanding of that imaginary.

2. SCHEMAS: These are the ideas that the articulations manifest. Although there is broad social awareness of them, this is at the level of commentary and critique rather than consciously informing an individual's engagement with the articulations.

They are analogous to ideology, but are not necessarily fully developed "systems", or logically developed, but rather tacit assumptions.

3. TENETS: These are the notions that inform the schemas; they are closely linked to the keystone concept. Although they do not appear in quotidian discourse, there is broad familiarity with them, and they may be assumed to be natural facts.

4. DISPOSITIONS: These are the orienting attitudes that the articulations manifest. There is some social awareness of them, although this is mainly at the critical margins of society that actively seek to elucidate and challenge the status quo.

5. KEYSTONE CONCEPT: The underlying concept(s) whose logic pervades the imaginary complex and provides the principle of coherence around which the parts (i.e. articulations) of the complex are organised. This is not consciously held, and its existence is scarcely acknowledged, if at all. It is the imaginary complex's ontological principle: without it, a given imaginary would not be what it is.

Fig 1. The imaginary complex represented as the keystone structure. The keystone structure consists in concentric layers: each layer is manifest in the layers in a centrifugal relationship (the keystone concept is manifest in all three outer tiers; whereas the articulations are only manifest in their own (outer) layer). The graded colour from dark to light represents 1) the volume of parts of each layer (high to low) and 2) the level of conscious awareness of each layer (high to low).

Starting from the inside out, the tiers of the keystone structure successively instantiate the adjacent tier's ethos. The nearer to the outside of the circle, the more elements that comprise each tier, and also the more consciously held and recognised those elements. Thus, the outer ring comprises myriad articulations, most of which will be familiar to most of the denizens of a given imaginary, whereas the central ring just has one keystone concept, and is by and large not acknowledged by denizens. To put this in Merleau-Ponty's terms (Chapter Three), we see the outer tier represents the 'visible' that carries the 'invisible'. And to put this in terms of the insights gleaned in Chapter One from Ricoeur and Castoriadis, the outer one or two tiers represent the first plane of meaning, and the inner three tiers the second plane of hidden meaning.

Of course, it must be acknowledged that the structure that presents itself in this case is not necessarily

generalizable. To make such a claim, a thoroughgoing analysis of several social imaginaries would be necessary, and that is certainly beyond the scope of the current work. However, we can say that there are at least two tiers (articulations and keystone concept), or even three (the schema level that Haslanger identifies). We might speculate that the more heterogeneous a society is, and the more diverse its articulations, or the larger group to which the imaginary belongs, the more tiers will be needed, because ultimately, as Meadows saw, hierarchies of categorisation are ways of managing complex information sets (2008).

We can also postulate that the tiers are mutually reinforcing – the articulations require the keystone concept, in virtue of which they exist; but likewise, the tacit, oblique keystone concept requires the articulations to institute it, to keep it alive. But, this interdependence does not mean that the keystone concept and the articulations are of equal standing: as we have seen, the articulations in themselves are fungible, and even those that I have claimed might constitute a sufficient remainder are themselves potentially fungible. For example, one could imagine a world in which animal liberation was achieved and women were not called misogynistic names, but in which entitlement still flourished because certain people are bred for their organs to be harvested for others (as in Ishiguru's *Never Let Me Go*) or most women were kept as sexual slaves for the purposes of procreation (as in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*). Conversely, the keystone concept is precisely non-fungible: it must remain in place for the imaginary to be what it is. It follows then that if we seek to transform the social imaginary, that 1) it will be necessary to replace the keystone concept, and 2) we must actively resist and reject those salient articulations that institute the keystone concept.

These two points have massively important implications in terms of indicating how to proceed in the task of transforming the imaginary. But they also have serious ethical implications: if the stuff of our daily lives and routine interactions with the world constitute salient articulations, then our choice of whether to scrutinise them, to resist them, to call them out and label them, or whether just to carry on using them and accepting them as normal, matters. We may think that our diction or our breakfast choices are simply neutral personal decisions, but it is perfectly possible that they contribute to the prevailing status quo which threatens to undermine the very conditions of civilization. The perspective we glean from imaginaries is one of radical responsibility and, conversely, of radical empowerment: many of us do not possess meaningful political power to directly change the institutional structures that keep the status quo firmly entrenched, but all of us do have the power and capacity to choose to reject or affirm many of the articulations of daily life that legitimise and consolidate these 'systemic' structures. This speaks to ongoing debates around personal action vs system change. The former is often pitted as a neo-liberal rendering of the problem: of reducing social structures down to the atomised subject, forgetting the political structures that are the real might behind many global – notably – climate issues. However, this argument often seems to be used by those who do not want to resist certain salient articulations (most commonly flying and eating animal products), as a way for excusing or minimising the significance of those behaviours. On an imaginaries perspective, however, we see that 'the system' and personal actions are not really separable: systemic (that is political/governmental) apparatus exists in part in response to the broader ethos instantiated by all of us; and certainly those systems help to shape that ethos in turn.

COHERENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

At the end of this chapter I have revealed extremely useful insights into the nature and structure of imaginaries. We have seen that the keystone concept is at the heart of a given imaginary being and remaining what it is, and also the thing that must be removed – and replaced – if an imaginary is to be transformed. The keystone concept, then, is that in virtue of which the social imaginary coheres. This is a significant step in the field of social imaginaries: we have seen that coherence is one of its core characteristics, which was explicitly recognised by Castoriadis (and supported from a systems thinking perspective), but this is the first attempt to account for that coherence. Doing so has very important implications for the amelioration of social ills: it provides us with a working diagnosis of their common pathology. Furthermore, and following from this, we have been able to show the importance of ethical responsibility: our actions are never just empty – regardless of intention. On the contrary, our actions are articulations of the heart and soul of the imaginary (the keystone concept) that is ontologically dependent on such articulation. As denizens of an imaginary, we each have responsibility for the form that imaginary takes.

We are left with two questions, however. Firstly: how exactly do the keystone structure and the articulations relate to each other? In other words, we have still not accounted for the dynamics of the imaginary, even if we have made considerable progress in revealing its parts and their relationships. The answer to this question, I believe, can be provided by giving an account of what I call the ‘synthetic imagination’. It is in understanding this mode of the imagination that we can understand its opposing mode, the radical imagination, which I believe can help us answer the second question: if we want to transform the social imaginary and replace the keystone concept, how can we do so? It is to these two modes of the imagination that I turn now in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: The Synthetic and Radical Imagination as Positive and Negative Capability

"Why do people actively sort and screen information in the way they do? How do they determine what to let in and what to bounce off, what to reckon with and what to ignore or disparage?…Why is it that periods of minimum structure and maximum freedom to create are so frightening?…Why are people so easily convinced of their powerlessness…?" ~ Donella Meadows[46]

"The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty: not knowing what comes next." ~ Ursula K. Le Guin[47]

So far I have shown that our social world consists in a complex of articulations – socially salient phenomena with which denizens of an imaginary grapple in order to participate fully in that imaginary. We have seen that in order for these articulations to cohere in a complex there must be a unifying and organising principle, which also accounts for the flavour or character of a given imaginary. In the last chapter, I posited a five-tiered structure of notions that infuse the imaginary with the character of its ultimate principle – the keystone concept. I suggested that an analysis that might reveal the keystone concept is necessary if we are to effectively diagnose the underlying cause of the many ills contemporary society faces. In my analysis of the current imaginary, I argued that its keystone concept is 'Entitlement'. To move from diagnosis to *remedy*, however, requires further understanding: we have seen that articulations institute the keystone concept, but we are yet to account for exactly how this happens.

How does a nebulous, unconsciously held concept sufficiently infuse – dare I say infect, in the current case - the entirety of the social imaginary? If we can understand this, we can perhaps also start to understand how to resist this infusion, how to reject the keystone concept, and how to generate an alternative.

In this chapter, I turn to the imagination to help answer these questions. In my view, one of the most appealing dimensions of the concept of the social imaginary is its explicit appeal to the imagination. The originality and

46 2008, 16

47 2000, 70

power of Castoriadis' *oeuvre* is to be found in his account of the 'radical' imagination, which he explores in order to account for the possibility of the radically non-determinate nature of social history. It must be noted, however, that he has remarkably little to say on the other – opposite – faculty: the reproductive imagination.

It is surprising to me that the literature on imaginaries is content to account only for the radical function of imaginaries – their 'rupture', as Ricoeur (1991a, 314) puts it - but has nothing much to say about the ordinary functioning, that it is the *reproduction*, of the imaginary. This is perhaps particularly surprising of Castoriadis. He was very aware of the role of coherence in the social imaginary, and yet, in my view, it is the synthetic imagination that accounts for the coherence of the social imaginary system: it is through the synthetic imagination that denizens inhabit the social imaginary of *shared* articulations.

My intention in the first part of this chapter is to seek to do just that. In order to do so, I suggest that we can apply a Kantian account of the synthetic power of the imagination to account for *social imaginary* understanding, supplemented with Heideggerian insights into mood and disposition to explain how synthesis is 'schematised'. I will call this faculty the 'synthetic imagination'.[48] I suggest that Heidegger's notion of fundamental attunement can be seen as a "positive capability", and a fundamental drive to integrate with our social milieu. The synthetic imagination serves to perpetuate the existing social imaginary, and it operates as a positive feedback loop (see Chapter Two): it serves to consolidate what is already there.

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[48] My terminology differs markedly from Kant's, although my account of the synthetic imagination is an interpretation of Kant's productive imagination. For Kant, the productive imagination generates understanding (and in this sense is productive), but because it does so through synthesis with *determined* categories, it is not truly creative. Much contemporary literature uses the productive imagination as synonymous with the creative or radical imagination (see e.g. Geniusas, 2018). For my purposes, the synthetic imagination is useful in explaining the *reproduction* of the social imaginary, but this is very different to Kant's reproductive imagination, which refers to the phenomenon of Humean 'impressions'. Thus in order to avoid confusion, I have chosen not to use the Kant's terms (productive and reproductive). It should be noted, however, that even though Kant recognised a synthesis at work in the creative faculty of the imagination, synthesis involves a fixed category. My conception of the creative faculty of the radical imagination, however, turns precisely on the absence of such pre-existing categories, and therefore is not synthetic in the Kantian sense.

The distinction I make between the synthetic and radical imagination is broadly analogous to Castoriadis' notion of institut*ed* and institut*ing* imaginary (1987, 117 ff): the former is a matter of *reproducing* socially given significations, and the latter refers to the imaginary capacity *to create radically* new forms (significations). Merleau-Ponty (2010) also makes a distinction between the instituted and instituting, to denote passive and active modes of being in, and creating the world, respectively. I would emphasise the active element of the radical imagination, but do not suggest that the synthetic imagination is merely passive (in the sense of receptive): for the articulations to exist as salient embodiments of the keystone concept they must be actively *grappled* with (see Chapter Three).
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In the second part of the chapter, I will turn to consider the radical imagination – sometimes called the productive or creative imagination. I suggest that the radical imagination begins with the frustration of the synthetic imagination, and the creation of what I call the 'hermeneutic space'. I draw on a range of sources to show how this can be engendered through juxtaposition. I then discuss how the hermeneutic space facilitates the critical imagination and suggest that this can be understood as a "negative capability" after Keats, and in contrast to the positive capability of the synthetic imagination. I then go on to discuss how 'deep problems' and rich confusion can give rise to the creative faculty of the radical imagination. The radical imagination counterbalances (i.e. as a negative feedback flow) to the synthetic imagination: it creates openings in an otherwise closed system and disrupts the positive feedback loop (see Chapter Two).

Before I turn to the synthetic imagination, I want to acknowledge the following caveats. The issue of imagination is sprawling and complex. It is not my intention here to make substantive claims for the imagination beyond its role in the social imaginary. For now, I offer a focussed discussion on issues specifically relevant to the problematic at hand, even though this involves bracketing a very good deal of the imagination literature.

THE SYNTHETIC IMAGINATION

In the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*,[49] Kant observes that the imagination is the "fundamental faculty of the human soul" (A125). This is a very strong claim, that he would temper in the second edition. What led Kant to make this claim in the first place is the recognition that imagination is the faculty through which all human knowledge and understanding, and therefore, all human connection with the sensible world, is afforded. On this view then, we can start to see the explanatory possibility of the imagination in accounting for how we come to understand – to grasp – the articulations that comprise the social imaginary.

The power of the imagination can be summed up as the "synthesis of the manifold" (e.g. A157ff). Of all Kant's insights into the imagination, this is perhaps the most important. What is meant by this phrase is simply that, because each object of perception has several facets to it, in order for the mind to be able to comprehend the *unity* of object & facets, there must be an act of synthesis involved.

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[49] All references from the first Critique are from Kant, I. and Weigelt, M. (ed. and trans.) (2007). *Critique of Pure Reason*. London: Penguin Classics. A refers to the first edition, and B refers to the second edition.

So, when, for example, we are walking down the street, we might encounter a man with long blond hair and a moustache wearing a red jumper and a baseball cap rather than arms+legs+masculine physiology and physiognomy+red+clothing+hat+hair+facial hair and so on. And indeed, many of the items in this second scenario are themselves composites, which themselves require a "synthesis of the manifold".

To get from a list of disconnected phenomena to a *coherent* image requires that the parts be recognised as a *unity*. But it also requires some principle of coherence in terms of which the attributes are organised. Kant recognised that without this principle of coherence, there is merely "irregular accumulation" (A121). Whereas for understanding to obtain, recognition must be able to endure even in absence, and this requires regularity.

For Kant, organisation of the manifold is a matter of "association [that rests] on the synthesis of imagination" (B153). In this sense, we can think of 'manifold' as composites that are rendered complexes through the synthesis of the manifold with the concept that organises the aggregates of parts. This principle of organisation is fulfilled by *categories*. Kant claims that categories, which are functions of judgement and constitute fundamental concepts, are that in respect of which the manifold is determined (A147ff). There are various classes of concepts through which synthesis is possible. In the case of the man we encounter down the street, the concepts of "red" and "clothing" and "man" help us render an aggregate of attributes into a complex, understandable image.

Kant claims that the synthesis of intuitions in accordance with the categories "must be called "the transcendental synthesis of imagination" (A114). Why 'must' this synthesis be attributed to the imagination? Kant understands the imagination as "the faculty of representing an object in intuition even without its presence" (A114). On the one hand, Kant claims that imagination is "the subjective condition under which alone it can give a *corresponding* intuition to the concepts of understanding" (A114, emphasis added). It might be supposed then that Kant means to claim that the imagination is that which produces a representation of the (absent) object of intuition to the concepts. The thinking might be that because intuition belongs to the sensible, that some way must be found to present this intuition to the abstract concepts of consciousness in a manner that consciousness can grasp. In this sense then, imagination 'presents' (i.e. makes present) to the concepts an 'absent' object, and in doing so synthesises (i.e. brings together) the object of intuition with the concepts.

However, Kant then immediately goes on to claim that "synthesis is an act of spontaneity" (A114), indicating that imagination is unprompted by an external stimulus (unlike sense, for example). The question then is: what has spontaneity to do with "representing an object...without its presence"? Because Kant also refers to this faculty here as the *productive* imagination on account of its spontaneity, and because he also notes that this spontaneous synthesis is determinate, I take it that we are supposed to understand what is represented without presence here is *meaning* (or understanding). So, when we see a figure coming towards us, we are presented immediately with a

meaningful interpretation: we do not have to count the aggregate of the manifold, rather the manifold is unified for us in meaningful terms by the imagination. What is produced is meaning: and we can attribute this to the imagination because the meaning was simply not present in the aggregate of parts that we experience. For Kant, categories are the "last and highest" (A163) class of concepts, which "render possible the formal unity of experience" (A163). Kant claims that "all possible perception depends on... the categories, ... all possible perceptions, and... everything whatever that can come to empirical consciousness...must... be subject to the categories." (B165). Thus, we can infer that what is synthesised is perceptual phenomena with existing categories that allow us to make sense of the assorted phenomena we encounter. On this reading, then, Kant's conception of imagination is the spontaneous faculty by which we are able to synthesise disparate perceptual phenomena with existing concepts, and therein produce meaning and understanding.

The links between Kant's notion of the synthetic power of imagination and my conception of the social imaginary are, I hope, clear. Both accounts suggest that shared understanding is a matter of positing a principle of coherence (categories and keystone concept, respectively) that unifies composite social phenomena (the manifold of sensory perception and articulations, respectively). These similarities suggest that Kantian synthesis may be a good fit for explaining how social imaginary understanding is shared. Indeed, understanding the synthetic imagination as the synthesis of the manifold with the concepts helps to illuminate Castoriadis' phrase that we saw in Chapter Three: "unity of differences" (1987, 224).

There is a crucial difference between the accounts, however, which pertains to the 'transcendental' status of the categories. For Kant, that the categories are transcendental is necessary to explain the fact that all of us seem, by and large, to have commensurate experiences of the world. And the consequence of this is that the synthetic imagination appears spontaneous. On my account, however, the keystone concepts are not transcendental, they are trans-subjective: we are unavoidably endued with them in virtue of our ongoing encounters within a given social milieu. As such, the meanings that arise through the synthesis of our encounters of the articulations with the keystone concept are not spontaneous at all: they are, rather, heteronomous, in that the meanings thus produced are in accordance with conceptual laws that are not produced by the individual.

Does this mean, then, that my account is no longer Kantian, in that I reject the spontaneity and therefore productivity of what is, after all, often known as the 'productive imagination'? I believe it is still Kantian, because, to my mind, the heart of the Kantian imagination is the idea of synthesis: the notion that the imagination is capable of drawing together disparate perceptions and marrying them with the keystone concept to produce rich meaning that does not inhere in the object in itself. Thus, the synthetic, non-spontaneous imagination still holds a productive capacity (in that it produces shared meaning), albeit weakened: in this conception the synthetic imagination is not a truly *generative* or creative faculty (but, then, neither is Kant's transcendental account truly creative). In fact, it is this power of producing meaningful unity that reveals to us just how significant this kind of imagination is to

the social imaginary. The articulations are phenomena that carry certain social meanings, but this meaning is contingent.

We saw in Chapter Three that articulations are contingent because the meanings they carry can change or else become obsolete. Now we see that their contingency is also a matter of their being imagined as such by a person who happens to hold the correlative keystone concept: to an outsider, the meaning*ful* unity that is present for an insider is absent or diminished. In Chapter Three, I discussed how articulations can undergo change, but still retain their identity. This is important for consistency and adaptability of the social imaginary: denizens have to be able to convey and interpret life in a socially salient way in all manner of different scenarios and circumstances. I suggested that a key element of this persistent identity can be attributed to what I referred to as a "sufficient remainder" that allows subjects to *identify* articulations according to *expectations*. We are now equipped to understand how this occurs. The Kantian concepts (categories) are always already there - they are *a priori* – and this means that they therefore must endure, and as constants are able to provide 1) the 'sufficient remainder' (when synthesised) and 2) a sense of expectation that helps us with identification.

In my account of the synthetic imagination, the keystone concept is not *a priori* in the strong sense that follows from their transcendence in Kant's account. However, it is *a priori* in the sense that by the time we are fully cognitively competent as adults we are also fully cognisant of the keystone concept. As we saw in Chapter Four, grasping is a spectrum, and it is the case that all our social learning must take place in the presence of a keystone concept, as all articulations carry the keystone concept. But, as I discussed in Chapter Four, there are several layers of meaning that mediate the articulations and the keystone concept. Thus, we can suggest that grasping the keystone concept is a matter of learning over time. I suggest, furthermore, that we can understand the relative imaginativeness and creativeness of children as following directly from the fact of their grasping the keystone structures of the imaginary less strongly. Our exploration of the radical imagination in the second half of this chapter will reveal why this is so. The point at issue is that the synthetic imagination plays a crucial role in the functioning of the social imaginary. This role of the synthetic imagination has so far not been recognised in the literature of social imaginaries, and yet it seems to me that it offers us one of the most distinctive and compelling features of the concept of the social imaginary.

Appeals to synthesis, however, are still not sufficient to account for the dynamics of the imaginary. Kant wants to address how exactly the two heterogeneous entities at issue in synthesis - appearances on the one hand, and categories on the other - can be said to apply to one another? (A137): "How can the categories be applied to appearances" (A137). To answer this question, Kant claims that it is necessary to find a "third thing" that is "homogeneous" with both appearances and with categories (A137). To be clear, when Kant says that something is "homogeneous" with something else, he means that the former is *subsumed* in the latter (A137/138).

This question of application is what Kant calls the "transcendental schema" (A139/140). The schematising candidate that Kant puts forward here is time, because time, he claims, is homogenous with the category insofar as it is "universal and... a priori", and time is also homogeneous with appearances, insofar as "time is contained in every empirical representation" (A139/140).

Schematism is as relevant to my account of the synthetic imagination as it is to Kant's. However, the substance of the solution differs significantly, and here I part ways with Kant. The reason being that the core of his problematic was, although similar in many ways to mine, ultimately different. Where we are dealing with a trans-subjective reality, Kant posited a transcendental one. For Kant the categories that cohere our experiences with those of others exist *a priori*, are transcendental – they transcend the subject, they transcend experience. They just are, and their being thus is the condition of knowledge. On the other hand, the categories of the social imaginary are not *a priori*: although they may exist prior to any given individual's experience or existence, they are not prior to all experience. Indeed, as illustrated in Chapter Three, their existence is intrinsically connected to experience of them. This distinction matters because it has important implications. In Kant's conception, the transcendental nature of concepts means that they are essentially fixed and eternal: it doesn't matter in which century or continent one is born and lives, the concept of dog is the same. This kind of explanation may be adequate for certain, broad categories with empirical correlates (Kant distinguishes between empirical and transcendental concepts), but it cannot tell us about how the meaning, the relevance or salience of the concept of dog differs from society to society: in short, it cannot account for changes in social imaginary concepts or the creation of new ones.

