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SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT AND WORLD: THEMES OF NIKLAS LUHMANN

Research Study

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C O N T E N T

CHAPTER I

SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT AND WORLD

Introduction

Niklas Luhmann belongs to a generation of the most fertile social theorists of the Twentieth Century, inclusive of the members of the Frankfurt School. His views were a major aspect of profound debates concerning social theory and its foundations, and included fundamental issues of transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics, and methods of comparative studies of societies. While considered to be a major contributor to systems theory, Luhmann was too much of a social philosopher to be classified within specific parameters. After all, he was engaged in the philosophical arguments concerning transcendental subjectivity and intersubjectivity, ontological issues of world horizons, and meaning interconnections of social systems and their sub-systems.

The complex issues discussed by Luhmann will not be offered in this essay; the focus, rather, will be on his conception of social system, environment and world, and their relationships, above all their relevance for "theoretical" and practical understanding of the ways that societies function regardless of their differences. It is important to note that Luhmann is in an European intellectual tradition that is no longer content of explicating all phenomena as if from a privileged position, from "outside" but requires an understanding of theorizing that is also an aspect of a social and political system. All, including the theorist and the theories, are affected by and affect the very phenomena under investigation. The theorizing subject and theoretical thought are inner-social, historical, imbued with current modes of perception, valuation and interests. Moreover, this intellectual tradition has argued that it is no longer possible to have a theoretical thinking which is not, as a matter of course, practical. The reason for this claim is Kant's demonstration that since the thing in itself is unknowable, then any theoretical claim about anything apart from phenomena is empty and hence redundant. The phenomena are intertwined with our activities and hence cannot be understood without them.

The conception of theory as praxis is, in this context, not Marxian, but stems from the cognizance that (1) theories (including Marxism) do not explain events, but, as critical functions in a society, change them; (2) theories do not signify events directly but are conjoined with them from some point of interest, whether it is ontological, economic, political, or psychological; (3) being an aspect of a social context, theories cannot claim to have encompassed "all there is in society." In these senses, theories are socially effective and in turn socially constituted. No doubt, these aspects will become most relevant in Luhmann's efforts to deal with complex social phenomena and specifically his explication of reflexive mechanisms that are designed to avoid the positing of a "pure" subject capable of reflecting upon everything as given without any participation in worldly affairs.

Still another common view of social science must be excluded in order to understand what Luhmann has accomplished in his social understanding: "empirical facts" as a basis of validation of propositions. Rather, Luhmann is engaged in establishing the conditions for the possibility of social theoretical praxis that are involved in any empirical fact and theoretical proposition. In this sense, Luhmann's way of thinking is more encompassing and more concrete. Moreover, such thinking is not explanatory but expository of the invariant requirements (even temporality and change) without which neither facts nor theoretical statements would make sense. That is why Luhmann does not offer a theory, but a way of doing, a praxis of theory and social action.

Complexity and Social Practice

The central point of departure for the exposition of Luhmann's social systems is the issue of complexity and its methodical reduction. It is noteworthy that "complexity" is not a theoretical concept but a systematic issue to be resolved by any society. Yet complexity appears only in view of the total social system and, as it will be seen later, in view of the world horizon. Sociology, thus, is the understanding of total orientation of community in the context of world horizons. The latter notion is taken up from phenomenology, wherein world horizons are open temporal indices of what is to come, given a specific social system. In turn, a social system is not a set of "facts" but an interconnection of sensible (meaningful) activities that point to each other and are delimited against the environment and activities that do not play a role in

such interconnections. This means, furthermore, that what counts as a fact is already selected as significant for a social system. In this sense, a social system plays a role of selectivity of what aspects of environment will be relevant and hence be regarded as "facts" and what will remain in a background as "outside" the limits of society. No doubt, the environment "outside" a social system may also be regarded as a system, such as an astronomical system. Yet in most cases such an "outside" system need not play a significant practical role in the social system – unless certain significant questions are raised for interconnections within a social system.

Here, the notion of complexity may be given a more precise exposition: first, complexity is a relationship between a system and world horizon and thus it is not a state of affairs but a process; second, complexity is the basic problem addressed by social theory as praxis, and thus it is a sum of possible events and activities. What enters here is the concept of possibility which is equally central in Luhmann's work as it relates to system, environment, and world, and in addition, contributes to the issue of complexity. A distinction must be made between an environment and world. Environment is a current variant of a combination of all events, while world is a horizon of all the horizons of such events as open possibilities. The concept of possibility or, as some would call it "modality" must be explicated in various ways. First, there is the ontological – "the way the world really is" understanding that relates to Luhmann's notion of "totality" as open to all possible variations and all their horizons, and thus comprises an endless manifold of events. This endless totality can be, then, made more precise by selectivity and combination. Thus, the totality, as endless complexity, is managed at first by constitution of structures that are in a position to simplify or reduce such a complexity. That is to say, the first issue that social systems are confronted with is ordering the totality of possible events and their complexity by a manageable system.

The second issue that social systems must address consists of the complexity inherent in a society. The latter is a current state of actualized world possibilities manifest in a current environment and its selected relationship with human activity. The remaining world consists of unactualized possibilities. A more complex society increases possible combinations and thus complexity and in turn increases possible selectivity from the environment and world horizons which, in turn, increase the complexity of intersecting social

activities, requiring procedures for complexity reduction. One available solution is an objectivation of the possible in a current order of a concrete environment that both enables and limits practical activities. Such a reduction of complexity would leave the more complex possibilities as an "irrational residuum." This means that the current environment and its selectivity provide a limit to what is possible, although the limit is equally defined by the horizon of each event and by the horizon of all horizons – world. It is to be noted that for Luhmann the horizons of events and their combinations and world horizon are not subjective projections of a future, but are read on the selected environmental factors and the limits that they signify. The reason why horizons are not subjective projections is because the human psychological, physiological, and biological factors are equally aspects of environment and are functional only when they enter into social interconnections of sense. Thus, consciousness is not psychological but functions at the level of social system's signification.

For Luhmann, signification is "sense" and the latter is a founding social concept. Social systems are "sense-systems" such that a social world is an interconnected sense system. What allows this system to expand is a world horizon and, in turn, the world horizon reveals the limits of a particular interconnected social sense system. Thus human social activities that comprise sensible interconnections are equally "motivated" by the sensible interconnections of the relevant environmental factors that set current limits to what is possible. This, then, is the meaning of the possible that must be objectified and appear on events, including selected human events, such as "feelings" or "desires."

At this level, complexity also appears as a major aspect of praxis to the extent that its reduction is a way of managing the horizons of possibility. This does not mean that such a process of reducing complexity and thus possibilities solves all problems. Indeed, for Luhmann a solution cannot be deduced from a given problem without creating other problems and without opening up numerous solutions, one among which might be selected momentarily. Such a selected solution can only function by changing the selectivity of the environment and horizon possibilities. This means that a solution does not imply what is already given but a reconstruction of the currently available activities in correlation to restructuration of the environment. From what has been said, it follows that sense interconnections are contingent. After

all, complexity, even when reduced, plays its role in a horizon of possibilities and thus there are more possibilities of acting than can be realized. Some sense indications toward what is possible may not be realized and with the shifting rearticulation of the environment may be annulled and replaced by other factors that are equally open to possibilities and disappointments. A more radical implication suggests that some possible indicated results may be attainable, but may have become redundant even for a social actor who sought to realize them. At any rate, sense indications have no necessary and conclusive results and hence are contingent. Here, Luhmann has challenged the very basis of the cherished theory of cause and effect and hence any social theory pretending to offer explanations. This is not to say that explanations make no sense, but that the sense they have belongs within a system of sense interconnections of human social actions. Sense interconnections comprise the conditions for the possibility of regarding events causally, but the very notion of making sense is not derivable from any theory of causality. This has already been known by the empiricists and Kant who left no doubt that causality is metaphysics.

Positivization and Reflexivity

The continuous deliberations concerning complexity and its reduction, as delimited above, require a set of practices that correlate social structures in mutually intersecting ways. To come to terms with such ways Luhmann offers an exposition of such practices as positivisation. This term means an explicit acceptance of a specific social phenomenon without a pretense to base such phenomenon on something else. For example, if there is a question of justice, the latter cannot be reduced to some conception of "human nature" or "natural right" but must be accepted positively as it functions in a society. This positivity also requires a distance from the posited phenomenon in order to comprise a space for decisions. The latter suggests that there is no one concept of, say, justice, but a constant variation which requires continuous management and rearticulation. The principle of variation is the most fundamental; that something can be changed is the basis of all stability and legitimation. This follows from the above discussion of contingency.