Because we are dealing with different kinds of concepts, Kant's proposed schematism is not relevant for our purposes. Indeed, we may query whether time really is the appropriate bridge concept for a priori concepts which are surely outside of time. As mentioned, the imaginary concepts are instantiated and kept alive through their constant engagement, through *being grappled* with. Thus, it strikes me that an adequate schematic solution will have to account for this active role of denizens. Time, conversely, has no requirement for denizens: it sweeps on regardless and thus cannot account for their active role.

In the place of time then, I suggest that we have already encountered the schematic solution. In Chapter Four, we encountered several tiers of the keystone structure that connect the articulations to the keystone concept. These tiers have already been demonstrated to schematise the keystone concept. I suggest that we can think of these tiers as attitudes or dispositions. At this point, we can turn to Heidegger to help conceptualise the role of the attitudes in the synthetic imagination.

THE DISPOSITIONAL SCHEMATIC

Heidegger uses the idea of 'mood' to suggest an affective attitude towards the world. Moods are necessary elements of our engagements with the world, and they are always present: we are never not in some mood or other. For Heidegger, moods serve the vital function of allowing us a mode (c.f. mood) through which we can come to know the world (e.g. 2010, 137). As Greaves puts it: "All moods have this double structure of gripping me and in so gripping me revealing myself and my ways of engaging and being open to the world, such that I may *get to grips with* my being in the world in one way or another." (2010, 65, emphasis added). The notion of 'getting to grips with' is of course redolent of the phenomenological grasping that characterises social imaginary understanding. Lennon also emphasises this fundamental link between moods and understanding, "without moods ... we could not *grasp* what possibilities there are for engagement" (2015, 8, emphasis added).

The idea presented here is that there is a pervasive mood that mediates, or in other words, *schematises*, our interaction, our grappling with, and therefore our understanding of, the world. Moods provide us with the orienting framework through which we interpret the world. Geertz makes a similar observation when he says: "our ideas, our values, our acts, even, our emotions are... cultural products - products manufactured by... *dispositions*..." (Geertz, 57, emphasis added).

Indeed, Heidegger uses the term *befindlichkeit*, which is often translated as 'disposition', to encapsulate the way in which, rather than being purely personal affective undulations, moods are at heart a matter of the fundamental attitude with which we dispose ourselves to the world. Thus, we can understand mood as affective disposition, a 'feeling *towards*' rather than just 'feeling'. Heidegger stresses the orienting role of mood: The German *befindlichkeit* literally meaning 'to find oneself' (Gorner, 2007, 72).

In the etymology of the English word 'disposition' we again find analogies to schematism: disposition derives from the Old French and Latin word 'disponere' meaning 'to arrange, to sort, to organise'. As Greaves notes, "Disposition and understanding are both equally basic ways, or as Heidegger puts it 'co-originary' *existentiales*, in which Dasein is in its world." (2010, 66). In Chapter Three we saw how articulations are what make understanding possible in the social imaginary, and that the articulations depend on the responsiveness of denizens: we can understand this responsiveness in terms of Heideggerian disposition. It is through moods that the articulations we encounter matter: "Only an essentially mooded being can be affected by entities" (Gorner, 2007, 75).

The idea of moods and dispositions being linked to the world around us is brought out more sharply in Heidegger's notion of attunement (*stimmung*). *Stimmung* refers to the "atmospheres in which we are steeped, not interior conditions" (Blattner, 2007, 77), an already existing ambience in our surroundings that we attune our moods to, that we dispose ourselves to.

In this idea of attunement we see another kind of synthesis at work, this time on a phenomenological, rather than the mental plane that Kant had in mind. Our moods help us to synthesise ourselves with the world in which we find ourselves; they allow us to act in harmony with our social world. This kind of attunement would only be possible through an active and embodied engagement with the world. Given that we have posited understanding as a matter of grasping the articulations, and that the nature of articulations is a matter of being grasped, I suggest that these Heideggerian notions of disposition and attunement offer a useful means of connecting the imagining denizen with the articulations. I posit that it is the affective *salience* of articulations, to which we are fundamentally and specifically attuned, that gives rise to certain moods, which synthesise our experience with the keystone concept. As such then, the moods of denizens reflect the character of the social imaginary: both are ultimately embodiments of the keystone concept.

We have seen that mood is strongly related to our grasp of the world for Heidegger. Mood provides a disposition which offers an interpretive framework for our encounters with the articulations, and likewise, the articulations carry affect that gives rise to *stimmung* – the atmosphere to which we attune our own moods. These moods are more than just ambient affect, a sort of background music, which while pleasant is not necessary at all. On the contrary, moods are necessary for our capacity to conceptualise, to make sense of the world.

Heidegger uses the notion of fear to make this point: we feel fear so we can *think* 'threat' (2010, 140 ff). It seems that our minds are deeply connected to our feelings, and modern neuroscience bears this out: our brains are directly linked to our guts via the vagus nerve, which informs our feelings towards the world. So that when we feel fear, we think threat, and when we think threat, we viscerally feel fear. As Geertz puts it, "in order to make up our minds, we must know how we feel about things." (1973, 89). The connections between mood and judgement (and cognition more broadly) is well established. One broad school of thought, known as 'Affect as Information' highlights how "emotional feelings serve as affective feedback that guide judgement, decision making and information processing" (Clore, Gasper & Garvin, 2001, 124).

Mood and judgement are essentially linked: mood is what informs the evaluative element of judgement. It may be that because many moods are "persistent, smooth...pallid" (Heidegger, 2010, 131) that they are not recognised

as such and that we mistake cognitive machinations as mood*less*.[50] The point is that affective judgement is the basis for understanding. We saw in Chapter Three that distinction and difference were necessary for organising, and now we can also see that affective distinction, or relative salience, is necessary for judgment: how to impart value to one notion over another; how to reason and so on.

Heidegger in fact posits two kinds of attunement. The first, that we have just been exploring, is specific and intentional: it represents the capacity to affectively align with ambient moods in a specific moment. The second kind represents the basic capacity and inclination to align with the world at large. As Greaves puts it, it is a matter of disposition "not towards *something* within the world, but to the world itself as a meaningful whole." (2010, 68, emphasis added). This fundamental attitude is the basis of our everyday, intentional attunements. For Heidegger, this fundamental attunement has, despite being generalised and non-intentional, substantive affective content. In *Being and Time*, he discusses the fundamental mood of anxiety – as contrasted to the intentional mood of fear (2010, 178 ff). But in a later lecture, Heidegger suggests that there are other possible fundamental moods (he gives the examples of profound boredom and love) (1998).

I want to suggest that we can understand the relationship between the fundamental attunement and everyday moods as follows: fundamental attunement represents a foundational, orienting attitude towards the world that gives rise to related affects that colour our interactions. Whereas the fundamental attitude is somewhat abstract, non-intentional, and most often not directly perceived by us, its affects are positive, often apparent to us, and intentional. In other words, the affects *schematise* the fundamental attitude. Thus, I wish to interpret Heidegger's account of mood such that it can be used to explain the schematism that affords the synthesis between the keystone concept and the articulations. On this account, the keystone concept is posited as a disposition, a fundamental orientation to the world, and the tiers that mediate the articulations and the keystone concept that we uncovered in the previous chapter are the *affects* - the *feeling towards*. To put this in terms of the substantive analysis of the current imaginary of Chapter Four, we can see that the fundamental disposition is entitlement, and that the affects (the feeling towards), include: hierarchism, competitiveness, instrumentalism, proprietarianism. These affects are then imbued in the articulations, and it is the affective salience of articulations that allows us to recognise and schematise them so readily. I will discuss entitlement and its schematism in more depth in Chapter Six.

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[50] It may also be that we commonly think of emotions in rather limited ways. That there exists a broader range of affect than is explicitly expressed in English is evidenced in examples of words in other languages that have no English counterpart (like *schadenfreude*, or *hygge*), or in familiar feelings that do not have precise terms (like the feeling of wanting to be a part of something), and even in the case of negatively expressed emotions (e.g. un-scared, not overwhelmed, unexcited) that refer to feelings that are not the opposite (bold, whelmed, bored).

Positing the keystone concept as a fundamental attitude has important implications. Firstly, it renders the synthetic imagination a '*positive* capability'. By this, I mean that as an attitude it represents a substantive orientation to the world, and it gives rise to positive affect. By positive I mean affirmative and substantive, in the sense in which Heidegger's moods can also be said to be positive: they must always be present for synthesis to take place. Synthesis is the positive "matching" (Geertz, 1973, 232) of keystone concept with encounter, via the affects. This is not to say results of the synthesis cannot be *normatively* negative: normatively negative affect and judgements are still positive in the sense that they are substantively given. Valence can be positive or negative. Even apparently neutral – or rather ambivalent – affects are positive. However, it is plausible that our degree of familiarity with certain judgements and affects, renders us insensible to them, to the degree that we may believe that judgements and affects are absent.

Indeed, it seems plausible that to a great extent the articulations that we encounter on a daily basis are so commonplace and 'second nature' that we are not aware of feeling or registering any particular reaction to them at all. The most potent way in which we see this sense of comfortable reassurance at work is by inverting – or, better, subverting – norms.[51] There are a great many examples of norm-violation that result in vitriolic push-back. Greta Thunberg violates the norms of females – especially children – not bringing attention to themselves, not being given or pursuing attention, not being listened to, not being headstrong, and being pleasant and smiling. We see similar pushback against veganism when it is called "extreme" or "smug". We might suggest that what is happening in these cases is that an articulation has been turned on its head: the opposite elicits a strong, positive (that is, affirmative) attitude, in a way that suggests that the unnoticed attitude towards the status quo – animals being brutally exploited and killed, women as demure, humble, invisible, secondary – is anything but neutral.

The second implication of positing the keystone concept as a fundamental, orientating attitude, following from its positivity, is that it represents a basic *drive*. As a drive, the fundamental attitude is an inclination to attune to the world. This drive is not intentional, however, because there is no specific object at issue, but rather one's social world per se. This impetus is also what accounts for the sense of expectation that, as we saw in Chapter Three, informs identification. It is therefore also the means through which the social imaginary's meta-purpose – social cohesion – is met (see Chapter Two).

This is a drive to integrate socially, and is, I would argue, the fundamental force of the synthetic imagination: only through synthesising our encounters with the world *in the terms* of our specific social imaginary can we fully integrate with society. Thus, this power of what is often dismissed as the merely "reproductive" imagination (and, indeed, the synthetic imagination is concerned very much with the reproduction of the social imaginary), far from

[51] What is known as a 'breaching experiment' in ethnomethodology (c.f. Garfinkel, 1967).

being an inferior or somehow unimportant faculty is shown to be of almost unparalleled significance. As Meadows observes, "an important function in almost every system is to ensure its own perpetuation" (2008, 15).

Thus we can think of the synthetic imagination as a 'positive capability' (as opposed to Keats' negative capability), by which I mean the capacity to synthesise experience in positive, affirmative terms that are provided by the social imaginary. I shall be contrasting this capacity with my interpretation of its negative counterpart later on in the chapter.

THE RADICAL IMAGINATION

In the literature on the imagination, this generative faculty of the imagination is often contrasted with the merely reproductive form of the imagination (see e.g. Kearney, 1998). I maintain this opposition. The generative imagination is also variously referred to as the productive imagination (after Kant), the creative imagination, and the radical imagination, which is the term that Castoriadis prefers.

I am choosing to use the Castoriadian term here, for three reasons. Firstly, as mentioned, I believe the emphasis on the unique power of the radical imagination to account for the intrinsic power of the social imaginary to change represents Castoriadis' most important insight. Castoriadis does not offer an in-depth account of the dynamics of the radical imagination. Nonetheless, the account that I attempt to provide here is intended to be applicable to Castoriadian thought. Secondly, the word 'radical', in the sense of getting back to the roots, is an apposite term for the account I offer here that emphasises the *negative capability* of this faculty of the imagination. Thirdly, in my account, this faculty has two main functions, the critical and the creative, whereas other commonly used names focus solely on the latter capacity.

Whereas the synthetic imagination involves the positive "matching" of an experience with the keystone concept, via the keystone structure, I suggest that the radical imagination comes into operation when such an attempt at synthesis is frustrated. When this happens, we are faced with what I call the 'hermeneutic space'. The hermeneutic space refers to a moment of consciousness in which experience – whether of a person, an idea, a memory, a gesture, an institution, a phrase – is not synthesised in terms of the existing shared conceptual structure, namely the keystone concept and the dispositional schematic. In this sense, it seems analogous to what Mazis describes as a "*hesitation* to impose well-worn labels of sense on what is encountered" (2016, 23, emphasis added).

It is a space in the sense of an absence, a clearing, a momentary cognitive tabula rasa. It is hermeneutic because it pertains to the interpretation of experience. The hermeneutic blank space arises, then, in the absence of existing interpretative means. Such a means of interpretation is provided by the synthetic imagination – the power to link our experience with existing shared imaginary concepts (the keystone concept), via the dispositions of the keystone structure.

It also follows, then, that what is experienced in moments of the hermeneutic space are *not* articulations. This may seem like a bold claim, given that articulations pervade our social, cultural, political, and private lives. But articulations only exist in virtue of a perceiving subject possessing a certain attitude towards the object on which the articulations supervene. Thus, in a moment of either synthetic *or* radical imagination, the objective experience of perception remains the same. The difference lies in whether we interpret that objective experience qua articulation.

Most interpretation happens without our conscious awareness, and most social experience is synthetic in that it involves interpreting situations (and objects) qua articulations. However, the fact of most interpretation being subconscious does not, of course, mean that it is necessarily so. We all know from experience that it is possible to bring conscious awareness to ordinary experience. But conscious awareness itself is not enough to engender the hermeneutic space. So how is it engendered?

I suggest that the hermeneutic space is the result of what Ricoeur calls "semantic shock" (1991a, 168-169). By this, Ricoeur is referring to the cognitive experience of metaphor: when words from two distinct and unrelated fields are forced together in metaphor, this tension creates a semantic shock. Ricoeur's notion is strictly limited, however, to linguistic experience, but I suggest that it has far broader application than language.

Geertz, in discussing the power of metaphor also refers to the "semantic tension" it evokes through the "interplay between the discordant meanings" (1973, 229). However, Geertz speaks only of meaning in general and does not attribute metaphoric power to any one domain. On an etymological basis, we could reason that *any* scenario in which meaning is *carried across* one semantic domain to another is sufficient to qualify as metaphor. Essentially, the heart of semantic shock lies in the *juxtaposition* of seemingly diverse and unrelated semantic fields. On this view, semantic shock could be engendered through art, music, through embodied encounters, through unfamiliar or strange occurrences. One particularly rich source of juxtaposition is dreams. And indeed, as we shall see, there are several reports of creative instances resulting from dreams of the hypnopompic/hypnogogic state, the state of semi-consciousness in which one becomes aware of dreaming.

Another rich source of juxtaposition is synaesthesia, in which individuals experience unassociated sensations or feelings when certain words or senses are evoked. Some people may hear smells, or attribute colours to words, or feel that letters have personalities. Indeed, Cytowic and Eagleman (2009) suggest that metaphor is a form of – perhaps the most common form – of synaesthesia. On this view, we see that synaesthesia is not a binary state, but a continuum, and that non-synaesthetes possess latent synesthetic capacities. Arguably, dreams are another common form of synaesthesia.

This is not to say that latent or active synaesthesia is the only means by which semantic shock can be engendered. In his posthumously published and unfinished book *Metamorphosis of the World,* Ulrich Beck discusses an interesting conception of 'cosmopolitanized' spaces of action, by which he means those spaces which are not colonised by institutions, "they are not integrated, not limited, not exclusive" (2016, 12), they are "the open opportunities of [reflexive rather than routine] action which are subject not to the logic of reproduction but to the logic of the metamorphosis of the social and political order." (2016, 13).

Arguably, Harold Rugg, who turned to discovering the secrets of creativity in his retirement, and who produced a rich and suggestive analysis of imagination (1963), also posited an idea that can be seen as analogous to the hermeneutic space. Rugg's most original and compelling insight, in my view, is his notion that creativity happens in the 'transliminal mind', a state of 'off-consciousness' that is an 'ante-chamber' of conscious thought. The idea of the trans-liminal is intriguing. It is suggestive of the liminality involved in the hermeneutic space. What makes it transliminal? For Rugg, like most theorists of imagination, the *creation of something new* is the central problematic and it is this, not the nether realm of uncertainty, that can yield critical perspectives, and foster openness. Thus, 'trans' alludes to 'going beyond' uncertainty into new creations.

These different means of juxtaposition go to show that even though the synthetic mode is the most commonly deployed faculty of imagination, and whilst it is also the case that true, de novo creativity is relatively uncommon, at least the conditions for engendering the hermeneutic space are not particularly elusive or ethereal or elitist, and they are broadly accessible. But such access will depend on a variety of factors, some personal and some structural. For example, in heteronomous societies in which artistic expression is strictly controlled or forbidden, there might be fewer opportunities. Conversely, liberal educations that have wide curricula, innovative pedagogies and actively encourage inquiry and critical thinking will produce more opportunities for juxtaposition. Similarly, a single mother, with limited financial resources, and considerable strain on her time may find it near impossible to access disruptive experiences that most commonly occur beyond run-of-the-mill activities. Thus, although in theory such disruption is broadly available, there may – in practice – be considerable limitations to access. Most of these, I believe, are not insurmountable however.

So how exactly does juxtaposition engender the hermeneutic space? In ordinary moments of synthesis, the subject is presented with a scenario that is conducive to the positive drive of the fundamental attitude: the scenario is sufficiently *familiar* to enable synthesis with the existing conceptual structure. As we discussed above, this familiarity is often experienced as neutral because we do not give it a second thought: it is comfortably commonplace. This comfort induces a complacency, a sense of competence and assurance. Interestingly, research has found that those individuals who feel happy are inclined to rely on stereotypes – that is, existing conceptual structures – to interpret scenarios, whereas individuals who feel sad are more inclined to generate their own, novel interpretations (Clore, Gasper & Garvin, 2001, 130). We might suggest that the same phenomenon would equally apply to feeling comfortably complacent or uncomfortable and confused, respectively. Indeed, Schwartz suggests that in feeling that "a situation is safe, people may see little need to expend cognitive effort...so that they engage in *heuristic processing*" (Clore, Gasper & Garvin, 2001, 131, emphasis added). I am suggesting then that the keystone structure is that which makes the 'heuristic processing' of the synthetic imagination possible.

Thus, in familiar situations, the positive drive to integrate prevails and the situation is interpreted qua articulations. In moments of juxtaposition, the situation is sufficiently surprising and unexpected ('shocking', in Ricoeur's terms) that the positive drive of the keystone concept is thwarted. Instead of familiarity, confusion prevails: the situation resists synthetic interpretation. Geertz also recognised the role of "overcoming psychic resistance" in moments of "semantic tension" (1973, 229). The result is a *lacuna of understanding*, an empty space where positive understanding ordinarily prevails. This gap is the hermeneutic space.

Let us consider some examples of semantic shock. One example might be encountering processions of Extinction Rebellion protesters dressed in long, red gowns, their faces disguised by masks, moving silently through the high street. Ordinarily, high street encounters are mundane and routine, but the extraordinary sight of something so strange defies easy synthesis: is it a funeral procession? Does the red symbolise blood, or danger? Or is red just stark and alarming? Is it theatre – in which case, what is the story? What is the denouement?

Yet another example might be people's initial encounters of vegans or arguments for animal rights. At first, one might feel dismissive or maybe a bit defensive. One is faced with something seemingly so private and personal as eating and decisions around eating, that the introduction of a moral domain creates a semantic shock. But gradually, as one experiences such encounters repeatedly, one's attitudes shift, from dismissiveness to tolerance, and perhaps even support.

Both of these vignettes are examples of semantic shock, but the reactions and implications can differ significantly. For some people, exposure to animal rights arguments can produce a strong affective response, of derision and disapproval and anger. Rather than shift to more neutral or positive feelings over time, the vitriolic reactions

intensify. Whereas for some, an initial feeling of hostility, or perhaps subtler feelings of discomfort or dismissiveness can gradually turn to acceptance and support.

How are we to account for the difference in responses to, and effects of, the same semantically shocking situations? I would suggest that there are two factors to consider here. The first is that there appears to be attitudinal differences in the subject: how open is the subject to new ideas and dispositional schemas, new ways of seeing and experiencing the world? Mazis also notes the importance of "the moment of openness before imposing categories..." (2016, 24). Conversely, where the subject is closed-off, the parochial 'closed-mindedness', I suggest that the semantic shock does not produce the hermeneutic space. Instead, the closedness strengthens the drive to integrate and synthesise and an apparently shocking situation is rendered familiar. What I mean by this is that something that is apparently unusual, instead of challenging our assumptions, is synthesised with the existing conceptual structure as a *violation* of that structure. Thus, Otherness is *de-otherised*: it is assimilated in terms of existing interpretations.