An assumed distance to a phenomenon – positivisation – is premised on reflexive procedures, one of which is decision. Decision is not only about

some social phenomenon, such as justice, but also about decisions. Obviously, it is impossible to subsume all considerations of a particular judicial process under one, even if complex, decision. The decision process must be subdivided into various processes wherein one process may comprise reflection upon another: a court decision may be reflected upon and changed by another court decision or by a precedent. Clearly, even when a new law is decreed to supervene over other laws to reduce their complexity, it is unnecessary and indeed impossible to foresee and pre-establish all situations which the new law would positivise and reflect upon. The reduction of internal complexity of a social system requires the intensification of the effectivity of social processes through positivisation. In one sense, processes of the same kind must be applied on themselves. Language must be able to speak about language, to apply money upon money as exchange possibilities, to teach learning and teaching, to do research about research, and so forth. As we shall see subsequently, processes of different type must positivise other processes and reflect upon them in order to reduce the complexity of such processes. Hence, legal procedures may reflect upon economic practices and help reduce social complexity in production process. These processes that reflect upon themselves and upon other processes are social "reflexive mechanisms" that exemplify a broader principle. It is a process of positivisation constituting conditions for an application of any process upon itself or other processes.

Luhmann sees in the process of reflexivity a basic advantage over other processes. For example, an extreme expansion of judicial protections for individuals in the modern age was accomplished only through positivisation and institutionalization of reflexive mechanisms that enabled a subsumption under judicial procedures even extremely fluctuating social situations and activities. Yet the significance of reflexive processes and positivation does not lie merely in its temporal aspect of transformation of old norms, values and practices into new ones, but also in the fact that such processes allow the restructuration of the selected content of the environment and values. This also holds for values; reflexivity multiplies and can manage value viewpoints that then can enter into decisions. This leads to an increased satisfaction of citizens with respect to the values they hold. With an increase in complexity of social interactions, environmental selectivity, and open possibilities, positivisation and reflexivity are unavoidable. It is the central way in which

complexity can be reduced and expanded. Institutionalised reflexivity and positivisation offer greater opportunities for a greater number of norms and values. Of course, complexity cannot be multiplied to such an extent that it would overwhelm the management of information. The latter too requires reflexive procedures such as studies of languages, and information systems.

A stabilising influence is provided by political processes of a society. But one of the conditions for stability is that a political process in a society cannot be seen as playing an auxiliary role to other processes, such as economy, religion, family, etc. This process must be institutionalised so that it is capable of positivisation of every other social process and hence be a process of reflexivity of society as a whole. Yet as already mentioned, such reflexive process must be divided among various functions. This is necessary not only because the labor is complex, but because the processes of positivisation and reflexivity can never be completely institutionalised. The changing possibilization of world horizon and retrogressively of environmental selectivity precludes such completion. Thus political functions in addition constitute a deliberate ordering of transition from one set of norms and their application to novel norms. Of course, it follows from Luhmann's thesis that political functions must also be positivised through an institutionalised reflexivity, such as selection or appointment of political functionaries who must be coordinated according to specific aims and means. Other checks on political reflexivity will be discussed shortly.

While norms are posited and established, they are reflected from what is known as "values." For Luhmann, any preference of one activity over another, or one environmental factor over others is valuation. With respect to complexity, valuations become ideologies when preferential activities and functions are reflected upon and are used to evaluate other activities and hence values. Values, here, are evaluated from a viewpoint of selection of activities and can be seen as exchangeable with other values. As soon as the function of valuation becomes visible, it becomes a standard of value evaluation. In this process absolute values discredit themselves, since it is no longer possible to evaluate values in terms of the "highest" values. After all, even such higher values become positivised through reflexivity as one set among others to be compared, discarded or selected. As noted, established values that reflect upon other values become ideologies. The latter become the invariables

among variable values and provide a reduction of complexity and thus greater stability. To enhance stability, ideology must respect two conditions: First, it must build selected programs and steer them through various changes, and must also accept corresponding exclusion of other programs. Second, it must maintain the consensus of those who must remain waiting with their specific values by guaranteeing that their opportunity is in the making. This is its symbolic function: horizons are open for implementation of other values.

In its symbolism, ideology must create a space for alterations of values as well as activities. However, this means that an ideology must constitute symbols that are reflexively distanced from the values that initially became an ideology in order to correlate such values with other values and their activities. Such a symbolic structure cannot be evaluated within an ideology and it becomes guaranteed by a political party as a continuous institution of interpretation of the ideology and its explicit values. Thus, whenever there are values, there are ideologies, and resultantly political parties. A political party is a required condition for the institutionalization of positivisation of ideology and its relevant values. Obviously, this structure may pervert political process, especially in a multi-party social system, by exchanging the values of ends and means. In principle, political activities must attain specific ends. Political power is thus granted to political figures in the form of competence for decision-making as means to such ends. Yet in many cases the aim of political parties is perverted to maintenance of power while the proposed programs, reflected by ideologies and their values, are evaluated with respect to their potential to maintain the political power of a given party. The programs become subordinate as a means to maintain power. This perversion makes all ideologies and hence all values extremely variable and the valuation itself extremely reflexive, thus adding to the incrementation and not reduction of complexity – greater arbitrariness. But this too is checked by reflexively established mechanisms such as elections, revolutions, and above all practical life and its limitations.

This can be avoided by specific norms, institutions and symbols which can be distanced from political processes, i.e. they must be politically neutralised. Separation of powers that tend to balance each other's efforts to dominate; economic praxis that in modernity is a major condition of stability and general interest. Since such neutralizations remain practical in-

sofar as they are engaged in valuation of environmental factors and open possibilities, then they do not hinder the retention of reflexivity of values and ideologies. In addition, political parties can never be certain of ideological persuasion of their constituencies, they must interpret the public in terms of the lowest common denominator, namely materialistically. In this sense, political materialism fulfills the role of a reflexive domain that hinders political arbitrariness. This suggests a broader view of reflexive mechanisms than an application of one process upon itself or upon another process.

This broader view reveals that reflection is not a matter of subjects reflecting upon their own selves, but of one process upon another wherein even the subjects have their positions and self interpretation. Hence reflexive processes are social procedures established to manage complex functions and activities. As noted, economic activity – materialism – is a domain that provides a continuity across variations. Yet its process in modern age has become complex and included production procedures, division of labor functions and their graded valuations, exchange of commodities in terms of social labor time, and its costs. Hence, to manage this complexity reflexive mechanisms are established. Money is introduced to manage exchange of commodities, pay for work, loans and profits. Yet money too becomes a complex process and requires a reflexive institution, such as banking where money is exchanged for money, but in such a way that this exchange also reflects the material processes. The latter, of course, is equally a reflexive mechanism that intersects the exchange of exchange values. Such exchanges are performed by conventional rules that comprise a reflexive mechanism of what is permitted and prohibited. Here we enter a judicial system that not only reflects upon exchange values but also upon the material processes such as labor safety, rights to leave a work place, selectivity of environmental factors that are useful but not harmful, etc. In turn, the changes in the material processes will provide reflexive analysis of the exchange processes and the evaluation of rules and the requests for their changes. It is to be noted that such interreflexivity is not a matter for an explanatory theory but is constantly engaged in praxis. As already noted, theories are not external to social and historical events and thus play a role in shaping them.

Yet in all cases, the establishment of "higher" level reflexivities is designed to reduce social complexities at the lower levels. As was already noted,

ideologies and the manner in which they reduce the complexity of values are also involved in the reduction of complexities within juridical, and the latter within exchange of exchange values, all the way down to material processes and the selectivity of environmental factors. No doubt, the "lower" levels will limit the reductive capacity of the higher, since they too enter as reflexive mechanisms that impact on those of the other levels and thus limit their arbitrariness. Moreover, the reflexive processes, such as valuation of values by ideologies that reduce complexities have a greater generality than the complexities to be reduced. Such generalities have a greater longevity than the shifting aspects of a complexity. For example, human activities and interactions bear complex meanings, such as diverse purposes, means to attain them, and places and times relevant for their fulfillment. Hence, social time is required to reduce such a complexity by constituting a common time for everyone. We all know when and where we have to be to accomplish our tasks. Such a time is sequential, fractioned, and yet convenient for all. Despite labor variations in the material area, despite the qualitatively different tasks required in the arena of exchange values or the debates of laws, there is "one time" for everyone, such that the latter reduces the complexity. In one way, such a greater generality is also a means for social continuity despite changes in other domains, such as the material. Ideologies have the same generality with respect to other reflexive mechanisms. Perhaps one major effort to reduce complexity in all spheres of human activities and affairs, despite continuous failures, are monotheistic cults. Our divinity gives us a simple set of rules that are "eternal" and inevitably must apply to all human doings. There is no need to belabor the history of the most obvious.

Conditions for Reflexivity

The brief outline above has suggested how reflexive mechanisms function "vertically" insofar as one process reflects upon another. This reflexivity must now be grounded in its conditions, if it is not to remain metaphysical. Here Luhmann points out that reflexivity presupposes, as its condition, a distinction between what is regarded as currently real and the temporally possible. It must be also recognized that what is currently real is a realization of past possibilities. In this sense, the past is not "gone" to the extent that its unrealized or unselected options may continue to be also future options

for selectivity at the present. Hence, a particular society does not vary only in terms of the presently selected and given facts and activities, but also in terms of its constitutive conditions of selectivity based on temporal possibilities. The selectivity of relevant facts in any social process is a key to the constitution of a relationship between social facts, their structures and the temporal horizon of possibilities. The fundamental condition for possibility and the selectivity of facts within a social process is temporality and, as we already saw, modal generalization constituting temporal horizons – in both directions – of such a system.