So, what then is the connection between closedness and the positive capability that drives synthesis? I suggest that both tend towards determinateness: closure keeps the possibility of altering the existing structure at bay, and the presence of the synthesising drive requires – as Kant saw – pre-existing and stable categories. In this respect, the understanding produced by the synthetic imagination is determinate.

This determinacy is the opposite of the radical imagination posited by Castoriadis: the radical imagination creates new forms that cannot be predicted from the conditions in which they arise. Conversely, for the open-minded, semantic shock can give rise to the hermeneutic space; because openness is antithetical to synthesis. Geertz notes that metaphor works by symbolically *coercing* discordant meanings into a new conceptual framework (1973, 229). I wonder whether Geertz has in mind a necessary disposition of an openness – a willingness to be led in strange and unfamiliar directions.

This leads us on to the second factor. This is the observation that the hermeneutic space is the absence of understanding, but it is not necessarily the absence of affect. Humans are uncomfortable with threats to their stability and security, and this includes the stability of socio-conceptual structures (see e.g. Holbrook et al, 2011). Indeed, Ricoeur speaks of our "first order interest in manipulation and control" (1991b, 170), suggesting perhaps that what I have called "positive capability" is a fundamental drive.

Thus, feelings of discomfort or resistance are likely to accompany the uncertainty intrinsic to the hermeneutic space. I suggest though, that such instances of semantic shock might still instantiate the hermeneutic space. We

might suggest that even though resolution - that is finally coming to accept a different perspective, or finding a way to accommodate something new into the conceptual structure – does not necessarily occur immediately or even at all, that the hermeneutic space can remain or is re-generated. The transition period is one in which a subject demonstrates *negative capability* – to keep an idea in reach, but not yet fully grasped, to accept a state of uncertainty.

This is a good demonstration of the critical faculty of the radical imagination, which I shall consider next. Before that, it is worth noting another interesting dimension of the examples given above. I would suggest that exposure to animal rights is more likely to engender vitriol and synthesis than the example of witnessing a procession of red-robed protestors. This can be explained through salience: speciesism, as we saw in the previous chapter, is closely connected to the keystone concept of entitlement, and is a particularly ubiquitous embodiment of it. As such, matters of speciesism are extremely salient to our lives, and are therefore more likely to evoke a synthetic response, because their salience readily evokes the keystone concept. High streets, and people in red robes are not especially salient to the entitlement imaginary, and thus their juxtaposition are more likely, I would suggest, to resist the synthetic drive and give rise to the hermeneutic space.

CRITICAL FACULTY OF THE RADICAL IMAGINATION

The critical faculty is made possible by the arising of the hermeneutic space: the interpretative script is absent, and the subject has the opportunity for interpretative improvisation. Improvisation requires close reading of a given situation, it is a matter of responding to the world as one finds it, not in terms of prior narrative expectations. Improvisation is a spontaneous imaginative creation, responding to a specific situational need. This analogy, in which improvisation stands for the creative faculty of the radical imagination, points to the necessary prior process: critical inquiry. It is only when a situation has been gauged that creative responses to it can be meaningful. This critical inquiry is the first faculty of the radical imagination, and a necessary component of the second, creative faculty. That this critical step should be necessary to creativity is not surprising. Rugg opens his study of the imagination with a thorough comparison of accounts of the phenomenology of the creative process of a variety of great creative artists, poets, and scientists. He found that common to all creative processes was a deep immersion in the field of inquiry. I will say more about this immersion in the next section. This immersion would sooner or later involve a *problem* that led to a *state of confusion*, and which the 'creative flash' is able to resolve.

Analogously, the idea of a criticism is derived originally from a medical term referring to crisis and extreme doubt or danger (of a disease). So, we see there is an intrinsic connection between critique and creativity: both involve

a problem that, insofar as it remains unresolved, is the cause of confusion, doubt, and uncertainty. It would also seem that for effective critique it is necessary to engender some kind of hermeneutic space – which is precisely the space in which hermeneutic meaning and certainty are absent. We can understand this by suggesting that, to the extent that there is a sense of hermeneutic certainty, inquiry is stymied because it is replaced by pre-existing answers, rather than responding to the situation at hand. It might be argued that immersion in a given field and hermeneutic space are fundamentally at odds: the former is a condition of information, the latter a lack of it. But this would be to misunderstand my claims: I do not mean to say that hermeneutic spaces lead to confusion because of an absence of information, but rather *an absence of the structures* that make sense of information. Meaning arises in complexes, and complexes as we have seen (Chapters Two and Three), require principles of coherence. Without such principles, which structure information in meaningful ways, the information is just a deluge of data. The hermeneutic space is engendered when a plethora of data is encountered without the organising principles or structures. Thus, far from being contradictory, we could even say that the existence of more information could yield a *richer confusion*.

It is this inquiry in conditions of uncertainty that makes it seem like a Keatsian 'negative capability', of which Keats wrote in a letter, "when a man [sic] is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (cited in Harris Williams, 2010, 42). It should be noted however that I am using negative here to mean the absence of positive structures that are, necessarily, pre-given. The hermeneutic space is analogous to Blake's notion of "cleansing the doors of perception", that is the opposite of being 'closed up' and only narrowly perceiving the world in terms of the existing limitations of one's vision. Yet Blake, and Bion, use 'negativity' to refer to the absence of passions and affect, and as such belong in the hellish realm of self-obsession – presumably because affect presupposes an object of passion (in Harris Williams, 2010, 37). As noted above, although I suggest that negative is the absence of existing prisms of interpretation, I reject the idea that the hermeneutic space is therefore non-affective. On the contrary, I suggest that uncertainty necessarily evokes disagreeable affects. As Harris Williams puts it "the hidden inner beauty of ideas seems ugly and monstrous to the existing mind that does not want to become changed into whatever subsequent shape Fate or Necessity demand" (2010, 35). Conversely, earlier in this chapter I also claimed that positive interpretation can – indeed most often does – yield neutral affects, a sense of implicit comfort at the taken-for-granted. So whilst there is a strong analogy between what I term the hermeneutic space and Blake's notion of cleansed doors of perception, which I suggest leads to a state analogous to Keats' 'negative capability', I do not share Blake's specific understanding of negativity. Rather, by my lights it refers to a state of liminality, which is uncomfortable yet necessary for creativity. The claim that this state is uncomfortable is rather banal in fact: a cursory reflection of times when we've encountered a difficulty in something that we are working on – the solution to which occurs to us all of a sudden at some point – is experienced as frustration, discomfort and, as Keats noted, irritability. Harris Williams indeed refers to the "emotional turbulence of not knowing" (2010, 42).

Ricoeur also thinks of the moment that ensues after semantic shock as "negative" (1991a, 170). To Ricoeur, this negative moment is a moment of suspension in which the imagination enjoys "the free play of possibilities, in a state of non-involvement....". This "non-involvement [allows us to] try out new ideas, new values, new ways of being in the world". (1991a, 170.) He goes on to emphasise "the capacity to open and unfold new dimensions of reality by means of our suspension of belief in an earlier description." (1991a, 171). Ricoeur calls this power the "heuristic force" (1991a, 171). So again, we encounter the idea of openness that is able to resist the *a priori* conceptual structures that give common meaning to the world, and Ricoeur astutely notes the socially ameliorative possibilities that arise from such critical suspension.

This powerful feat of imagination is also linked to what Ricoeur calls 'distanciation' (1991a, 259 ff). He means it in the sense of distancing the self from itself – to allow enough room from critical reflexivity. But what is this other self? Perhaps we can understand this dichotomy as the private subject recognising its distance from the social subject. It is the social that is put into question and that is interrogated by the heuristic force. There is also an element of risk here, which is one reason perhaps for the experience of discomfort. For in interrogating existing modes and principles of interpretation (i.e. conceptual structures and the keystone concept), we are also therefore suspending the terms of our relationship to society. In Ricoeur's terms, we sever the "analogical ties". And this is radically alienating. As Ricoeur notes "distanciation, dialectically *opposed to belonging* is the condition of possibility of the critique of ideology..." (1991a, 261, emphasis added)

When discussing existing philosophical treatments of the imagination, Ricoeur finds that there are two axes of thought, one pertaining to the subject and the other to the object of imagination. With regards to the former, he suggested that at one end of the axis is a fascinated consciousness, which he links to being in the grip of ideology (1991a, 166). At the other end is what he calls critical consciousness, and which he suggests involves a fully self-aware critical subject. Although Ricoeur does not elaborate on this observation, arguably he does in fact offer further explication of the notion of 'heuristic force'. For Ricoeur, critical distance is at the heart of utopian thinking. In the metaphorical "no-where", the ordinary course of things "suddenly looks strange, nothing more being taken for granted" (1991a, 312). But the hermeneutic space that I have in mind is not prone to the same pathologies that Ricoeur identifies in Utopia, which he says is wont to prefer "frozen models" and "escapism" (1991a, 313). Utopia is not a particularly helpful word in this context: for the lacuna experienced in the hermeneutic space is not, as I've already claimed, an emptinesss nor a fantastical 'elsewhere', but a sudden sense of confusion or disorientation in a place that is very much populated and cacophonous.

With this caveat we can, however, see how utopian thinking – as the subversive function of the social imaginary in Ricoeurian thought – involves a loss of hermeneutic anchoring, and thus necessitates a renewed grasping process. In this renewed grasping it becomes necessary to interrogate and scrutinise experience in terms of how it actually appears. Kearney identifies two functions of critique. The first is an "inquiry into the conditions of

possibility of meaning" (2011, 2). By this we can understand that a certain analysis is required, because it poses the question, 'how does such a meaning arise from x condition?' and further 'Is this meaning necessary? Are there other possibilities for alternative meanings in x condition?'. This leads on to the "ethico-political aspect" of critique that consists in "a critical exposure of 'masked' power in the name of liberation and justice." (2011, 2).

I hope it is becoming clear that critical inquiry is necessary for a renewal of the social imaginary, and that the project at hand is an example of such a critique.

CREATIVE IMAGINATION

When discussing the critical function of the radical imagination, that the hermeneutic space makes possible, we saw how the quality of openness was a crucial factor in this. I suggested that if there is an existing attitude of closure, then the semantic shock of encountering juxtaposition may nonetheless give rise to the synthetic drive, and the situation synthesised with existing conceptual structures. Conversely, openness is an attitude of inquiry, humility, non-complacency, curiosity, hopefulness, even love. It is this attitude that disarms the synthetic drive, making way for the likely uncomfortable experience of uncertainty that is the key characteristic of the hermeneutic space. This quality of openness is also essential to the creative faculty of the radical imagination. This openness was recognised by Castoriadis, for whom it "signifies altering the already existing cognitive and organizational 'system'" (1997a, 310).

For Castoriadis, by far the main mode of the imagination was that of closure – what I have termed the synthetic imagination – and yet, the *crucial* mode of the imagination is openness. In a phrase that resonates with the idea of semantic shock, Castoriadis speaks of "radical rupture" (1997a, 311) that is ontological creation. By this he is referring to the fact that creation is the positing of new forms that are in no way determined by the circumstances in which they are generated. This is a rupture because it actively rejects the "already given" (1997a, 311), and seeks to find new forms of being. For Castoriadis this is openness at the ontological level because "to go beyond this closure signifies altering the already existing cognitive and organisational 'system' [what I have called 'conceptual structures']... *therefore* creating a new ontological *eidos*, another self in another world." (1997, 310, emphasis original). Castoriadis does not make a clear distinction, as I have, between the critical mode and the creative mode of the imagination, but he does recognise that the critical is an essential part of the creative. He goes on to note that the possibility of a new ontological *eidos* appears as the "possibility of challenging – one's own laws, one's own institutions" (1997a, 310).

Castoriadis does not dwell too much on the artistic and individual act of creation (although he does consider it from the point of view of the human psyche), but this is not to say that the kind of creativity he speaks of is procedurally different from this kind of creation. Rather, Castoriadis' omission is simply one of emphasis: he is committed in his inquiries of the imaginary institution of society to autonomy, and its sister concept praxis. I discussed these ideas in the introduction, but to recap, autonomy for Castoriadis represents the self-reflective organisation of society. Castoriadis then is the thinker who more than anyone else has emphasised the role of the

radical imagination in the creation of society. The *modus vivendi* of society is summed up in the notion of metacontingency (Castoriadis, 1997a, 315), which we can understand as both a necessary and contingent element of society. In the sense of immanent purpose (Chapter Two), the keystone concept is necessary for a given society to be what it is, and for this to be so, closure is necessary. But in terms of the meta purpose, *what* that keystone concept is, is itself contingent.

This contingency, I suggest, has two dimensions. The first serves to remind us that, in even apparently heteronomous societies, where the locus of power is elsewhere, these loci are nonetheless imaginary institutions that are instituted by that society. This is the source of radical freedom that is the basis of autonomy. Thus, where we hear talk of "the economy" as if it were an *a priori* fact; or "the system" as if it were something other than the things we do, the way we live, the words we use; or "that's just the way things are" as if society is just the way it is and there is no conceivable alternative, we know this to be incorrect: society can change radically, and it does. The economy is a construct in need of a rethinking; the system is what we build every day. The other dimension of contingency refers to creations, and the act of creativity: that what is created is not the necessary consequence of what has preceded it.

A question emerges as to how we could distinguish between something that is created (i.e. an ontological new form) or produced (i.e. the product of existing forms)? We can think of a piece of cinema – take *Son of Saul* (Nemes, 2015)– in which the director creatively and viscerally explores the idea of fragmentation on many levels through creative camera angles and the first person experience. Many would agree that this is an example of creativity not production. Conversely, a Hollywood remake or sequel is not creative. On first reflection, it seems that the idea of necessity does not explain how we can differentiate. Some mainstream Hollywood films are formulaic rather than creative, but this does not mean that a given film was necessarily going to be made, rather than another 'take' on the same formula. But perhaps we can suggest that 'takes' on the existing formula *are* necessary for the perpetuation of the imaginary. Any given popular movie then is not necessary, but something very similar to it, be it another movie, or book, or advert and so on, is necessary for the perpetuation of the given imaginary via the public cultural sphere. Articulations, then, are *iterations*.

We might be able to say that although a specific product is not necessary, it is in hindsight predictable. That is to say that there is nothing surprising about the fact of its existence or its content: it is familiar. The white man has the leading role and the serious part/problem; men speak more than women; people of colour are cast in token roles and their presence has no bearing on the plot – they may as well not be there; women are foils for men's heroism; women's troubles are trifling and silly; non-human animals are used as puppets or instruments.

In Harold Rugg's study, there are two distinct elements that are necessary to the creative process. The first element is immersion, and the second is "off-consciousness". Immersion is "a long, conscious preparatory period of baffled struggle" (1963, 289). Rugg suggests that "Helmhotz, Poincare, and many others insist that the two great stages of incubation and the illuminating flash *only* occur if the way has been *rigorously* prepared." (1963, 7, emphasis added). He cites other great thinkers on the matter of rigorous immersion: "Newton, when asked how he came to his discovery of the law of universal attraction, replied: "By constantly thinking it over."" (1963, 7). Delacroix's phrase for it was "a voluntary faithfulness to an idea" (cited in Rugg, 1963, 7); Hadamard's was a

"tenacious continuity of attention" (cited in Rugg, 1963, 7). Rugg sums it up as "untiring, plodding, uninterrupted continuity of thought" (1963, 7). A great merit of Rugg's book is his intentional exploration of non-Western sources of illumination. In his discussion of Tao and Yoga, he recounts how initiates in these systems must first dedicate themselves to years of practice to accomplish a particular way of releasing an arrow in archery, or scaling the various levels of consciousness.

It is interesting to note that creativity arises in response to a problem, but that this problem is not one of ignorance, but of immersion. It is a matter of "rich confusion". We might consider Kuhn's distinction between problem and puzzle at this point. Puzzles, says Kuhn, are "that special category of problem that can serve to test the ingenuity or skill in solution." (2012, 37). Kuhn observes that puzzles need not have any particularly interesting or significant conclusion, but that they do *have* a conclusion or resolution, and that there are usually rules – established procedures – for reaching the solution. Puzzles are usually resolved in terms of the existing paradigm – which provides the rules. Problems, on the other hand, do not necessarily have a solution at all, and there are no prescribed procedures for tackling them. So, in the case of "immersion", we can say that problems are perhaps a matter of understanding the existing terms of a given field *too well*, of reaching the limits of its usefulness or relevance. We saw in Chapter Three that a deep grasp often involves 'letting go'. A puzzle, on the other hand, could be resolved through further immersion – by acquiring more knowledge (within a specific field).

So, immersion is a matter of deep problems. These are not the problems that we might encounter on a daily basis that are directly explained by a lack of experience and knowledge, and that have prescribed paths of resolution. For example, I am at best a mediocre baker – I frequently encounter problems with baking – sometimes I am mystified by these problems. I know that they arise because of a lack of proficiency on my part, and that more practice, and more learning of the art of baking will resolve these problems. A deep problem on the other hand is one that can only be identified once a level of expertise is acquired: it is a problem with the usefulness or application of a particular field. Problems are not necessarily resolvable, and the means of resolution are not given. Again, we encounter here – albeit tacitly – the distinction between determined and non-determined, that Castoriadis so perceptively shed light on. Castoriadis used the term "ex nihilo" to capture the non-determinate nature of radical creativity (e.g. 1997a 321), but moderated this claim by saying that *ex nihilo* did not mean "*in nihilo*" or "*cum nihilo*" – it simply referred to the notion that radical creation is not necessitated by existing conditions, and is not substantively related to them. Castoriadis then posits five conditions (which he does not claim to be an exhaustive list) which delimit creation (1997a, 333 ff).[52] Rugg's study is useful in firmly dispelling the notion that deep problems and their creative solutions arise out of nothing. The opposite is true. But using a Kuhnian interpretation of these problems, and considering Castoriadis' stipulated limitations and notion of "leaning on" (*anlehnung*) (1987, 229 ff), we see that these unrelated contributions to explicating the creative process are in fact compatible.

The second stage of Rugg's creativity is summed up in the phrase "off-consciousness", which he describes as "the

[52] These are, in brief: external (or environmental) constraints; internal (or psychic) constraints; historical constraints; intrinsic constraints, including (1) coherence, and (2) completeness.

critical threshold of the conscious-unconscious continuum...” (1963, 39). It is a state of mind that is off-guard and relaxed. Rugg quotes poet-scientist Edward Carpenter on the matter: the person “that at last lets Thought go...leans back in silence on that inner being, and bars off for a time every thought, every movement of the mind, every impulse to action, or whatever in the faintest degree may stand between [themselves] and That; and so there comes to [them] a state of absolute repose...” (1963, 40). Rugg then draws on numerous other thinkers’ insights into the phenomenon and finds remarkable congruity. For example, James describes “the fringe”, Galton “the antechamber”, Schelling “preconscious”, and Taoism ‘letting things happen’ (1963, 39). The transliminal mind is found in the hypnogogic and hypnopompic stages of sleep, when deep relaxation and off-consciousness produce a strange lucidity.

As noted above, I suggest that this transliminality that Rugg identifies is analogous to the hermeneutic space. I suggest that in understanding the role of the synthetic imagination as providing the conceptual structures through which we render the world and our experience meaningful, we can also understand why transliminality – or the hermeneutic space – is so important for creativity. It is the relaxed state of mind in which the structures of thought that are usually in place are absent: this means that the ideas, dimensions, images, affects, perspectives and so on that are relevant to a particular field are able to freely associate, creating novel combinations that ultimately yield new creations. We can then also see why immersion is a necessary first step – transliminal mind without its rich pool of images and experiences is not able to provide those necessary, unexpected interactions. The “aha!” moment of the sudden flash of inspiration is telling: it denotes that the answer comes upon us suddenly, and that it is a *surprise*. Given the problem’s solution is not determined, it must also be unexpected, and it follows that it must also be surprising.

There are intriguing links here also with Castoriadis’ notion of magma – the constant flux of phenomena that our mind presents to us. Rugg also speaks of a continuous flux of perceptions and images that are essential to the creative act (1963, 51-52). Neither thinker has articulated exactly why this magma, this continuous flux, is necessary. But the answer, I think, is straightforward. The creative flash occurs at moments of surprising combinations. indeed Rugg identifies “the close *juxtaposition* that gives the greatest promise of permitting the spark of recognition to be ignited.” (1963, 12, emphasis added). It seems that the greater the “store” of “percepts, images, motor adjustments, and concepts” (Rugg, 1963, 13), then the greater the number of possible combinations, and thus the greater the opportunity for surprising, radically new, creations to emerge.

It strikes me that there are notable links between the idea of a rich confusion – the unstructured and unprescribed juxtaposition of phenomena - as the source of creativity and Kant’s notion of ‘free play’ in the Third Critique. In the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant discusses the phenomenon in which imagination diverges from understanding, which in ordinary synthesis constrains the imagination in line with the concepts. In aesthetic judgment, however, the concepts are not present, and the imagination is in free play. This scenario seems analogous to that which I have outlined, in which the absence of existing conceptual structures leaves the imagination to construe new, strange configurations and produce novel insights. But Kant claims that the freedom at issue is yet constrained: it is “both free and itself conformable to a law” (2007b, 307). Kant acknowledges that this is a contradiction but does not resolve it.

There have been several attempts to make sense of this aporia (see e.g. Ginsborg, 2019), but here I wish to offer my own, in light of the foregoing discussion. My thought is that Kant means that there persists some nebulous, undisclosed law that is in operation when the synthetic laws of the categories and schematism are not in contention. In discussing genius, Kant suggests that there is indeed such a rule at play, but that a genius does not follow it, but rather embodies it through her work, though she herself will not be able to articulate it (2007b, 308). Given that the imagination at issue seems to be that of 'genius', we might understand the hidden law as being *intentional*: creativity is a response to a deep problem. It is the deep knowledge of deep problems that provides the guiding parameters for creativity: without such parameters, creativity is "mere extravagance", as Geertz says of unruly metaphors (1973, 229). Thus, even when the foundational disposition of the radical imagination is at odds with the social world – it contradicts the ambient mood, and is replaced by one of uncertainty –that uncertainty is nonetheless ultimately a disposition *towards the world*.

It will not have gone unnoticed that the semantic shock engendered by juxtaposition that brings about the hermeneutic space that enables creativity also constitutes the heart of creativity itself. Indeed, it is possible to read these as two discrete moments in Ricoeur's account of semantic shock. He says, for example, that "predicative impertinence" produces "a shock between two semantic fields [and] to respond to this shock, we thus produce a new predicative pertinence that is metaphor." (1991a, 168). Given that the initial semantic shock of predicative impertinence is itself produced by the juxtaposition of apparently unrelated fields in metaphorical expression, the process at issue here is not quite clear. It seems that Ricoeur implies that metaphor has two moments, the first of which produces what I call the hermeneutic space, and the second a new, fresh perspective or understanding that emerges out of the metaphor, but only once the initial shock, or hermeneutic space, has been created. I think we can distinguish these two moments more sharply: in the first moment, juxtaposition can be externally engendered, and can yield the critical imagination and negative capability. But the second moment – the creative moment of filling the hermeneutic space with a new perspective – requires the immersion and competence of deep problems. It will be noted that in this account I have conflated creator and audience: the person who conceives of a 'metaphor' or a new idea or creation, and one who hears something new in it. This is because both instances require the positing of a new meaning in the wake of the hermeneutic space. Thus, we can make sense of the way in which aficionados of music or art or poetry understand more deeply, "get more out of" the works they encounter: they are deeply immersed in a problematic in the way the artist, poet or scientist is.

So, we have now explored the main features of the radical imagination. Insofar as one is interested in imagination for its creative potential – for yielding Shakespeares and Einsteins – one may perhaps overlook the negative, critical function of the radical imagination. But for our current project, the radical imagination is of interest insofar as it can shed light on the amelioration of social discontents. This requires both features of imagination: it requires us to understand what is wrong with the current imaginary, where are the weaknesses, and what is the pathology (the keystone structure). Only the critical approach can help us clinically examine our imaginary. But the creative faculty is essential too: we need to imagine radically new ways of being in the world. These radical creations may be ideational, normative, or experiential. The critical function can hold the hermeneutic space open while creative imagining takes place, and it can do so by making incremental steps – like refraining from engaging with the articulations and the keystone concepts.

In this chapter, I have offered an account of the two modes of the imagination, the synthetic and the radical, that maintain, or else disrupt, the social imaginary. I have framed them as positive and negative capabilities, respectively. Positive capability is the innate drive to integrate with our social world, it consists in positively interpreting our encounters via existing shared conceptual structures. The synthetic imagination also functions as a positive feedback loop, reproducing and perpetuating the social imaginary. As such, the synthetic imagination provides the imaginary with the mechanism for coherence: through synthesising our experiences with existing shared categories (the keystone concept), we grasp a common world.

Conversely, negative capability is the capacity to resist the integrating drive and synthesis of encounters with the keystone structure, and to endure with the hermeneutic uncertainty and psychic discomfort this entails. Negative capability affords us the distance needed to critically appraise the world as we find it. Through critical appraisal and deep immersion in a given problematic, we are able to forge unexpected juxtapositions that give rise to new insights, new understanding, new ways of conceiving the world. The radical imagination therefore counterbalances the synthetic imagination (i.e. as a negative feedback loop), shattering the closure of the social imaginary. In understanding the role and dynamics of the radical imagination, we start to see what our responsibility as denizens consists in: we see that resisting the keystone concept is a matter of engendering the hermeneutic space through which critical reflection is possible. We also see that a truly creative response to the problems of the social imaginary requires a deep grasp of them, of "staying with the trouble" as Haraway (2016) puts it.

While this chapter has looked at the imagination from a largely theoretical point of view, whether or not these insights have real world ameliorative value remains to be shown: what can this model of the imagination tell us about how to address the problems of the social imaginary? Thus, in the next chapter, I will demonstrate the role of the synthetic imagination in contemporary social problems, and their connection with the keystone concept of entitlement, and explore the role of the radical imagination in redressing them. Ultimately, we want to know: to what extent and how can this account of the social imaginary and the imagination guide us in the task of transforming our imaginary?

CHAPTER SIX: A FOCAL ANALYSIS OF ENTITLEMENT AND VEGANISM AS LEVERAGE POINT

"For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never allow us to bring about genuine change." ~ Audre Lorde[53]

"Whether we're talking about gender inequality or racism or queer rights or indigenous rights or animal rights, we're talking about the fight against injustice. We're talking about the fight against the belief that one nation, one people, one race, one gender, one species, has the right to dominate, use and control another with impunity...[to] feel *entitled*..." ~ Joaquin Phoenix[54]

In the previous chapter we saw how, in ordinary life, our encounters are synthesised with the existing keystone structure. When we encounter familiar scenarios, we are naturally inclined to synthesise them in terms of the keystone concepts, and thus generate understanding that is congruent with our social milieu. Only when this drive to positively integrate is thwarted – through lack of familiarity – is the keystone concept resisted, and a hermeneutic space of critical appraisal, uncertainty and creativity made possible. We have yet to consider the concrete implications of these ideas, however. I suggest that there is a very significant implication for critical theory and ameliorative projects that warrants attention. Very often, social issues are taken to be discrete problems that merit isolated solutions. But it would seem to me to follow from the insights of the keystone concept, and the dynamics of synthetic imagination, that we cannot hope adequately to resolve any one issue if the underlying pathology responsible for it is allowed – even encouraged – to flourish in other areas. In this vein, Meadows opens *Thinking in Systems* with the following insight from Robert M Pirsig: "If a factory is torn down but the rationality which produced it is left standing then that rationality will simply produce another...If a revolution destroys a government, but the systemic patterns of thought that produced [it] are left intact, then those patterns will repeat themselves." (Meadows, 2008).

As briefly touched upon in Chapter Three, ideas of intersectionality have recognised the considerable overlap between racial and gendered oppression (see e.g. Crenshaw, 1991; Lorde 2018). Similarly, there are some strains of environmental thought that recognise that environmental sustainability requires meaningful redressal of social

53 Lorde, 2018.

54 Phoenix, 2020, emphasis added.

inequalities (e.g. Naomi Klein, 2019; Kate Raworth, 2017; Higgins 2019; Gough, 2017). On the whole, however, there is a notable absence of understanding *why* various oppressions should be addressed simultaneously, and in the vast majority of cases the most oppressed group of all, non-human animals, are persistently excluded from consideration in mainstream discourse.[55] My contention is that if the keystone concept of entitlement still proliferates in everyday life for the vast majority of an imaginary's denizens, then there can be no hope of either remedying other injustices *or* replacing the imaginary. And yet, speciesism is allowed to flourish, and indeed is almost entirely absent in discourse on social transformation at any level. The quote at the top of this chapter from Audre Lorde, speaks precisely to this idea. On the matter of feminism's exclusion of black (and lesbian and poor) experiences, she asks: "What does it mean if the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable" (2018, 17).

In order to demonstrate these points more clearly, I am going to highlight how closely speciesism mirrors sexism. My aim is to suggest that the degree of similarity between the two phenomena is highly suggestive of a singular pathology: entitlement. I then spell out exactly why feminism and animal rights cannot progress without reference to each other, and all other domains of oppression. I show how we can understand the similarities through recalling the dynamics of the synthetic imagination. Having analysed sexism and speciesism side by side, I suggest that we can understand entitlement as a singular phenomenon of *autonomy appropriation*. By this, I mean that control is removed in certain areas from the subordinate person or group by the dominant group, and that the act of doing so is enjoyed as a furthering of the dominant's own autonomy, which can be considered illicit appropriation. I then suggest that speciesism offers the most effective expression (that is *articulation*) of entitlement, and as such, veganism, which is the rejection of speciesism in practice, can be considered the most effective 'leverage point' in altering the imaginary.

Specifically, I argue that veganism is the way in which this leverage point can be pushed in the right direction (Meadows, 2008, 145). I show that veganism does not have 'schematic pathways' in the keystone structure, and as such it represents a very good opportunity to resist the synthetic imagination and prise open the hermeneutic space. I then suggest ways in which veganism could be used to cultivate the radical imagination.

FOCAL ANALYSIS

[55] Although there is a body of literature that specifically links speciesism and sexism (see e.g. MacKinnon, 2004; Glasser, 2011; Kheel, 2007; Wyckoff, 2014); and Common Cause seeks to ameliorate various social ills through a methodological approach to communicating values (see e.g. Crompton, 2010).

As we saw in Chapter Four, Haslanger introduces the idea of a 'focal analysis' in her book *Resisting Reality* (2012), in which certain structures – particularly systemic injustices – are scrutinised through the lens of an overarching concept that provides the framework for the analysis. She stated that "A focal analysis explains a variety of phenomena in terms of their relations to one that is theorized, for the purposes at hand, as the focus or core phenomenon." (2012, p 7). We encountered the idea of a core phenomenon in Chapter Four, when I suggested that it represented an analogous idea to what I called the keystone concept. At this point, then, having discerned what that keystone concept, or core phenomenon, is – entitlement – I employ it here to shed light on the structural similarities of patriarchy and what I term 'anthroparchy', the ideology and instituting social structures that posits the supremacy of humans above all other species.

In her book, *Down Girl*, Kate Manne (2018) offers a compelling analysis of the logic of misogyny. Her central claim is that instances of overt, aggressive misogyny are not merely the acts of certain rogue and malicious, but otherwise non-representative individuals, but rather constitute what she calls the 'enforcement' branch of patriarchy's systemic privileging of men. Manne's claim is that misogynistic aggression and violence follow naturally from patriarchal systems and are therefore anything but anomalous. She contrasts misogyny with sexism, which she posits as the 'justificatory' arm of patriarchy. Thus, sexism discriminates between the sexes, on apparently reasonable grounds of natural differences, for example the trope that men's natural assertiveness recommends them for leadership. Misogyny, conversely, seeks to punish women for perceived transgressions of patriarchal order. I suggest that we can view our current imaginary's treatment of non-human animals in analogous ways: where patriarchy asserts the privilege and primacy of men over women, anthroparchy asserts the privilege and primacy of human beings over non-human beings; where patriarchy is justified by sexism's "alleging sex differences beyond what is known or could be known, and sometimes counter to our best scientific evidence." (2019, 79), anthroparchy is justified by speciesism's alleging *species* differences beyond what is known or knowable, and even contrary to scientific evidence[56]; where misogyny enforces patriarchy through punishing transgressions of patriarchal order, 'misanimalia', that is 'gratuitous' animal violence, can be viewed as using brute force to reinforce hierarchical order.

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[56] I do not mean to suggest that there are not numerous differences between species, and between non-human animals and human animals: there are of course many. Rather, the point at issue is taking weak premises (such as "humans are more intelligent" or "humans inherited the earth" or "humans are naturally superior") to justify similarly weak, and very often extremely harmful conclusions, ("therefore, other animals must serve human ends", "therefore it is permissible to dispose of other species how we see fit", "therefore human interests take priority"). The same dynamic applies to the use of weak premises to justify discrimination on the basis on sex or race. We should heed Lorde's caution, I believe, that we must recognise and celebrate difference, not reduce it, deny or distort it (2018, 18). One might be inclined to suggest that in the case of insects, for example, the differences are too profound, and therefore weaken the analogy to sexism. But this would be to miss the point: it is not the degree of difference that determines whether or not sexism and speciesism are problematic, rather it is the suggestion that differing from the male human standard (respectively) is relevant to moral standing that is problematic.

Manne identifies several articulations of misogyny, which I will use as points of comparison to explore the similarities between patriarchy and anthroparchy. These are: derisive language; epistemic injustice; victim blaming; and expectations of giving/taking. Having shown the similarities, I then suggest that both can be analysed via the keystone concept of entitlement.

Derisive language

This pertains to the ubiquitous use of derisive words, used in both casual and formal settings against both men and women, that are intended as a put-down, either in jest or in animosity. Our language is replete with both sexist and speciesist words that are used to overtly insinuate the inferiority of the object of the derision, through comparison to either female or animal qualities.[57] I considered some of these in Chapter Three, so I will limit my comments here. Such metaphors carry very important tacit messages too, however: their derisive sting obtains only insofar as women and animals are tacitly accepted to be inferior. Thus, what looks like a relatively 'harmless' metaphor carries more sinister undertones in that it serves to legitimise the autonomy appropriation characteristic of structures of entitlement.

Epistemic injustice

Epistemic Injustice is the term coined by Miranda Fricker (2007) to highlight the ways in which women's authority is systematically undervalued or discounted in public and private spheres. There are several manifestations of epistemic injustice, and I suggest that there are analogies with our systematic refusal to understand non-human animals.

In both cases, the issue is not, I would argue, a matter of refusing to accept that the testimony of women or non-human animals speaks to their autonomy. Rather, while there is a tacit acceptance that testimonies of injustice speak to injured autonomy, there is a concomitant failure on the part of the perpetrators to *acknowledge* this. We

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[57] Sexist examples include: pussy, big girl's blouse, grow some balls, mother-in-law's tongue, sissy. Speciesist examples include: bitch, cow, pussy, foxy, batty, snake, treated like an animal, "Led by Donkeys" (which is a left–wing tongue-in-cheek campaign to highlight the ineptitude of contemporary Conservatives. See e.gg Lewis, 2019)

can understand acknowledgement as the acceptance of the truth of something (to know), *and* that it *matters*. In this sense, failure of acknowledgement is a lack of recognition. Ikaheimo and Laitinen conceptualise acknowledgement as related to, but distinct from recognition. Where recognition pertains to persons as the object of recognition, acknowledgement takes 'normative entities' as its object (2007, 36). I take it that testimony, that which is overlooked – or undervalued – in epistemic injustice, can be considered to be a norm in the sense that Ikaheimo and Laitinen use it, and therefore an appropriate object of acknowledgement. But the very notion of testimony can surely only apply to objects themselves considered worthy of recognition – love, respect and/or esteem.

I take it that, in most cases, the animals we slaughter and eat, or else love and nurture, and the women in men's lives, are *recognised as persons* – that is as subjects with morally significant interests (see e.g. Francione, 2008, 61-62). This is uncontentious in the case of women, although Manne convincingly rebuts the notion that extreme misogyny is a matter of failing to recognise the humanity of the female victims (as touched upon in Chapter Four).[58] Even though certain actions seem to treat people as if they did not have personhood, it seems very unlikely that abusers actually believe their victims not to be persons. And furthermore, as our analysis of entitlement over *against* has suggested, personal autonomy is precisely the object of appropriation (and the locus of abuse).

The claim is more contentious in the case of non-human animals. Most of the time, when we eat animals, we do so because we have failed to properly recognise the personhood of the body that we now gorge on – or so we might want to claim. But, again, even though we have put the fact of the victim's personhood *out of mind* (because doing so is conducive to our food choices), this is not the same thing as actually believing that the animals are not persons. I suggest that we do recognise animals as sentient subjects with preferences, and many of us have experienced first-hand our companion animal's distinctive *person*alities. Indeed, the very popularity of welfare laws (e.g. Francione,1995; 2008; and Earle, 2017) points to this recognition: there would be little point in safeguarding the welfare (sic) of animals if one simultaneously believed animals not to have interests.

The point I am making here is that recognition of personhood alone does not also imply the recognition of the *salience* of that personhood in social practices. Acknowledgement, that is *the recognition of the social salience of personhood*, is needed if oppressed groups' interests are to be taken seriously. Therefore, epistemic injustice can be shown to apply both to women and non-human animals, and in both cases involves the refusal – consciously or otherwise – to acknowledge the *salience* of their respective claims on the continuation of certain social

[58] She asks "Is seeing people as people really all it is made out to be? To what extent does it dispose us to treat others decently? And to what extent is dehumanization responsible for the most brutal forms of treatment that people visit on each other?" (2019, 140), and points to "the stance towards those perceived as insubordinate, which comes with a disposition to try and punish them..." (2019, 149).

practices, and that refusing such acknowledgement is in fact premised on the recognition of personal autonomy. This is an example of what Fricker understands as hermeneutic injustice: a failure at the collective level to properly account for the *significance* of personhood of oppressed groups in social epistemology (2007). We might also suggest that there is evidence of testimonial injustice too, in which a person is wronged by the under-valuing of their testimony, of their value as a knower. In the case of women, testimonial injustice leads to a reluctance to credit women's testimonies. Paradigm cases include the under-processing/prosecuting of rape cases (see Chapter Four); the mansplaining phenomenon (see Solnit, 2008); the failure to credit the authority of women's claims (c.f. Manne, 2018, 185ff; Beard, 2017, 19ff).

In the case of non-human animals, we might suggest that their status as credible knowers capable of testifying their own experience is systematically ignored. Animals are often described as "voiceless": they cannot express their meaning. The cries of distress of the dairy cows are ignored, and the screams from the slaughterhouse are ignored as we persist in claiming that animals do not really have an interest in remaining alive. It strikes me that animals are perfectly capable of voicing their needs (especially their acute distress and mortal fear), and that as human animals we are perfectly able to understand their screams because they are strikingly similar to the sounds of distress human animals make. It is not, then, that the plaintive calls of cows longing for their calves is not recognised as distress, but that such distress is not acknowledged as salient. This confusion was recently brought to light in Joaquin Phoenix's Oscar acceptance speech. Phoenix starts by claiming that he must use his "voice for the voiceless" (the non-human animals we exploit), but then goes on to note, astutely, that, "We feel entitled to artificially inseminate a cow and steal her baby, even though her *cries of anguish are unmistakeable*." (2020, emphasis added). I'm inclined to see that latter comment as the most pertinent: we are often able to understand the voices of non-human animals, and always able to understand that those animals have voices.

My neighbour has a dog who is kept outside most of the time. I know that this dog has a difficult time, for two reasons: firstly, the owner can be heard shouting at her on a regular basis, and secondly, she howls and whimpers for hours. It is quite clear to me that this is distress: as animals, we recognise these sounds, because after all that is the purpose of distress sounds – they communicate to others that we need help. Humans in deep distress make similar sounds. However, these cries are ignored by her owner. I called the RSPCA to report the situation, but they were unable to investigate unless I had *visual* evidence that the dog was being treated poorly. In other words, the dog's clear expression of distress was not deemed credible testimony of that dog's own well-being.

Indeed, well-meaning concerns over animals' "voicelessness" might do more harm than good, in that they perpetuate the idea that it is the fault or inadequacy (albeit blameless) on the part of the animals that makes it difficult to comprehend their needs. The purpose of such a notion is to exculpate humans for ignoring animals'

voicing of their needs on the false grounds of incomprehension.[59] Or, it speaks to the 'human saviour' complex, in which only human beings are capable of 'saving' others.[60]

Analogously, we may think of claims of speciesism as 'invisible' as similarly problematic (see Joy, 2011). For all the reasons that I have explored so far, and in the same way that racism and sexism is not invisible, speciesism is very much demonstrable, and necessarily so. The claim for invisibility removes the locus of responsibility from humans and places it elsewhere in the world, and possibly even with the animals themselves (e.g. for their failure to 'speak up'). In fact, of course, speciesism is perfectly visible: whether or not we see it, and whether or not we see it *and* acknowledge it is a different matter. It is kind of epistemological legerdemain to suggest otherwise. The claim for invisibility is a form of hermeneutic injustice: at the level of the collective, we have all tacitly agreed to ignore the social salience of the personhood of non-human animals. It is not that they are voiceless or that we are deaf; or that abuse is invisible or that we are blind: we fail to acknowledge others, and that is not a faculty failure, but a moral one.

Victim blaming

Manne also probes the phenomenon of victim blaming,[61] which frequently takes the form of the propensity of society – men and women included – to attribute at least some portion of blame or responsibility to women who are victims of abuse. In everyday discourse, this is seen in phrases like "she was asking for it" or "asking for trouble", or she "should not have dressed provocatively". Analogously we might point to claims in the United States along the lines of "if that black man had not been wearing a hoody/loitering on the street corner, he wouldn't have been shot by the police". More explicitly, it is well documented that in rape, and even murder trials, the victim's dating/ drinking history is 'exposed' as somehow exculpatory for the abuser. In a mirroring dynamic, this apportionment of blame to the victim is done in order to remove blame from the culprit. This proclivity to remove blame is seen in judgements in which a man's sporting prowess, intelligence, looks, career prospects are explicitly valued more highly than a victim's claim to justice, a phenomenon that Manne has termed 'himpathy' (2018, 196ff). The perpetrator indeed may himself be tacitly painted as a victim of his culture: a culture of locker-

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[59] It is of course true that humans cannot hope to understand the nuances of non-human animals completely, but nonetheless, those of us with companion animals learn the specific modes of communication of particular animals, just in the way that parents understand the needs of babies before they are able to use language to communicate.

[60] This is analogous to the 'white saviour' phenomenon, and that of the 'male saviour' of helpless women in popular movies. Each example reinforces the binary hierarchies in which the saviour is also superior (and often the oppressor and cause of the peril from which the 'helpless' need saving).

[61] And see Taylor (2020) for a very recent exegesis of this phenomenon.

room banter, of binge drinking, and so on.[62] Again this can be understood through the appropriation of autonomy: the original crime or abuse is an appropriation of a women's autonomy by a man, but in the ensuing reprisal, the act of a woman seeking to claim her autonomy at the expense of a man is intolerable: thus the burden of guilt is redeployed in favour of a man's appropriation of autonomy.

In the case of non-human animals, we can also find ample examples of scapegoating – even the word is telling! The victims themselves are not necessarily blamed, but rather animals as a general category are scapegoated. This dynamic has analogies in misogyny, in which women in general are taken to be broadly culpable for perceived transgressions.[63] The spread of bovine TB is directly caused by the practice of dairy farming: that is the sine qua non for the disease. And yet, there is very little recognition of this fact among policy makers, farmers, consumers, and even animal and environmental groups. Instead, the disease is blamed on badgers. As punishment, badgers are culled in tens of thousands despite little evidence of the effectiveness of curtailing the disease[64]. We can make sense of this, however, when we recognise that humans' autonomy – the choice to consume dairy, and more sinisterly, the prerogative to remove dairy cows' autonomy, is threatened by bovine TB. In apportioning blame to badgers, human autonomy is reasserted: through the ultimate autonomy removal of the badgers through death. Furthermore, we might also see humans as subjects of sympathy: our practices are positioned as the hapless *victims* of environmental circumstances.[65] Similarly, we see victim blaming when instead of acknowledging that it is the practice of keeping hens in coops that endangers them, chicken keepers are quick to blame foxes – for doing something that they cannot rationally be blamed for. Yet, foxes are blamed for infringing on human efforts at appropriating chickens' autonomy.

Taking/Giving

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[62] See for example the case of Stanford athlete and rapist, Brock Turner in Manne (2018, 196 ff), and see also Chanel Miller's victim statement https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2852615-Stanford-Victim-Letter-Impact-Statement-From.html

[63] See for example the Isla Vista murders (see Manne, 2019, 34-41).

[64] Full Fact (23 Sept, 2019) 'Does Badger Culling Work'. Accessed on https://fullfact.org/environment/does-badger-culling-work/; see also Carrington, D (13 November, 2018), 'Farming industry to blame for TB crisis not just badgers –report'. *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/nov/13/farming-industry-to-blame-for-tb-crisis-not-just-badgers-report

[65] The impacts of Coronavirus on the meat processing industry has led the 'euthanasia' of farm animals. Francione (2020) highlights the framing by the media of farmers who would otherwise have slaughtered these animals as victims, analogous to those who have lost loved ones to coronavirus.

The idea that misogyny and misanimalia are latent in ordinary cases of sexism and speciesism, respectively, and therefore not qualitatively different phenomena is also apparent in the twin dynamic that I touched on in Chapter Four (following Manne), in which subordinate groups are expected to give to dominant groups, and that where this giving is not forthcoming, dominant groups are entitled to take from the subordinate groups. Where the expected service is freely *given*, there is no need to resort to aggressive taking, as is overwhelmingly the case. But the latent threat of aggressive taking effectively coerces giving. This coercive element is yet another manifestation of the dynamic of autonomy appropriation: both choice and opportunity are removed from the subordinate, and experienced as benefits and extra control by the dominant. This is seen in the case of sexism in expectations of care: women are expected to provide solace and emotional comfort to men (and society more generally) in a variety of ways. Care can manifest in giving care to the incapacitated (children, elderly, sick), which overwhelming falls – unpaid – to women; as physical care by providing sustenance and sex; and as emotional care by making men feel good.

I would argue that a similar expectation is levelled at non-human animals: pets are expected to be affectionate, friendly, grateful, and owners feel peeved when their pet fails to perform their expected care duties – and in some instances may turn aggressive, just as 'slighted' men may turn aggressive. The most chilling example of the extent to which these entitlement dynamics are internalised is perhaps when we hear people talk of "animals *giving* their lives" for us, when the opposite is patently the case: their lives have been brutally taken from them against their will. This example shows how thin the line is between apparently benign, quotidian practices, and their much darker, abusive motivations. That animals are expected to die at the hands of humans, for the sake of humans appropriating their autonomy, easily warps into the Orwellian double-speak of animals giving their lives. That their lives are in fact taken, that there is no choice at all in the matter, is again an example of the deeply coercive nature of social practices.

REVIEWING ENTITLEMENT

In Chapter Four, I suggested that the keystone concept of entitlement has two dimensions to it: entitlement *over* against, and entitlement over *agains*t. Broadly speaking, at issue in both is the same dynamic of superiors exerting power and control over inferiors, but the difference in emphasis speaks to different motivations. In the first case, *over* against is analogous to the liberal ideal of pursuing personal ends, the legitimate modus vivendi of prioritising one's own ends over another's. This usually posits the subject *over* against others in general, but it can also apply to structural inequalities in which superior groups' needs are prioritised ahead of subordinate groups. In entitlement *over* against, there is not necessarily a sense of spite, of hatred, of schadenfreude, and indeed there may be a concomitant sense of guilt or uneasiness. For example, we might acknowledge that animals do not want to die, or feel sad about the systematic harming of animals for human demands, but ultimately still continue to eat

or wear them because our own desires (or so our social imaginary claims) are naturally – and legitimately – prioritised over others, especially over those perceived to be inferior. We might recognise that creating traffic in residential areas is harmful and antisocial, and feel a twinge of discomfort about doing so, but still continue to do so, because our own needs and convenience are legitimately prioritised. One might wish to argue that such issues as traffic are more reflective of structural constraints than social norms, but I would still want to claim that such unjust structural constraints persist because they are legitimised by norms of the social imaginary. We could imagine, for example, a culture in which the good of the collective, and the needs of others constituted the highest ideals – the keystone concept perhaps – of a society. In such a society, the overt prioritising of the subject's immediate preferences over the wellbeing of the others might be a matter of deep shame. It is much harder to imagine residential streets being treated as 'cut-throughs', or the widespread practice of engine idling in such a scenario.

Entitlement over *against*, conversely, still prioritises the needs of the subject - or the dominant group – over against (inferior) others but, in this case, it is motivated by the sanctity of hierarchy, rather than the sanctity of the self. In entitlement over *against*, the actual needs of the subject might indeed sometimes be sacrificed by the overriding desire to exert control over *against* the other. Spite, schadenfreude or status anxiety might all be in play in this dynamic. To put this in terms of the dispositional schematic of Chapter Five, we can say that these affects are the orienting moods that schematise the keystone concept (entitlement) with the articulations. An example of such articulations might include a macho commitment to eating meat, despite the known health impacts, which can plausibly be read as a commitment to enforce hierarchical superiority.[66] There are myriad ways in which control can be exerted over *against* some object, some more benign than others. Arguably, taking control means taking control *away* from some other locus. The ultimate demonstration of control over *against* another is to decisively remove their control/ autonomy altogether – i.e. through causing death to that other. Given that killing by non-state actors is permitted only of non-human animals – in which case it is positively encouraged and celebrated – and given that killing is the most complete way to exercise control over *against* another; and given that animals (and nature) are considered subordinate to all other strata of entitlement, it is not surprising that 'progressive' narratives for justice are silent on the issue of injustice against animals.

It strikes me that we can view Manne's conceptions of sexism and misogyny as examples of *over* against and over *against*, respectively. As such, we can use my conception of entitlement as the 'core phenomenon' against which to analyse the analogous structural injustices of sexism and speciesism. Sexism involves prioritising men's needs or desires over women's because doing so happens to reflect the natural order of things; misogyny involves exerting power over against women in order to remove control from them, in an effort to reinforce men's status

[66] One recent example is the case of Carl Ruiz, a celebrity chef who died aged 44 of atherosclerosis. Ruiz was known to have been anti-vegan and boasted of his meat-heavy diet (Chiorando, 2019). Such diets are known to be leading causes of atherosclerosis (e.g. Park et al, 2019).

as superior. Indeed, Manne, drawing on Langton, explicitly recognises that "autonomy-violating" is a crucial dynamic in misogyny (2018, 85). Analogously, we can think of speciesism and animal abuse (misanimalia) also as examples of entitlement *over* against and entitlement over *against*, respectively. Speciesism leads to the legitimation of using animals, even to the point of causing death, because that is reflective of a putative natural hierarchy of interests, just as sexism leads to the legitimation of using women's labour. Misanimalia leads to instances of violence, for example, perpetrated by slaughterhouse workers on animals, just as misogyny leads to violence against women, in order to enforce the supposed fact of superiority.

Categorising these analogous injustices via the core phenomenon of entitlement over/against in this way, starts to reveal some interesting problems. There are two that seem to leap out of the previous paragraph. The relationship between use and abuse has been thoughtfully explored by Francione (e.g. 2000), who holds that, even if animal use is appreciated and performed with 'love' (rather than, say, gratuitous beatings), all use is still abuse. This is because it diminishes – in most cases absolutely – animals' autonomy. Francione (e.g. 2000) uses the examples of slaves: even though there may have been slave owners who had particular fondness for certain slaves, who may have enjoyed relative comfort, their status as a slave is unchanged: their autonomy has been fundamentally removed from them. In these cases too, autonomy is appropriated: it is taken from animals and slaves and apportioned to (white, in the case of the latter) humans who acquire another domain over which they can exercise control. From this perspective, even apparently benign practices like pet ownership is *premised* on abuse (c.f. Francione and Charlton, 2016). The trouble with keeping companion animals is that it involves ownership, and with this comes the power to decide the fate of the animals concerned. Even in the most benign cases, keeping animals involves making decisions on their behalf for their own good that effectively keep the animals in a perpetual childhood. However, for most of their lives, they are not children, but adults who are capable of and inclined to make their own decisions. But for many pets, their well-being is dependent on their owners, and this is a design of animal breeding.[67]

Where this kind of dependency and control happens in the case of human adults, we readily call it abuse. Abuse, then, can be construed as the taking of autonomy of one (person or group) and appropriation by another, and, importantly, the removal of the choice to leave that dynamic.[68]

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[67] This is why it is preferable to adopt abandoned or severely abused animals than not to: both constitute abuse (as autonomy removal) but the former represents the lesser harm.

[68] Thus, even though ordinary employer/employee relationships are premised on appropriating some degrees of autonomy of the latter by the former, to the degree that this is compensated to the extent that it offers the employee with the option to leave that arrangement, the extent of the autonomy transfer is delimited. In the case of the gig economy, on the other hand, the pervasive lack of job security effectively removes the choice to leave, and the autonomy transfer is not properly delimited (for example, workers might be nominally free to choose their working patterns, but in practice face sanctions or sacking if they decline to accept the employer's demands (see e.g. Bloodworth, 2018)). This then becomes a form of autonomy appropriation and can thus reasonably be thought

With this new understanding of abuse in mind, we can perhaps also suggest that women's unpaid, and undervalued domestic labour – in all its forms – is not just a matter of use but is itself *abuse*. Even if women's labour is appreciated by others, even if it is accompanied with thanks, and not with beatings, it is still a matter of abuse because it unjustly takes away women's autonomy, and in doing so, re-appropriates it to men: women take on – are burdened with – extra work, unburdening men and thus giving them greater opportunity for leisure and earning, and thus status and power. I do not mean to suggest that the abuse through the taking of labour of non-human animals and women is identical: the former is surely more complete, as the animals do not have any possibility of escape, except in freak cases, whereas although women's autonomy to leave such abusive dynamics is significantly curtailed, it is not impossible – and indeed there are many cases in which women do choose to leave. Similarly, where a pet is loved as a member of the family, the degree of abuse is lesser than the case of a woman who is beaten by her partner.

From this perspective, the distinctions between speciesism and misanimalia, and sexism and misogyny start to look fuzzy. The latter in each case starts to look more like overt, *crass* forms of the former. In other words, the distinction is now quantitative, rather than qualitative, as Manne's distinction is.

The second issue is the sheer absurdity of taking issue with gratuitous violence in slaughterhouses, but condoning slaughter – the ultimate violence, and ultimately gratuitous! The idea that even within one location – the slaughterhouse – one might seek to distinguish between 'mere' speciesism and misanimalia, between legitimate and celebrated violence, and illegitimate maligned violence surely highlights that these apparently discrete phenomena are not so readily distinguishable.

I would like to suggest, then, that rather than viewing entitlement as comprising *two* different kinds of manifestation (*over* against/over *against*), that we can see these two forms as mutually implicit dimensions of a singular phenomenon. It is perhaps helpful here to take examples less extreme than, say, wife killing or dog kicking. Women quite frequently encounter being asked (or told) to 'smile' by passing male strangers[69]. In some regards, this request might seem like friendliness – a desire to see the world brightened by more smiles, or just to

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of as abusive. Conversely, we could imagine a society with universal basic income, in which paid work was understood as chosen, and not effectively coerced.

[69] On this phenomenon, Manne comments: it "is an ostensibly less offensive remark, but it is expressive of the same insidious demand that a woman's face be emotionally legible...the comparative rarity of the social practices where the gender tables are reversed is instructive here, for anyone doubtful of their patriarchal nature or social meaning. The issue is... the underlying sense of who owes what to whom, and who may demand it..." (2018, 116)

break down some of the cold indifference of strangers in urban environments. This might seem like a plausible explanation, except when one considers that this only occurs in specific dynamics: a man commanding a woman, but never men commanding men, or women making commands to either men or women. This would seem to suggest that it is motivated by something other than public spiritedness. As Laura Bates of the *Everyday Sexism* project puts it, "street harassment is not friendly flattery" (2014, 160). Furthermore, if a woman were to ignore the request, or to re-assert her autonomy (i.e. having interpreted the request as an attempt to appropriate autonomy), she might not be surprised to be called a "bitch" or similar by her would-be interlocutor. In this example, what looks like mere sexism (a man's entitlement to approach a strange woman with a request), has misogynistic undertones (the punitive, and autonomy-taking motivation surfaces with the smallest provocation). In other words, the misogyny is latent in sexism, sexism contains the threat of misogyny, and women know this.

In a chilling recent incident, involving a public (male) figure of the centre left, the apparently benign speciesist practice of chicken-keeping, turned extraordinarily violent: the chicken-keeper saw a fox – clearly trying to feed herself – stuck in the chicken coop's fence. Rather than free the fox, and chase her off, or seek help for her injuries, the man bludgeoned the fox to death with a cricket bat. Also alarming is that this occurred on Boxing Day (at the heart, in other words of the season of goodwill and peace,) and that the man decided to boast about the events on Twitter (see e.g. Allen, 2019).[70] Wildly violent misanimalia was latent beneath quotidian speciesism. What points to the sheer desire to punish an animal for daring to interrupt this man's entitlement to appropriate the autonomy of others is the apparent lack of alternative reasonable explanation.

The purpose of the foregoing analysis is three-fold. Firstly, it demonstrates the salience of identifying the relevant keystone concept – in this case entitlement – for explaining and illuminating significant problematic practices that are the object of progressive reform; secondly, in using the keystone concept as a core phenomenon in this way, the analysis helps to reveal further insights into the nature of entitlement – we see that that entitlement over *against* is latent in even the most benign liberal formulations of entitlement, and we can see that the chief means of achieving over *against*, is via autonomy appropriation; thirdly, it highlights how structurally similar two of the most ubiquitous modes of oppression are, with important implications.

It is this last point that I wish to focus on now. Using entitlement as the core phenomenon, I suggest that the similarities between sexism and speciesism are not just coincidence, nor a matter of mirroring that might be expected in commonplace practices. For one thing, the actual manifestations in articulations are often quite

[70] I don't mean to say that this man's acts were particularly remarkable from a moral perspective (i.e. certainly no worse that eating animal products), I just use this as an example to demonstrate how misanimalia is latent within 'ordinary' speciesism.

different – it takes a focal analysis to reveal the hidden similarities.[71] Rather, my claim is that it seems probable that these separate phenomena are so structurally similar because they share a common logic: entitlement. Although I have limited my analysis to just two modes of oppression – arguably the most common kinds (there are more women than there are non-whites, than poor and so on; and the number of directly exploited non-human animals is far greater than the number of humans, and therefore much more significant than the total of human oppression, and that is before one considers the degree of indirect harm caused to wild animals) – I suggest that similar patterns could be found in race-based and class-based oppression, because they too, on this analysis, are also manifestations of entitlement.[72]

The implications of this are that as long as the keystone concept of entitlement is still very much salient in day-to-day practices, there is no reason to think that its other presentations can be abolished. Thus, while there is still speciesism, there will also be sexism, racism, and classism – and vice versa. It follows that those who seek the end of one form of oppression need to broaden their scope: all manifestations of the keystone concept represent a threat to any specific oppressive domain. The recognition that speciesism must be addressed is absent from almost all discourse on 'progress'.[73] Speciesism represents the final frontier of the current imaginary, because redressing it is deeply unpopular. But unless progressives can recognise that they are powerfully reinforcing the status quo and the current imaginary through failing to publicly resist, and to systematically reject, speciesism, then progress in transforming the imaginary will remain, in my view, untenable.

Speciesism is the most deeply entrenched form of oppression, and the most powerful instituter of the keystone concept of entitlement, for three reasons that we have already touched on. The first is that it is through killing that entitlement, expressed as autonomy appropriation, is most completely realised, and it is only non-human beings that are culturally sanctioned as the objects of such complete entitlement. In short, killing is the most potent possible expression of entitlement.

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[71] Cochrane (2010) has argued against what Wyckoff calls the 'linked oppression thesis' (2014), by suggesting that the commonly cited similarities between speciesism and sexism do not in fact obtain. A strength of my analysis is that it identifies similarities in *dynamics* (i.e. in the dispositional schema), which can result in quite different articulations (i.e. manifestations).

[72] Racism and racial exclusion are still extremely problematic issues in the area of sustainability discourse, and so such an analysis is certainly warranted, although it is beyond the scope of the current project.

[73] This may be related to the ideas of human exceptionalism that undergird notions of progress (e.g. Pinker, 2018). The same is true, however, of other ameliorative projects that reject human exceptionalism (this is particularly true in the environment movement).

The second reason is that there are a great many millions of humans who are themselves the objects of (victims of) autonomy appropriation – non-whites, women, homosexuals, poor and so on, and who therefore have fewer opportunities to participate as denizens of an imaginary that is centrally premised on entitlement: but for most (denizens of the western entitlement imaginary) access to autonomy appropriation is available via nonhuman animals. Finally, speciesism is evident in numerous practices each and every day by the overwhelming majority of people, meaning that it constitutes a significant proportion of the most salient articulations. By salience here I refer both to the ubiquity and familiarity of articulations, and the potency (relevancy) of such articulations' expression of the keystone concept.

LEVERAGE POINT

I suggest then that although there are several very significant and serious instantiations of entitlement that need to be considered holistically, if they are to be meaningfully redressed and resisted, that the most significant instance of entitlement, from the perspective of transforming the imaginary, is speciesism. With this in mind, we can identify speciesism as a notable 'leverage point' in the imaginary. I take the notion of leverage point from Meadow's account of systems thinking (see Chapter Two). A leverage point is "a place in the system where a small change could lead to a large shift..." (2008, 145). Meadows goes on to list a series of loci of leverage points, and concludes that paradigms, "the shared idea in the minds of society, the great big unstated assumptions... the sources of systems" (2008, 162-163) is one of the most effective leverage points.[74] There are a couple of things to note about this. Firstly, it should be obvious that changing a paradigm is not exactly a "small change", but Meadows acknowledges that her ideas on this issue are under-developed (and she died before she could go on to develop them further).

Therefore, rather than think of leverage points as "small changes", I suggest they represent the most *efficient* means of effecting change – areas that can have the most significant transformative effects, relative to the scale of the intervention. Secondly, in the matter of imaginaries, which I take to be systems, there is no direct way to change or reach the keystone concept – the heart of the paradigm. Instead, all interventions must happen at the level of the articulations (see Chapters Three and Four). It follows then that the most efficacious articulation intervention would be in those that are most salient to the keystone concept. I have argued that speciesism fulfils

[74] Meadows actually suggests that transcending paradigms is the most potent leverage point. By this she means "to keep oneself unattached in the arena of paradigms, to stay flexible, to realise that there is *no* "true" paradigm...it is to "get" at a gut level the paradigm that there are paradigms." (2008, 164). I take this last category to be practically moot, however: by virtue of seeking to effecting change at the paradigm level, one is necessarily also acknowledging "that there are paradigms", and demonstrating flexibility "in the arena of paradigms".

this role in the current imaginary. Meadows cautions that leverage points, owing to the complexity of systems, are not necessarily intuitive and can indeed be mistaken and may even be "pushed... in the wrong direction" (2008, 146). We might suggest in this vein that the 'welfarist' drive in animal use can be construed in such a way.

Welfarism focuses on improving the conditions of exploitation, and minimising harm – but only within a paradigm of abuse that is premised on harm and violence.[75] Nonetheless, welfarism is particularly lauded in society, it attracts much in the way of celebrity endorsement, and is generally associated with a sense of doing the right thing, of being a noble thing to support. In this way, it can be seen as having been recognised as a leverage point – a point of intervention that is an easy way to 'better' humanity, to humanise civilization. The welfarist leverage point, however, is not at the paradigm level. Arguably it is a form of "numbers" intervention, which Meadows identifies as the *least* effective intervention point. This category includes taxation rates, air pollution controls, changing leaders, the minimum wage, AIDS expenditure and so on. Meadows rather scathingly describes these interventions as "diddling with the details." (2008. 148). She describes it using the metaphor of running a bath, "putting new hands on the faucets may change the rate at which the faucets turn, but if they're the same old faucets, plumbed into the same old system, turned according to the same old information and goals and rules, the system behaviour isn't going to change much." (2008, 148). Arguably, focussing on this point of intervention (the improved use of animals) is worse than not changing the system, because it actively reinforces and cements the existing system.

Welfarism makes the abuse of animals more palatable, and therefore more sustainable as an extremely salient articulation of entitlement. Welfarism is intended to reflect the magnanimity of abusers, rather than delimit the extent of their entitlement, and as such it serves to reify the abuser's dominant status: mercy is the privilege of the powerful, and yet another demonstration of autonomy appropriation. Arguably the same applies to 'reducitarianism' and 'flexitarianism': none of these movements are concerned with reviewing human beings' claim to entitlement to the lives of others. Rather they are further expressions of magnanimity, which is implicitly only available to those in positions of power. Audre Lorde's suggestion that using racist patriarchy to fight patriarchy can only produce the narrowest changes can be understood best as a "numbers" level intervention: *more* white women will end up earning *more* money, perhaps and thus reclaim *more* autonomy, but these are ultimately trivial changes in a system that is still poised to exploit and demean.[76] In other words, the change is

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[75] See Francione (1996) for a detailed analysis of the ideology of the Animal Welfare movement.

[76] As I write this, Elizabeth Warren withdrew from the Democratic nomination for the US 2020 presidential election, facing the same obstacles as Hillary Clinton had done four years earlier (see e.g. Donegan, 2020). Even paradigm cases of glass-ceiling smashing white women have ultimately not transcended the patriarchy that oppresses black, poorer women more onerously. The system is the same and tweaking with numbers is merely fiddling at the margins.

quantitative, where qualitative transformation is necessary. This analysis bears out Meadow's observation that leverage points can be correctly identified, but for the wrong reasons and plied in the *wrong direction*.

So, if instead of pushing animal use at a 'numbers'-level in the wrong direction, we identified it as a *paradigm*-level intervention and pushed it in the right direction, what would this entail? Ultimately all animal use, in an imaginary premised on Entitlement, exemplifies the keystone concept.[77] Yet, animal use is deeply entrenched in society, and unpicking all those elements will take time. Many uses are also beyond the control of denizens and are a matter of governance. It is a fact of this imaginary, as with many others, that establishment powers – especially the government-corporation complex – are interested in maintaining the current imaginary, which is highly skewed in their favour. Thus, I would suggest that aiming for legislation changes and policy around specific uses (e.g. tallow in ten pound notes, animal testing, animal breeding and so on), would also be a form of pushing in the wrong direction – not because ending use in these areas is not desirable, but because doing so is likely to have very little traction, especially as long as the overwhelming majority of animal use – as food and textiles – remains intact. Indeed, taking tallow out of money, without taking animals off the menu would be meaningless in terms of resisting the keystone concept of entitlement. Thus, arguably the best means by which to utilise this leverage point in the right direction is through the widespread adoption and promotion of veganism.

Veganism is understood as the avoidance of using animal products or by-products to eat, wear, or otherwise use, as far as practicable. Practicable means feasible and admits inconvenience. Veganism has been growing significantly in recent years, and thus as a leverage point has the advantage of widespread recognition and a certain cachet. The most significant element of its leverage potential, however, is that veganism involves a daily and, importantly, *visible*, rejection of entitlement (because, as I argued above, speciesism is far from *in*visible, as Joy (2011) has argued.). Of course, veganism that promotes sexism or racism, for example, will again be ineffective, both in terms of rejecting the keystone concept of entitlement and in promoting veganism, ultimately (see e.g. Glasser, 2011). If the logic of speciesism is still active and robust, through articulation in sexism and racism, for example, it will be very difficult to eradicate speciesism.

Therefore, an approach such as Abolitionist veganism, pioneered by Gary Francione, would be preferable: abolitionism explicitly rejects *all* forms of oppression and exploitation. Francione and Charlton, observe that "issues of human rights and animal rights [are]...inextricably intertwined" and that "not only is sexism and

[77] To be clear, I am not claiming that animal use is wrong only in an entitlement imaginary, but that in this case animal use is particularly salient to that imaginary. Because of the extent of animal abuse in the current social imaginary, it is difficult to conceive of a renewed, salubrious imaginary in which animal use was not a salient reminder of entitlement because of its historical role.

misogyny inherently immoral, but, as a practical matter, perpetuating the commodification of women will do nothing to change social thinking about...commodification." (2015, 114-115).

So far in this chapter, I have examined the notion of entitlement more thoroughly by using it as the 'core phenomenon' through which to interpret speciesism and sexism. I did so by considering some of the structures of misogyny identified by Kate Manne. However, my analysis revealed, contra Manne, that sexism and misogyny are in fact not two qualitatively different phenomena, but rather different levels (of subtly/crassness) of the same phenomenon. I showed that sexism is underpinned, in this imaginary of entitlement, by the latent threat of misogyny. Through the comparison with our treatment of animals, I was able to reveal the same dynamics at work in speciesism. This analysis also illuminated further insights into the nature of the keystone concept of entitlement: entitlement *over against* is a matter of autonomy appropriation, the wresting of autonomy from one, and the simultaneous autonomy enlargement of the other. I then suggested that speciesism represented the most fruitful domain of autonomy appropriation, both because all other oppressed groups are superior to animals in this imaginary, and because it is permitted to take the life of non-human animals, and killing represents the most complete form of autonomy appropriation. This insight led me to suggest that the issue of animal use and speciesism might represent a high-impact, paradigm level 'leverage point', through which to intervene in the current imaginary. I suggested that in order to push this leverage in the right direction, veganism represented the best means. I shall have more to say on this later on in the chapter, but first I want to explain the foregoing analysis in terms of the synthetic and radical imagination.

In Chapter Five, I suggested that the synthetic imagination represented 'positive capability', a fundamental drive to integrate with our social imaginary milieu. As such, we are wont to synthesise our experience of the world (i.e. our encounters with articulations) with our existing shared conceptual structure – the keystone concept, and its schematising dispositions. I have claimed that unless all salient forms of entitlement are resisted, then attempts to expunge one particular form of oppression will not be successful, because its originary logic will remain intact. I will now explain in more detail why this is the case, in terms of our analysis of the synthetic imagination.

SCHEMATIC PATHWAYS

I suggest that the clearest way to understand how similar structural injustices are similarly related to the keystone concept is through what we might call "schematic pathways". In Chapter Four, we uncovered the keystone structure, which comprises several tiers of organisation that eventually reveal the keystone concept – the organising principle of the imaginary. In Chapter Five, I suggested that we can use a Heideggerian notion of disposition to schematise – in other words, bridge together – the keystone concept and the articulations. I then

suggested that the structural tiers of Chapter Four are themselves dispositions, and can indeed be shown to schematise the keystone concept. Through the dispositional tiers, entitlement is embodied in the social imaginary as articulations. A schematic pathway is the substantive schematic progression from articulation, through the dispositional tiers, to the keystone concept, in a given moment of synthesis.

In the diagram below, I have highlighted the schematic pathways of some of the specific, analogous articulations of sexism and speciesism that were scrutinised above. We can see that the schematic pathways of the articulations of sexism and speciesism that we discussed above are almost identical.

Articulation	**Articulation type**	**Schema**	**Tenet**	**Disposition**	**Keystone concept**
Unremunerated Domestic Labour	Sexism	WIMS IGF	Instrumentalism Acquisitiveness	Hierarchy Proprietarianism	Entitlement
Care Giving	Sexism	IGF STFI	Instrumentalism Acquisitiveness	Hierarchy Proprietarianism	Entitlement
Un(der)acknowledged voice	Sexism	WIMS	Competitiveness	Hierarchy	Entitlement

Animal labour	Speciesism	AIHS IGF	Instrumentalism Acquisitiveness	Hierarchy Proprietarianism	Entitlement
Animals as care givers	Speciesism	IGF STFI	Instrumentalism Acquisitiveness	Hierarchy Proprietarianism	Entitlement
Un(der)acknowledged voice	Speciesism	AIHS	Competitiveness	Hierarchy	Entitlement

If the top three articulations were removed, the schematic pathway that generated them would nonetheless continue to exist through the bottom three articulations (and many others besides, of course). As such, although in that scenario, it may appear superficially as if progress in women's rights had been made, further abuses of women's autonomy could be expected, because the pathology that generates them still exists.[78] We can understand this by remembering that synthesis and schematism represent a positive capability – the drive to affirm the status quo. As such, our encounters in the imaginary are very likely to be assimilated in these terms. Heuristics such as this have an important role in cognitive processing, but the social imaginary heuristic is also extremely important in the role of social integration: the drive of positive capability is extremely powerful for good reason. But this also means that it is very difficult to resist, except for in circumstances in which synthesis is frustrated. I shall now turn to explore how veganism might aid the radical imagination

Radical imagination and veganism

[78] The work of Caroline Criado Perez (2019), which I drew on in Chapter Three, and that of Beatrix Campbell (2013), for instance, offer compelling arguments to the effect that that progress in women's rights has indeed been slight.

In the case of veganism, however, there is no schematic pathway available through which to schematise veganism with the keystone concept: veganism does not fit with the existing schemas, tenets or dispositions. As such, attempts to synthesise veganism in terms of the existing keystone concept is frustrated: this frustration leads to the hermeneutic space. A few points should be noted here. The first is that 'veganism' refers both to a practice, and also an unfamiliar phenomenon that people hear about. In the case of the latter, I would suggest that the lack of familiarity is not sufficient to frustrate synthesis: indeed, arguably it is very often synthesised through a variety of existing schematic pathways. Veganism may be taken to represent an intolerable encroachment on people's sense of hierarchical standing, proprietarian right to choose, entitlement to total dominion, and instrumentalism ("animals were put there for us to use"). In such cases, veganism can be readily synthesised via existing schematic pathways. This would represent a form of de-othering, in which the perceived threat of the unfamiliar is rendered familiar – its true strangeness smothered. Veganism as a set of choices and behaviours that people consciously choose to take up, on the other hand, does frustrate synthesis. As suggested in Chapter Five, the difference in these two accounts may be between closure (closedmindedness) and openness. Secondly, it might be objected that vegans are not necessarily exemplars of entitlement resistance.

Critics could point to sexist or racist campaigning (e.g. PETA), of aggressive and/or violent campaigning, or personal identity campaigns (for example, the 'save' movement and selfie-opportunities). While it is certainly true that there are vegans who engage in these behaviours that can quite readily be shown to conform to existing schematic pathways, it is not veganism per se at issue, rather a concomitant existence of hierarchy (in sexism and racism), of autonomy appropriation (in aggression or violence), or proprietarianism (in selfies). None of these are intrinsic to veganism. A final point of issue is that it might be objected that veganism cannot realistically be said to create the hermeneutic space ad infinitum: sooner or later it becomes familiar and a matter of routine to the practitioner and even perhaps to society in general. This last point is a potentially valid concern, and I hope to address it by offering a more detailed explanation of how veganism relates to the radical imagination and hermeneutic space.

Veganism and the hermeneutic space

As we explored in Chapter Five, the hermeneutic space is engendered when synthesis with the keystone concept is frustrated, and this can happen in a variety of ways. We looked at the idea of 'semantic shock', in which the ordinary course of the synthetic imagination is disrupted upon encountering the juxtaposition of elements from apparently unrelated fields of meaning. We also considered what Rugg calls 'off-consciousness', or 'transliminality', which particularly emphasises the role of relaxation in generating the hermeneutic space. In

essence, the hermeneutic space is engendered when we encounter phenomena that do not have existing frames of reference. This might include the awe induced by hearing a symphony, when beholding spectacular natural phenomena – northern lights, red moons, the dawn chorus; the elusory pertinence of poetry; confounded expectations; witnessing birth or death; experiencing other cultures. We might also suggest that mindfulness and meditation could also help to prise open hermeneutic space (but again not necessarily), both by creating the requisite relaxation and by opening up extraordinary encounters with the everyday, through attending to things in closer detail. It is worth qualifying what relaxation entails here: it is less a matter of feeling a deep sense of ease, and more a sense of openness to possibility. In other words, the hermeneutic space involves, as we saw in Chapter Five, negative capability, which is a willingness to accept uncertainty and discomfort. It is a relaxation of cognitive structures, rather than a sense of comfort.

Veganism is able to create the hermeneutic space because, as I have suggested, its behaviours are not associated with the attitudes that schematise the keystone concept. Yet this is not the only way it can do so. Because veganism is still more or less counter-cultural, it still requires conscious effort on a day to day basis, and thus requires a mindfulness that is not present in mainstream dietary practices. Furthermore, the cognitive dissonance that the vast majority of people suffer from in respect to nonhuman animals, does not inhibit vegans in the same way. Thus, vegans are cognitively freer to attend to the realities of non-human animals: their suffering; the great injustices visited upon them; the range of extraordinary aptitudes that humans lack. Being a vegan in behaviour does not require that a fully developed theory of animal rights, or revised cosmology be in place: the decision to be vegan is just the beginning – what follows is an on-going re-examination of humanity's relationship to the world; the role and status of non-human animals; the full implications of veganism; the moral requirements of veganism, and so on.

There are those who might claim that veganism represents an alternative ideology, and as such has its own ready-made schematic structures and is not therefore able to produce the hermeneutic space. I would suggest that this is at best only partially true. Veganism has certain firm parameters – it is not endlessly loose and unformulated: animals are not to be exploited as far as practicable. But these constitute orienting guidelines in opposition to the prevailing imaginary that claims the opposite is true. Indeed, arguably the most robust – certainly the most stringent – theory of animal rights, that forwarded by Francione (e.g. 2008), is premised on the notion that animals have one fundamental right – the right *not* to be treated as property. Thus we can see that veganism and animal rights arise from the *negation* of the status quo: it is a negative capability.

Becoming vegan does not require that one is a competent chef, a nutritionist, an ethicist, philosopher, campaigner, zoologist: but it does instantiate the rejection of the premise of entitlement over against non-human beings, and an openness to discovery. Becoming vegan in a world in which animal abuse, as I have argued, represents the ultimate expression of its keystone concept, is a step into the unfamiliar, and that requires negative capability.

Veganism is only possible once synthesis with the keystone concept has been resisted, and thus it necessarily engenders the hermeneutic space. Whether and how much the hermeneutic space remains open is a matter, I would suggest, of how broadly the keystone synthesis is resisted: if one's veganism is married to sexism or racism, it will be difficult to sustain the hermeneutic space – if not impossible. Thus, I am suggesting that for the full potential of veganism as a leverage point in the project of transforming society, it must be accompanied by the concomitant rejection of all similarly salient articulations of entitlement. The radical imagination, I am suggesting, is conveniently primed by veganism, but its fruition is not a given.

VEGANISM AND THE CRITICAL IMAGINATION

Negative capability is the faculty that arises in the hermeneutic space of being able to critically appraise one's social milieu - to ask questions about it, even if the answers remain elusive. Veganism, arguably, turns on negative capability: it involves a willingness to accept the unknown in view of negating the synthetic imagination. In the preceding paragraph I touched briefly on certain elements that are up for review in veganism. Here I want to consider in more detail the elements of the status quo that are brought into question in veganism:

- *The status of humans*. In the current imaginary hierarchy, human beings are posited as somehow above or outside of nature. We fail to properly conceive of humans as animals; we fail to recognise, furthermore, that we are part of and wholly dependent on nature. This is arguably both the result of, and the reason for, our imaginary's notion of human exceptionalism, and anthroparchy. It is because we see humans as exceptional, that we extrapolate that they are also outside the 'material' realm of nature and ecosystems. And yet, in order to treat non-human animals and nature as mere resources, it is also necessary to view humans as exceptional: it is only proper that humans should be at the top of the entitlement hierarchy.

In choosing to reject the paradigmatic instantiation of this entitlement and exceptionalism – killing non-human animals for pleasure – we are able to question the correlative assumptions that go with it. Indeed, we may wonder, why if humans are so special, are the they only species that has knowingly worked towards its own extinction? If humans are so intelligent, why can they not consistently identify their basic needs – like functioning ecosystems, clean air, diverse plant food, water, cognitive integrity, ethical frameworks, mutual respect and so on? If humanity is so noble and benevolent, why does it systematically torture and murder upwards of 70 billion land animals a year, and knowingly persecute countless others?

We might question the anthropocentrism that marks even ‘progressive’ and ‘sustainability’ movements: humans are not the centre of the world, thinking they are so has led to untold disaster and horrors – so why perpetuate the patently false notion that they are in seeking to remedy these ills?

- *Human likeness*: We might ask, why is intelligence – and a very narrow kind of intelligence – supposedly the benchmark for attributing greatness in the world? What about the myriad qualities that non-human animals possess – like acute hearing, spatial awareness and dexterity, the ability to move easily in three dimensions, cooperation, patience and so on? As Mackinnon puts it, “why should animals have to measure up to humans’ standards for humanity before their existence counts?” (2004, 266)

- *The status of animals*: Questioning the status of humans leads on to questions about the status of animals; the moral issues around species and specimens’ of how much land humans should– once recognised as not central – take up; the implications of this on human population; the implications of responding to non-human species’ population issues[79] – for example, is ‘culling’ other invasive species acceptable, when human activity is the overriding cause of species loss?[80]

- *Human rights infractions*: Refraining from indulging in harmful activities leaves vegans cognitively free to consider not only the extreme injustices visited on non-human animals, but also those suffered by humans as the indirect consequence of animal-based diets. What does it say about a practice that only the disenfranchised would accept the work that is fundamental to it, being a slaughterhouse labourer? What are the mental harms that arise from exposure to this level of brutality? What are the potential spillover harms to the rest of society? What does it say about those who blame the violence visited on animals on the slaughterhouse workers, as if it were not their own appetites that created such a predicament in the first place? How much would we be prepared to pay for animal products if the cost incorporated what we would demand in remuneration for doing such work?[81] Is there a price we would consider acceptable, or would we rather go without?

We can also think about the extreme inefficiencies of producing animal products for consumption in Western societies, in terms of calories wasted for each calorie of food (see e.g. Berners-Lee et al, 2018) How much, in a

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[79] See for example Bar-On et al (2018) on global biomass distribution.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Relatedly, there are reports of meat processors being treated as slaves and exposed to extremely high Covid 19 risks (Laughland and Holpuch, 2020).

world of malnutrition, is an acceptable degree of wastage? Why is this central cause of food waste not emphasised, and often ignored in sustainability narratives? Is it acceptable to demand excessive land for animal-based diets, when the population is growing, and when biodiversity is on the brink of collapse? Why isn't the opportunity cost of the land used in producing animal products made a more prominent feature of sustainability discourse? Is it fair to appropriate the land of others to satisfy our consumption needs?

- *Corporate distortion of health*: How is it that the truth about health, that it is largely associated with lifestyle, and a great deal of that involves diet, has been allowed to be obfuscated by the twin interests of animal agricultural industries and large pharmaceutical companies? How many human lives are lost because of lack of knowledge of this?

Humility

As a counterpoint to the entitlement imaginary, the flourishing of the critical imagination that veganism opens up also engenders vital virtues: openness and humility. Only when we accept that much of our existing conceptual paradigms are deeply and insidiously flawed can we understand the scale of the task of social transformation. And yet, such revelations are only possible if one approaches received notions with humility: with the courage to ask questions that we do not yet know the answers to; to ask questions that compromise most contemporary lifestyles; that show one's previous actions to be gravely shameful; to compromise one's closest relationships. But such humility is the opposite to the hubris that permeates the entitlement imaginary. It is with humility that the experiences of women and non-whites could be finally acknowledged; that as a society we might recognise that techno-fix solutions and tech-heroism is often badly misjudged; that we might recognise that we are able to restrain ourselves – even in lieu of policy 'nudges' or legislation – from helping ourselves to excess emissions and land, and the lives of others. Castoriadis also stressed the need to "denounce *hubris* in ourselves and in those around us, and [to] achieve an *ethos* of self-limitation and caution..." (2007, 150, emphasis original), thus tacitly rejecting the ambience of entitlement of the prevailing imaginary.

VEGANISM AND THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

In the preceding section, I raised a host of questions spanning a raft of areas, many of which directly speak to issues of (un)sustainability and (in)justice. I suggest then that because veganism is at the intersection of so many of the most urgent problems facing society at this moment (environment; health; feminism; animal rights; social inequality), it offers an ideal opportunity for the *immersion* necessary for the radical imagination (as we saw in Chapter Five) to occur. I do not suggest that veganism will necessarily engender the creative imagination, but that in the right circumstances, it could ignite creativity in precisely the domain in which it is most urgently needed: in providing answers to the questions of What does it mean to live well? How should we relate to the world? What might be the most ameliorative keystone concept for the current predicament?

Aside from providing a springboard for immersion and 'rich confusion', veganism as a fundamental practice can ensure that the hermeneutic space that is necessary for creativity can be kept open. My contention is that those creative events and workshops that are explicitly designed to re-imagine our social paradigms, will not succeed in being sufficiently radical as long as salient articulations of the existing imaginary are able to hijack the possibilities of the hermeneutic space by appealing effortlessly – and unconsciously – to the existing schematic pathways. Veganism is not sufficient for the radical imagination, but I am claiming that it *is necessary for the radical re-imagining of the existing imaginary*.

In this chapter I hope to have put flesh on the bones of the claims of entitlement, and shown the importance of recognising the keystone concept. Taking 'entitlement' as the core phenomenon through which to analyse the structures common to sexism and speciesism, I hope to have shown the troubling extent of coherence in our social imaginary. I suggested that entitlement comprises a singular phenomenon, and that its hierarchical dimension is latent in its proprietarian dimension. I suggested that we can understand entitlement in the current imaginary as autonomy appropriation, in which autonomy is removed from a subordinate and enjoyed as greater power by the dominant.

Through my analysis, we can see that some even apparently trivial yet ubiquitous actions are radically related to the egregious pathology of contemporary society that is threatening the very conditions of existence, or at least civilization. I extended the analysis of Chapter Five in introducing the idea of the schematic pathway, in which apparently disparate articulations share a substantive pathway through the dispositional schematic to the keystone concept. Through this idea, I suggested that removing certain articulations will have very little ameliorative effect on certain domain (e.g. women's rights) where the substantive pathology that gave rise to them still exists in alternative articulations. I have suggested that veganism represents the most powerful leverage point in the amelioration of social ills: veganism consciously and visibly rejects the most salient expression of entitlement (killing animals); and it could offer opportunities for the radical imagination by representing a negative capability, providing the space to critique the pernicious assumptions of the current social imaginary, and as such providing the deep immersion necessary for the creative imagination. The leverage point of veganism represents, in my

view, the most important locus of responsibility (c.f. Meadows, 2008, 179) in our current social imaginary predicament.

Overall in this chapter I hope to have been able to demonstrate precisely why it is so important to have a working conception of the social imaginary: doing allows us to recognise the keystone concept, without which we could not properly understand or, more importantly, transform a given social imaginary. In Chapter Seven, I draw together the threads of the thesis, and emphasise the ameliorative significance of what I consider to be its most important contribution: the positing and identification of the keystone concept, and suggest possible avenues for future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

"It takes a world to make a world"

"The project of autonomy requires tremendous changes, a real earthquake...in terms of people's beliefs and behaviour." ~ Cornelius Castoriadis[82]

The epigraph at the opening of this thesis of Haraway's observation that "it matters what worlds world worlds" should by now start to make sense. Her pithy observation resonates with me because it seems to capture the nub of my arguments in this thesis. Haraway recognises that the world we inhabit is not merely a raw, unmediated bio-physical realm, but one saturated with imagined meaning. This meaning makes a *coherent* world, not just an aggregate of symbolic 'odds and ends' and private fantasies. In speaking of "world" as a verb, Haraway also recognises that our imaginary world is created and instituted. I might add that *it takes a world to make a world*: the instituting of the imaginary world through ongoing grappling with the articulations is necessarily incumbent on all denizens of that world, because if we do not articulate the keystone concept – the organising principle that makes it a coherent whole (a world) – it ceases to be a world. Furthermore, such grappling is a condition of denizens' integration in their world. The way in which we imagine our social world together matters because the imaginary is real. The "world" with which we create our social imaginary is the dispositional schematic that follows from the keystone concept: we are irreducibly disposed to the world, and the manner of this disposition sets the *timbre* of our collective imagining. If we imagine that "growth" is somehow an absolute end, ecological destruction and economic inequality follow; if we imagine that humans are superior, the lives of other beings are disregarded; if we imagine that politics is the exclusive domain of governments and parties, then we position ourselves as disempowered, passive consumers. And because it matters, and because we all make the world we inhabit, we all have responsibility for the character and consequences of that world. In this vein, Castoriadis encourages us to "try to be exemplary in [our] behaviour...[because] whatever depends on us *is our responsibility.*" (2007, 150, emphasis added).

I set out in this thesis to present an overarching conceptualisation of social imaginaries, and to offer substantive accounts of its parts and dynamics for the express purpose of applying these insights to the amelioration of social

[82] (2007, 148)

ills. I used the structure outlined by systems thinker Donella Meadows to give us the skeleton of a model of imaginaries. I will return to this systems structure of imaginaries to recap the major claims and insights developed in this thesis. I then distil what I take the key applications to be. I contextualise the project once again in the maze of egregious and lethal discontents that show why, in my opinion, a project like this one is so important. I will end by raising some pressing questions that emerge from this thesis and consider avenues of future research that suggest themselves.

ELEMENTS OF THE SOCIAL IMAGINARY SYSTEM

- *Organising principle – keystone concept*

I suggested that we can understand the purpose of imaginaries both in terms of their meta purpose *and* their immanent purpose: the former applies to social imaginaries in the abstract, and the latter to a specific social imaginary. The immanent purpose is the organising principle, which is recognised to some degree by Meadows as present in highly complex paradigms (i.e. the social imaginary) and explicitly by Castoriadis as accounting for the "internal cohesion of the immensely complex web[s] of meanings..." (1997b, 7). Having examined the analogous notions of non-congruence and defunctionalisation in Chapter One, and suggested that both Ricoeur and Castoriadis recognise two planes of meaning, where the second plane is that which *organises* the abundance of symbols of the first plane into *coherent* meaning systems, I was convinced that the role of the organising principle should be taken seriously. Castoriadis offers the notion of Social Imaginary Significations, but while I found the notion of central significations, which give institutions their logic, compelling I found his specific examples questionable. If we take the idea of an organising principle that accounts for the character of a given imaginary seriously, then we should pay close attention to its ontological role in the life of that imaginary.

I posited that the organising principle should be considered as that in virtue of which a specific social imaginary is what it is, and that therefore rather than asking of them, as Castoriadis does, 'what further meaning does this principle denote?', we should ask: 'could an imaginary be what it is *without* it?' It is because of this ontological role that I refer to the organising principle as the keystone concept: just as a keystone species is that which undergirds the integrity of an ecosystem, the keystone concept holds the social imaginary system together. The keystone concept is, in my view, the single most important contribution of this thesis: not only does it allow us to understand how a social imaginary coheres, but it also explains the dynamics of the synthetic imagination, and therefore, the radical imagination too. Through the dynamics of the imagination, I was able to suggest ways in which the keystone concept can be resisted. Furthermore, it allowed me to identify the specific keystone concept of our current imaginary: entitlement. I consider this to be an extremely important step in the ameliorative project

of engendering a paradigm shift – in transforming the imaginary. How can we effectively imagine society anew if we are not precisely clear on the aetiology of the defects of our current society?

In order to try to reveal the keystone concept, it was necessary to start with analysing the articulations – the everyday phenomena that embody and institute the underlying meanings of the social imaginary. This is because it is through the articulations that the keystone concept is manifested and therefore the only way that we, as denizens of an imaginary, can understand it. After analysing a large set of commonplace articulations into regressive tiers of meaning, I was able to suggest that *entitlement* represents the ontological foundation of our contemporary imaginary. With this in mind, I conducted a 'focal analysis' (Haslanger, 2012) of two particularly pernicious oppressive social structures with entitlement as the core (that is, explanatory) phenomenon. In doing so, I was able to show the structural similarities between sexism and speciesism, and account for them by suggesting that they have almost identical 'schematic pathways' – they institute the keystone concept in remarkably similar ways, despite on the surface manifesting quite differently.

I suggested that entitlement in our current imaginary manifests as 'autonomy appropriation', in which control is wrested from a subordinate and enjoyed as extra power by the appropriator. Put like this, we can now see that the modus vivendi of the current imaginary is in stark opposition to the ameliorative project of Castoriadis, for whom 'praxis' comprises the pursuit of collective autonomy. I also suggested that speciesism, and especially eating animals, represents the most salient articulation of entitlement because it is the most complete expression of autonomy appropriation.

- *Flows – the synthetic and radical imagination.*

When we take a systems view of social imaginaries, we see that the dynamic that accounts for their perpetuation is essential for understanding their durability and robustness. Systems thinking identifies positive feedback loops to account for this, and in doing so is also able to show why too much internal cohesion and imperviousness to external elements in fact undermines the resilience of the system. We are living in a social imaginary that is extremely good at reproducing its logic globally, but whose imperviousness to fatal, external – largely environmental – constraints will surely be its undoing. I write this conclusion during lockdown in a pandemic whose cause and spread are directly linked to extremely salient articulations, namely animal agriculture and global aviation. This has necessitated significant changes to society's modus operandi. In other words, all of us are contemporaneously experiencing a system whose powerful positive feedback loops have caused it major disruption. To me, this speaks to the importance of understanding these dynamics in the context of the social imaginary: after all, remedying such an emergency will be a question of being able to *imagine* ways of being that can act as *negative* feedbacks. It is curious, therefore, that the field of social imaginaries has so far overlooked the role of what is usually called the reproductive imagination – that which accounts for the perpetuation of a given social imaginary.

A systems view shows us that negative feedback loops are related to positive feedback loops, in that they work by pushing in the opposite direction. In other words, even if we are exclusively interested in understanding the radical (sometimes called creative or productive) imagination then we are still bound to first understand the positive flow that it serves to counteract. Both Ricoeur and Castoriadis recognise that the radical imagination serves to rupture the ordinary processes of the social imaginary, yet neither attend to the flow – the reproductive imagination – that it disrupts.

Thus, another central task of this thesis has been to offer an account of the role and the dynamics of *both* functions of the imagination. I suggested that we can think of the reproductive capacity as the 'synthetic' imagination. This is an interpretation of the Kantian 'productive' imagination, but with a different name to avoid confusion arising from the fact that Kant's productive imagination is more reproductive than creative, but that reproductive imagination is Kant's term for personal memory faculties. Our experiences are synthesised with the keystone concept, that is a historically contingent *trans-subjective*, rather than *a priori* transcendental, category. I suggested that we can use a Heideggerian conception of dispositions/moods to schematise the keystone concept with the articulations. I suggested that the keystone concept provides the fundamental disposition which gives rise to our specific orienting attitudes in the social imaginary. Common schematising dispositions in the Entitlement imaginary include: proprietarianism and hierarchism, which in turn manifest as instrumentalism, competitiveness, acquisitiveness, and subject-sovereignty.

It is through this clear depiction of the synthetic imagination that I have been able to give an account of the radical imagination. I take this also to be one of the most important and unique contributions of the thesis: although the field recognises the importance of the radical imagination in explaining the emergence of unique societies in history, there does not yet exist an account of *how* it works. To my mind, however, such an account is essential if we are serious about identifying the ameliorative potential of social imaginaries thinking. I posited, following some rich suggestions of Ricoeur's, a 'hermeneutic space' which opens up when ordinary synthesis is frustrated – often through surprising juxtapositions. This is a space in which the existing conceptual structures that makes sense of the world are temporarily absent, thus providing the opportunity for critical reflection on social givens. Rather than interpreting the world via the Entitlement-based dispositional schemas, we are free to question assumptions. This is the critical imagination that depends on a Keatsian negative capability – the capacity to withstand the discomfort of hermeneutic uncertainty before alternative interpretations present themselves.

It would seem to me that the coronavirus pandemic of 2019/20 has the potential to create the hermeneutic space: life has been sufficiently altered to allow us to question assumptions that held sway previously – about what work is valuable, about the role of government and community, or alternative forms of politics, of rethinking working practices, travel practices and, most importantly, eating practices (see e.g. Earle, 2020). Whether or not this

hermeneutic space can yield widespread creative responses will depend partly on the degree to which denizens critically reflect and immerse themselves in the problem at hand – which will partly be determined by the degree to which basic means are provided for.[83] This is because the creative imagination arises from sustained, deep engagement with a problem, because only such an immersion can create the rich confusion in which novel hermeneutic juxtapositions arise.

Several extremely important points follow from this account of the radical imagination. Firstly, the criticism and creativity that are necessary for generating a new social imaginary can only do so in the *absence of the existing keystone structure* (i.e. the keystone concept + the dispositional schematic). Secondly, that criticism and creativity do not just happen to an otherwise passive subject, but rather they follow from active, deep engagement with a given problem, and the ability to withstand the inevitable psychic and social discomfort that follow.

- *Stocks – articulations*

The stocks of the social imaginary comprise what I call the 'articulations' – the everyday phenomena that denizens of an imaginary grapple with, in order to understand – to grasp – their social world. Articulations can manifest in a variety of forms – from policies to metaphors. In each case the articulation *carries* the 'invisible' meanings of the social imaginary, and it is the abundance and spread of phenomena that articulate the ethos of the social imaginary that accounts for a social imaginary's discernible *character*. The articulations, as such, play a vital role in the social imaginary. As 'stocks' of the system, each of them is replaceable without losing the overall character of the social imaginary, and they are therefore contingent. However, it is through the articulations that the keystone concept – which is irreplaceable for a given imaginary to be what it is – comes to life. The keystone concept is also contingent upon articulations for its existence. Yet, for the most part, for phenomena to be articulations – *salient* expressions of the keystone concept - they must remain in continual use.

If we cease to articulate ourselves in a way that reflects a particular disposition of entitlement, articulations of entitlement will cease to be salient, and ultimately, entitlement will cease to be the keystone. Therefore, as denizens we have responsibility for creating the character of the social imaginary we inhabit: it is up to us whether or not we choose to uphold, to 'take up' the articulations of the status quo, or whether we choose to loosen our grip, to resist, and ultimately reject them. Castoriadis also recognised this fact: "In the last analysis, it is individual people themselves, in their vast majority, who want this regime and these orientations, or at least who do not reject

[83] One tentative early sign of the critical imagination arising from the hermeneutic space presented by Covid-19 might be the apparently overwhelming appetite among Britons for societal health to be measured via quality of life indicators, rather than GDP (see Harvey, 2020).

them...the regime is not separate from individuals, nor individuals from the regime...no society can exist...if it does not produce a modicum of support of its institutions...among most of its population." (2007, 143-144).

In this responsibility, however, also lies radical power: there is no configuration of society, however authoritarian, that removes this fundamental negative capability. It is because of the potency of our use of salient articulations that I suggested that veganism is the most powerful 'leverage point' (the most effective intervention point in an imaginary): I suggested that killing is the most complete expression of entitlement, and the most ubiquitous example of this is in our treatment of non-human animals.

KEY AREAS OF AMELIORATIVE APPLICATION

I suggest that there are two areas in particular that have significant ameliorative application: the leverage point just mentioned, and negative capability.

- Leverage Point: Meadows claims that the most effective interventions are those aimed at the paradigm level – by which I think we can read, imaginary level. However, because we can only access the keystone concept via its manifestations in the articulations, I suggest that the most effective leverage point will be the rejection of those articulations that most saliently embody the keystone concept, in this case entitlement. As mentioned above, I believe that this means rejecting animal exploitation – veganism, in short. Veganism is, I believe, the most powerful way to reject the Entitlement imaginary, but only if it is not married to other forms of exploitation (of women, of non-whites, of the biosphere, for example). This is not to say that there might not be other potent leverage points, but given that veganism involves the intersection of animal rights, feminism, food justice, land ethics, peace, labour justice, and ecological sustainability, its potential power to leverage change efficiently should be taken very seriously.

- Negative Capability refers to the stance of the radical imagination that makes possible criticism of the status quo, and the creation of new forms of being. As mentioned above, negative capability is effortful and uncomfortable. It will involve actively seeking to learn, both formally and informally through exposing ourselves to the perspectives of others. This involves listening to their testimonies, and sometimes this may require imagining their testimonies, in the case of non-human others and future generations. A Castoriadian praxis in this regard would also involve supporting each other in such opportunities for learning.

Negative capability involves, first and foremost, actively seeking what Beck (2016) calls 'cosmopolitanized places' in which the existing keystone structures are absent or weakened (through lack of salient articulations and/or the presence of the unfamiliar).

WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

The myriad social discontents represent urgent crises that demand our full attention, if there is any hope of their amelioration before society collapses. These problems are not new, and movements addressing them have been around for decades: yet very little progress has been made (see e.g. Foster, 2008). Why is this so?

One possible reason for the failure of the environment movement, for example, to make significant headway may present itself from an imaginaries perspective: that it has not sought to overcome the pathology of the social imaginary which gives rise to inter-connecting ecological crises. It is interesting to note that in 1977 Denis Pirages claimed that a sustainable society involves challenging what he called the 'dominant social paradigm', that comprised "the matrix of norms, values, beliefs and habits" (1977, 7). It seems, though, that this radical agenda may have been co-opted by that very same dominant social paradigm: sustainability in practice now means little more than greenwashing and technofix carbon solutions that allow business as usual to go unchallenged.[84] Two particular oversights in the environment movement are: 1) absence of calls for veganism – despite the considerable evidence of the enormous ecological impacts of animal agriculture (see e.g. Poore and Nemecek, 2018); and 2) the related lack of calls for personal action. The consequence of the former goes far beyond the potential ecological benefits that have been lost: as long as we persist in helping ourselves to the lives of others, the pathology of entitlement that also gives rise to (other forms of) environmental destruction will persist. On the second issue, personal action has been conflated with trivial acts like turning off lights and recycling,[85] while those actions that are extremely salient to the social imaginary of entitlement and the most environmentally destructive (such as eating animals, flying, having children) are disregarded (see e.g. Wynes and Nicholas, 2017). This matters

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[84] Climate scientist Kevin Anderson is particularly trenchant in his critiques of greenwash and the "subterfuge of... supposed progressives" (See e.g. 2019).

[85] For example, prominent climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe recently belittled the role of personal action by citing the CEO of Shell encouraging recycling (2020).

because, as I outlined above, the articulations are proxies for the social imaginary, and while some articulations are instituted at a structural level, many are those with which denizens have direct interaction.[86]

It is through articulations that the social imaginary can exist as such, and through denizens' interaction with them that they perpetuate. Thus, the ways in which we use articulations are deeply and intrinsically political. To suggest that the political is purely a matter of governance is to depoliticise the social imaginary, and to disempower citizens. My suggestion, then, is that claiming that calls for personal responsibility is a neoliberal trick[87] is to be fooled by it: the real trick is to restrict the domain of politics and power to the realm in which citizens have very limited influence, but where corporate interests have much (undue) influence – government. As long as the power to transform is placed at the feet of the hegemonic forces whose private interests are served by the current social imaginary, there is no reason to suppose that the imaginary will change, or even that it could change: denizens cannot be passive, they always either uphold *or* resist the status quo, and therefore social imaginary change must involve ordinary people like *us*.

Another point to raise here is that even if we take a very cynical view about the chances of civilization withstanding the perfect storm of crises it has conjured, it is nonetheless incumbent on us to ensure that we do not bequeath future generations a rotten imaginary that mistakes imagined competitiveness, acquisitiveness, and hierarchism for the 'state of nature'. Eco-climate changes are underway that will inevitably destabilise future societies, and thus engendering dispositions of cooperation, dependency, connection, respect and negative capability will be of utmost importance to their success.

FUTURE AVENUES OF INQUIRY

A reader might at this point be frustrated by the lack of alternative keystone concepts presented here. I have purposely refrained from delving into this question because I do not believe that it is properly the work of one person: it must be a collective effort. My challenge has been to help get us to a position where we can re-imagine society efficiently together. I believe that serious consideration of this issue is an important project for the

[86] On this matter, research has found that environmental leaders who are seen to embody the messages they bring are taken more seriously (see Westlake, 2018). This seems to point to the ways in which denizens carry and respond to articulations of the social imaginary (c.f. Chapter Four).

[87] On this view see e.g. Lukacs (2017); and for an opposing take that contrasts the neoliberal individual with a Durkheimian one, see Pendenza and Lamattina (2018)

community at large. This might involve considering alternative candidates and intentionally imagining the ways in which they might be dispositionally schematised and articulated: we must ask, as a matter of precaution, "what might the implications of X keystone be?" Candidate keystones may emerge organically from embodying alternative dispositions while actively rejecting existing ones. Interesting future research might involve documenting case studies of individuals or communities 'prefiguring' alternative dispositional paradigms. An important element for the health of any future social imaginary will be the cultivation of negative capability of denizens, who are disposed and encouraged to radically question assumptions and imagine counterfactuals.

An interesting aporia emerges at the heart of this account of the social imaginary, then, that warrants further inquiry: to what extent can denizens cultivate negative capability *and* the positive capability that integrates them with their society, and creates social cohesion? To what extent can we accept and believe in a keystone concept while also recognising that it is ultimately a contingent fiction?

Another avenue of inquiry might be to examine to what degree and in what conditions life-changing events that might be said to open up the hermeneutic space do in fact lead to negative capability and imaginative creativity?

On a more practical level, it would be instructive to apply these insights to actually existing ameliorative projects, such as those associated with the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL).[88] A great many of the boundaries for a 'safe and just space for humanity' identified in *Doughnut Economics* can be addressed by veganism (air pollution; biodiversity loss; land conversion; freshwater withdrawals; nitrogen and phosphorous loading; chemical pollution; ocean acidification; climate change; gender equality; food; water; peace and justice; political voice; social equity) (Raworth, 2017). Furthermore, addressing these issues in a way that frustrates the synthetic imagination, and therefore makes space for the radical imagination, will increase the likelihood – in my view – of these changes representing a paradigm shift, rather than a handful of short-lived tweaks.

DEPARTING REMARKS

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[88] See the website of the author of Doughnut Economics https://www.kateraworth.com/deal/#

Ultimately, my aim in this project has been to present a model of social imaginaries that might have real-world value. This starts with presenting a graspable conception of the social imaginary as a pervasive power that necessarily mediates our social world. When we recognise this, we are in a position to diagnose the imaginary pathologies that plague contemporary society, and apply our insights into the dynamics of the social imaginary system – the synthetic and radical imagination – to their amelioration. This work is intended to complement the existing research in the field of social imaginaries. I view the contributions made here to be important supplementary perspectives that help us understand a little better our predicament. The field of imaginaries is certainly broader and richer than I have been able to cover here and no doubt alternative perspectives and conceptions of the social imaginary will emerge. I do not suggest that there is any one definitive theory, but that each additional perspective sheds more light on the problem, and moves us somewhat closer to amelioration. As Castoriadis puts it: "the very idea of a complete and definite theory is a pipe dream and a mystification" (1987, 71), rather the work of theorising is "the always uncertain attempt to realise the project of clarifying the world" (1987, 74).

In the present case, I hope to have shown how a model of the whole can help us gain a deeper understanding of our current, beleaguered imaginary, and to have gone some way to suggesting how we might start to effectively intervene.

I am very aware that much of what I have contended here about our Entitlement imaginary is difficult to accept - perhaps shocking to hear. To have our everyday, comfortable, and convenient practices exposed and parsed in terms of egregious dispositions that most of us would reject outright and seek to distance ourselves from, is a bitter pill indeed. But, as our exploration of the radical imagination and its negative capability suggested: such an experience, such a task (and it *is* an onerous undertaking) is necessarily uncomfortable for all kinds of reasons. Furthermore, even if one disagrees with my diagnosis, I hope to have at least succeeded in prising open the hermeneutic space in which honest and radical reflection and interrogation can occur. The object of amelioration, after all, is not our psyches, but the myriad pernicious ills that we have collectively imagined into existence. Now we must imagine radically alternative modes of being, and this starts with illuminating the underlying pathologies that caused the ills we seek to ameliorate. The course of treatment of systemic illness is often unpleasant, but it is necessary.

APPENDIX 1: TYPES OF ARTICULATIONS

	Types of articulation	Examples of type[89]	Schema[90]
1	**GDP**	Citing GDP as indicative of 'health' of a nation.	WEP PAC
2		Making policy decisions *for the sake of* GDP	
3	**Gender pay gap**	Women regularly paid less than men for commensurate roles	WIMS
4		Lack of transparency of pay scale/gaps[91]	
5		Part time jobs, largely taken by women with caring responsibilities, less well paid[92]	
6		Pension disparity	
7	**Gendered roles/jobs**	Women in service roles (nurses; assistants; carers; hospitality; support)	WIMS
8		Men in leadership; expert and technological roles (CEOs; MPs; Professors; technicians; plumbers; builders; engineers; army)	
9	**Gendered slurs**	Slurs against women: bitch; cow; slut; cunt; hoe; whore; witch; dear; moaning; whining; hysterical; bossy; dyke.	WIMS

[89] Many of these examples I take to be generally accepted social facts. Where I make specific claims, or where it articulation is less widely recognised (but still pervasive), I include references.

[90] The schemas are the same as those presented in the analysis in Chapter Four, and therefore share the keystone structure presented there.

[91] Transparency of pay is one of the means through which pay gaps can be decreased/closed (e.g. Dromey and Rankin, 2018).

[92] 73% of part time jobs in UK are taken by women https://wbg.org.uk/analysis/2018-wbg-briefing-employment-and-earnings/, and there is little pay increase with part time jobs (see Jones, 2019).

10		Slurs against men: sissy; pussy; faggot; cunt; son of a bitch; wanker; douchebag; wuss.[93]	
11	**Rape culture**	Pervasiveness of rape and sexual assault[94]	
12		Acceptance of (e.g. marital) rape as not-rape (i.e. by husbands/partners)[95]	WIMS STFI
13		Priority of men's testimonies	
14		Prevalence of rape threats against women in public eye	
15		Lack of justice for victims (under-prosecuted)[96]	
16	**Gendered beauty standards**	Women expected to wear makeup	IGM WIMS
17		Women expected to wear heels	
18		Women expected to be slim	
19		Women expected to be pretty	
20		Women expected to shoulder costs for these standards	
21		Sanitary products taxed	
22		Women expected to have no body hair	
23		Female public figures judged by wardrobe	
24	**Unpaid care and domestic labour**	Women bring up children	WIMS IGM STFI

[93] It is interesting that many slurs against men are offensive because they appeal to sexism, speciesism of homophobia.

[94] 20% of women in UK have been victim of sexual assault, 31% of women aged 18-24 reported being sexually abused as a child. https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/about-sexual-violence/statistics-sexual-violence/

[95] A survey in 2018 found that 25% of respondents did not view non-consensual sex in long-term relationships as rape. (Topping, 2018)

[96] Roughly only about half of reported rapes are prosecuted, 42% of which did not end in prosecution. (see e.g. Barr and Topping, 2020).

25		Women do most housework (cooking, cleaning, shopping, planning)[97]	
26		Women are carers for disabled and elderly family members	
27		Women maintain family bonds	
28	**Consumerism (stuff)**	350,000 tonnes of clothes are thrown away each year[98]	PAC
29		Planned obsolescence	
30	**Status symbols**	Exotic holiday destinations	WEP
31		Designer labelled clothing	
32		Size of house	
33		Sports cars	
34		SUVs	
35	**Resource metaphors**	Natural Capital	NISH STFI
36		Natural Resources	
37		Ecosystem services	
38		Livestock/ Fish stock	
39		Human resources	
40	**Flying**	Aviation industry is growing[99]	PGSL PAC WEP
41		Airport expansion	
42		Private jets	
43		Air-miles	

[97] A 2019 study found that women do an average of 16 hours of housework a week, compared to men's 6 hours. (MacMumm et al, 2019).

[98] Worth approximately £140 million, according to WRAP. https://www.wrap.org.uk/content/textiles-overview

[99] THE International Air Travel Association (IATA) forecasts that the number of air passengers will *double* by 2037. https://www.iata.org/en/pressroom/pr/2018-10-24-02/

44	**Driving**	Car ownership at approximately 1.2 cars per household[100]	
45		Single occupancy journeys	
46		Most journeys made by car[101]	
47		Cars take up disproportionate amount of public space	
48	**Eating animals**	Eating turkey or goose and other animal products at the most important festival of the year	AISH STFI PGSL POS
49		Photographs of animal foods on Instagram	
50		Meat recipes regularly appear in newspapers and magazines	
51		Takes up amount of disproportionate amount of land[102]	
52		Meat production rapidly increased in last 50 years[103]	
53	**Corporate lobbying**	Pharmaceuticals	STFI
54		Meat industry	
55		Car industry	
56		Fossil Fuel	
57	**Post-truth (especially in political discourse)**	The rise of fake news	PGSL
58		The increase of barefaced lying of politicians	

[100] According to an RAC report, "if growth continues on the same linear basis by 2020 there will be over 37 million cars in the UK. More *optimistic* projections based on accelerating population growth suggest that there could be 44 million cars by then." (2008, emphasis added). https://www.racfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/car-ownership-in-great-britain-leibling-171008-report.pdf

[101] 60% of 1-2 mile journeys are made by car https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmtrans/1487/148705.htm

[102] Animal agriculture takes up 62% of agricultural land, but accounts for only 17% of calories, according to the Food and Land Use Coalition (Pharo et al, 2019)

[103] In this period, global meat production is five times higher than in 1960s, whereas population has doubled in this time. While many claim that they are reducing meat consumption, this is not reflected in the statistics (see Ritchie, 2019).

59		Nature replaced by artificial imitations	
60	**Disposability (waste culture; single use)**	Water bottles	STFI PGSL
61		Lunch/snacks/fast food	
62		Significant proportion of food calories wasted[104]	
63		Wasted animal lives	
64	**Pet ownership**	Breeding of designer dogs and cats	AISH STFI IGM
65		Right to end their life at whim	
66		Pets as comfort animals	
67	**Enslaving animals**	Animals used as working animals – i.e. in policing, army, guide-dogs; farming.	AISH STFI IGM
68		Animals used as burden bearing – particularly donkeys; horses and elephants	
69		Animals used for entertainment – horse racing, dog racing, bull fighting, fox hunting (using foxes, horses, dogs), shooting, show (e.g. Crufts), rides.	
70		Animals used for testing	
71	**Exploiting cheap foreign labour[105]**	Prevalence of bonded labour[106]	STFI IGM NWIWS
72		Unsafe working conditions (see Rana Plaza)	

[104] The most significant area of food waste is in producing animal products, rather than in food thrown away, as is commonly believed. Berners Lee et al (2018) show that the 9747 kcal produced per day is four times the amount that is actually required, and that eating animals requires the production of 2.4 x more calories than eating a plant based diet; and that the animal diets include 5.6 x more wasted calories than plant based diets.

[105] See e.g. MacDonald 2014

[106] According to Global Slavery Index up to 40.3 million people globally were victims of forced labour on any given day in 2016. 71% of these were female. https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/global-findings/

73		Supply chains abuses[107]	
74		Lack of workers' rights and unions	
75	**Racial stereotyping**		NWIWS
76		Racist caricatures	
77		Black people as less intelligent	
78		Black people as animalistic	
79		Latin Americans as lazy	
80	**Racial slurs**	Various	NWIWS
81	**Structural racism[108]**	BAME people more likely to be subjected to stop and search[109]	NWIWS
82		Racial profiling (e.g. asked to leave public venues)[110]	
83		BAMEs overlooked for promotions	
84		Racial pay disparities	
85		Higher unemployment rates among BAMEs	
86	**Convenience culture**	Driving short distances[111]	POS PGSL
87		Resistance to perceived difficult lifestyle changes (e.g. to diet)	
88		Throwaway coffee cups	
89		Cheap flights	
90	**Control over nature**	'Culling' species (seagulls; grey squirrels; deer; badgers)	NIHS AIHS

[107] See e.g. Clarke and Boersma (2017)

[108] See for example Booth and Mohdin (2018)

[109] According to Gov.uk : "between April 2018 and March 2019, there were 4 stop and searches for every 1,000 White people, compared with 38 for every 1,000 Black people". https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest

[110]

[111] See FN 99

91		Lawn mowing	
92		‘Weed’ killing	
93		Pesticides	
94		Geo-engineering	
95	**Ruling class**	Born to rule[112]	PIRS STFI
96		Hubris and complacency in current Government (e.g. CV19 response)[113]	
97	**Privatisation of public sphere**	Lack of public space	PGSL
98		Colonisation of land by private interests (particularly private cars and animal-based diets)	
99		Shopping malls	
100		Capture of publicly funded knowledge (i.e. academic output) by private publishers	
101	**Rent and rentierism[114]**	2nd homeownership/ Airbnb culture	PAC IGM STFI
102		Trickle up of wealth from renters to homeowners	
103		Privatisation of infrastructure	
104		Intellectual property rights	
105	**Technologism**	Technofix solutions to climate change	NIHS STFI
106		Post-humanism	
107		Attention economy	

112 This notion is implicit in UK MP Jacob Rees Mogg’s comments that victims of Grenfell fire had less common sense than people like him (see Merrick and Woodcock, 2019).

113 The hubris of the UK Government’s attitudes towards unfolding CV19 threat was captured in a talk given by the Prime Minister in February 2020, in which he positioned the UK as economic superhero resisting the safety restrictions implemented by other countries. (see Byline Times, 2020).

114 See e.g. https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/blog/rentier-capitalism-uk-case/

108	**Celebrity culture**	Celebrity endorsement for products	WEP PAC
109		Celebrity as kudos	
110		Celebrity as status	
111	**Ableism**	Few employment opportunities for disabled	DIAS
112		Ableist slurs	
113	**Short-termism**	Short-term report cycles for investors	PGSL FIPS IGM
114		Discounting future	
115		Preferring environmentally destructive expedience	
116		24 hr news cycles	
117	**Fungible workforce**	Rise of insecure jobs in services and academia (e.g. zero-hours contracts)[115]	PIRS IGM
118		Jobs replaced by machines[116]	
119		Culture of fear in workplace (e.g. Amazon, Sports Direct)	
120	**Disconnection from place/land**	Loss of natural terms from dictionary[117]	PAC NIHS
121		Intensive mowing practices[118]	
122		Celebrating beauty of barren landscapes (e.g. Lake and Peak district)[119]	

115 See e.g. Wallace-Stephens (2020)

116 ONS suggests that 1.5 million jobs are at risk of being automatedhttps://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/whichoccupationsareathighestriskofbeingautomated/2019-03-25

117 See e.g. Flood (2015)

118 See e.g. Watson et al (2019)

119 George Monbiot instead regards the Lake District, for example, as a "230,000 hectare monument to overgrazing and ecological destruction"

(2017).

123		Attention colonised by screens	
124	**Land grabs**	Wealthier nations buying up tracts of land in poorer nations[120]	PIRS STFI IGM
125		Rainforest deforestation for animal agriculture	
126		Livestock occupies 45% of global surface area[121]	
127		Privatisation of public land	
128	**Victim blaming**	Women's testimonies of injustice under-acknowledged	WIMS
129		Women blame themselves for men's sexual transgressions[122]	
130		Women cast as responsible for violations against them	
131	**Advertising**	Depiction of 'stuff' as necessary for fulfilment, success, respect	PAC WIMS PIRS WEP
132		Impossible beauty standards for women	
133		Celebrity as intrinsically desirable	
134	**Externalities**	Environmental damage 'external' to cost-benefit analysis	NIHS AIHS IGM
135		Loss of life of farmed animals as 'external' to food decisions	

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[120] China, the US and the UK are the top three acquirers of land in the Global South. (Seaquist et al, 2014)

[121] According to a report by the International Livestock Research Institute (Thornton et al, 2011).

[122] "Self-blame is a central construct in the sexual assault recovery field theorized to be related to the loss of control that occurs during the assault and internalized feelings of responsibility for the assault happening and/or for one's responses to it. Such beliefs about responsibility for being assaulted are a rape myth or false belief commonly adhered to in American society (Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds, & Gidycz, 2011). Many survivors blame themselves in the aftermath of their victimization and self-blame is related to greater psychological distress and increased risk of revictimization (Breitenbecher, 2006; Miller, Markman, & Handley, 2007)." (Sigurvinsdottir and Ullman, 2015). We might postulate that the narratives of accusations of 'playing the victim' augment self-blaming, or force victims to downplay impact.

SCHEMA ACRONYMS:

AIHS **-** Animals inferior, humans superior

DIAS - Disabled inferior, abled superior

FIPS - Future inferior, present superior

IGM - Inferiors give more

WIMS - Women inferior, men superior

NWIWS - Non-whites inferior, whites superior

PAC - Property/acquisition

PIRS - Poor inferior, rich superior

POS - Priority of Self

STFI - Superiors take from inferiors

WEP - Worth established by property

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Articulations – these are the everyday phenomena that permeate our social world and that carry the hidden social meaning generated by the **keystone concept**. It is through our ongoing, and necessary, grappling with the articulations that denizens come to grasp their social imaginary. 'Invisible' meaning supervenes on manifold phenomena (broadly understood) –from policies and structures, to rituals and practices, from metaphor to gesture, to things and attitudes. Phenomena are articulations insofar as the meaning they uphold persists, but particular articulations can be lost or substituted with little impact on the social imaginary. In this way, as particulars they are contingent and fungible, but as a class they are necessary: it is through the articulations that the keystone concept is spread and shared throughout society, and through which a society gains its character and ethos.

Dispositional Schematic – this is the set of dispositions that schematises (in the manner of the Kantian **synthetic imagination**) the **keystone concept** with the **articulations**. The schematic consists in tiers that organise the dispositions that follow from the keystone concept into descending/ascending levels of precision/abstraction, respectively. It is through the dispositional schematic that the keystone concept can eventually be embodied and expressed in the articulations in myriad different – and seemingly unconnected – ways. This produces the appearance of great variety (often expressed as 'choice' in the contemporary imaginary), that nonetheless are connected via an underlying dispositional logic.

Entitlement – this is the **keystone concept** of the current social imaginary. It has two core modes: *over* against, and over *against*. Entitlement *over* against is analogous to the liberal idea of a subject who is free to choose how to live, and who legitimately prioritises this over and above all other competing concerns, even to the degree that this causes harm. Over *against*, conversely, is motivated by the desire to assert hierarchy and status through controlling others. This sometimes involves inconveniencing or harming the subject. However, both modes are ultimately undergirded by 'autonomy appropriation': the taking of autonomy from someone else, which is then enjoyed as extra autonomy by the appropriator. In the entitlement imaginary, the most perfect expression of autonomy appropriation is the systematic killing of non-human animals.

Hermeneutic Space – this is the space that opens out when the **synthetic imagination** is frustrated by lack of familiarity, or by situations that thwart straightforward interpretation. In the hermeneutic space, we cease to interpret the world via the received **keystone structure** and must withstand the discomfort and uncertainty that

follows. This is a Keatsian **Negative Capability**, that gives rise to the critical and creative faculties of the **radical imagination**.

Keystone Concept – this is the idea that there is a central, organising principle at the heart of a social imaginary that accounts for the social imaginary's coherence and character.

The keystone concept is concealed: we do not engage with it directly, but rather we interact with via our grappling with the **articulations**. The keystone concept is an ontological principle: it is that which accounts for the integrity of the whole social imaginary system, and without which a particular society would not be what it is. The keystone concept is also that with which experience is synthesised to produce shared social understanding in the **synthetic imagination**. The keystone concept is connected to the articulations via the **dispositional schematic** – a set of dispositions that successively categorise the keystone concept. In our current imaginary, the keystone concept is **Entitlement**.

Keystone Structure – the keystone structure refers to the whole structure that relates the **articulations** to the **keystone concept**, via the **dispositional schematic**. These structures are that in virtue of which the synthetic imagination seamlessly functions. The keystone structure also includes **schematic pathways**.

Negative Capability – this is the Keatsian capacity to withstand uncertainty and discomfort, to refrain from leaping to conclusions (reaching understanding through the **synthetic imagination**). It is made possible by the opening of the **hermeneutic space**, and it is the mode of the critical faculty of the **radical imagination**. As such, it allows us to challenge the assumptions that undergird the status quo, and to conceive of problems in terms that are alien to, and even undermine, the prevailing wisdom of the existing imaginary.

Non-congruence – this is the idea posited by Karl Mannheim and developed by Ricoeur that the social world does not align completely with the bio-physical realm in which it exists.

Instead, there is an irreducible layer of meaning that makes symbolism possible, and that points to the fundamental role of the imagination in our social lives. I suggest that both Ricoeur and Castoriadis recognise two moments of non-congruence, and thus two planes of meaning in the social imaginary. The first is the symbolic realm (of **articulations**), the second is the underlying meaning structures (**the keystone structure**) that gives coherence to the symbols of the first plane.

Positive Capability – this is the opposite capacity to the Keatsian **negative capability**: it seeks to affirm the status quo, and represents a fundamental drive to integrate with our social milieu.

Radical Imagination – this is the faculty of the imagination that arises from the opening up of the hermeneutic space, after ordinary synthesis of experience with existing imaginary structures has been thwarted. The radical imagination involves a **negative capability**, that withstands the discomfort of social alienation and psychic uncertainty. The radical imagination firstly consists in its critical faculty: in which the subject is able to critically appraise and interrogate existing assumptions, practices, articulations and even dispositional pathways. It is able to endure – even celebrate and encourage - Otherness: strangeness is welcomed as offering further perspectives, rather than de-otherised by the **synthetic imagination**. The critical faculty is prepared to acknowledge a lack of understanding or the inadequacy of existing interpretations. The creative faculty, which is able to posit new forms of understanding, new ways of being, new ways of framing problems, emerges from the critical faculty. This is because creativity emerges from a 'rich confusion' that follows a deep immersion in a particular problematic, and it is the critical faculty that allows for such deep immersion.

Schematic Pathway – this is the substantive schematic route that connects specific **articulations** with the **keystone concept**, via particular dispositional tiers. I use this idea to show that even apparently quite different articulations can share near identical schematic pathways. Through schematic pathways, we can show how various social discontents are ontologically connected, and see that the underlying pathology must be circumvented if the discontents are to be satisfactorily ameliorated.

Synthetic Imagination – this is a social imaginaries' interpretation of the Kantian productive imagination. It suggests that understanding is produced through the synthesis of our experience with the **keystone concept**. In the synthetic imagination, the keystone concept, which is trans-subjective and ultimately contingent, takes the place of the *a priori*, transcendental concepts posited by Kant. The synthetic imagination is schematised by Heideggerian moods/dispositions (**the dispositional schematic**): these connect us to the world we are 'thrown' into, via the fundamental disposition (the **keystone concept**), that sets the timbre of our engagement with the world. Because the synthetic imagination makes sense of the world in terms of the shared hermeneutic structures of the social imaginary, it does not produce new ideas, and it does not critically appraise those structures. It is only capable of interpreting the world in terms of what already exists. This is because it is a **positive capability**: that capacity to *affirm* the social world driven by the deep need to integrate with the social world.

System - I deploy a systems thinking view as a way to model social imaginaries, which are a kind of system. Social imaginaries consist in *stocks*, which I call **articulations**, and *positive* and *negative flows*, which are the **synthetic** and **radical imagination**, respectively. Systems follow a *purpose*, in virtue of which a system does what it does. The meta purpose of the social imaginary is social cohesion; the immanent purpose of a specific imaginary is provided by the **keystone concept**.

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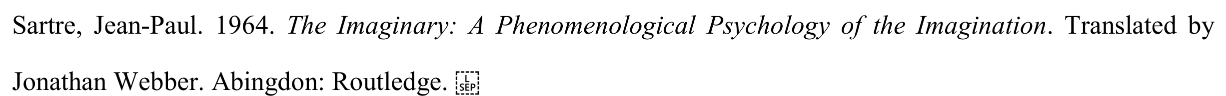

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