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CHAPTER II

DIALOGUE AND WORLD

Although some computer theorists have abandoned sender-receiver models of communication, the ontological and epistemological presuppositions that have buttressed this approach continue to hold sway. These assumption are latent in discussions that conceptualize communication as an exchange of information that occurs over specifiable channels of interaction. Such constructions of the communication process tacitly assume the existence of a structural framework or unquestioned point of reference that guarantees orderly interaction. At the very least, interaction is assumed to occur "in the world", so that a singular spatiotemporal matrix can be cited as the ultimate locus of communication. Thus, reality guarantees that interactants can encounter each other within the world's singular object-field.

Once this basic ontological background is established, a science of communication becomes possible that focuses on the interface between elements in a communicative relationship as its basic problematic. All efforts to test experimentally for the effects of messages across differentially configured channels of communication are founded on this basic realist stratagem, which opens interaction as a domain of technological intervention, even to the point of replacing the end poles of a relationship with self-referential automata. In this realist mode, the science of communication is intimately connected with the technological closure of the life world and the projection of present socioeconomic conditions into the future.

Exponents of other schools of thought, by contrast, have seriously questioned the status of the world in human communicative relationships. Alfred Schutz, for instance, cogently described the existence of "multiple realities", while Gilles Deleuze and followers working within cultural studies employ the imagery of lines, planes, and forces to describe semiotic configurations in a nondualist fashion. Similarly, Niklas Luhmann's extensions of the systems theory have thematized the topics of time/space and history, thereby introducing cosmology as a central topic of cultural and social theory.

For Luhmann, the concept of world is critical to founding a communication-based theory of the social domain. The world, in his view, is at once

the meaningful unity produced by everything that members of a society recognize as existing, plus the unspecifiable horizon within which members of distinct systems may encounter each other. As Luhmann explains,

The relationship between meaning and world can be described as the concept of decentering. As meaning the world is accessible everywhere: in every situation, in any detail, at each point of the scale from concrete to abstract. At the same time, the world is more than a mere sum comprehending all possibilities, all meanings of references. It is not only the sum, but the unity of these possibilities. Above all, this means that the world horizon for every difference guarantees its own unity as difference. It sublates the difference in all perspectives from individual systems, in that for every system the world is the unity of its own difference between system and environment.

Thus, the world is not merely the sum of specifiable elements that constitute the empirical cosmos, but a manifold of meaning references, each of which articulate a cosmology. Such meaning systems are not closed off to each other; they are available to interpretive understanding, and, as Schutz explains, in the course of mundane activities a person might inaugurate play and pass through multiple worlds. But recognition of such multiple realities results in a conception of the world that is understood to be a unity in difference.

A communicative relationship between members of meaning systems thus cannot be understood in the traditional sense of a more-or-less efficacious interface of elements in the world. Instead, such an encounter requires a form of communication that in some sense brackets the world of each partner and allows for the recognition of difference, mutual exchange of views, and self-transcendence. In other words, a communications-based theory of the society must be grounded on a theory of dialogue. But what is dialogue, and what is the nature of the space in which the dialogue relationship is articulated? Certainly a dialogue is always concretely situated, but what, then, is the relationship between dialogue and world?

A basic understanding of the dialogical domain requires the specification of its "pure" structure, in the sense that all dialogical relationships presuppose this framework. The following components comprise the pure structure of dialogue:

1. A significative orientation of the subject is initiated toward a state of affairs, events, or things. That is, an orientation, as an activity,

"means" something other than itself in a specific way. In this sense, dialogue is a reflexive activity.

2. By signifying, by meaning the states of affairs, things, and events, the subject orients himself or herself to another subject. This other person is not a mere object in the perceptual field, but someone who is being addressed about something.

3. By addressing the other, the subject orients this person to the intended states of affairs and to himself or herself as the initiator of the address. Thus, dialogue makes world and a speaker available to one another.

4. By orienting himself or herself to the other, the subject is oriented in turn to himself or herself, and recognizes his or her own uniqueness and contribution to the dialogue. As a result, dialogue is an "encounter" rather than a mechanical interface of actors defined, for instance, by their social roles.

The dialogical relationship is unique because it abolishes the binary relationship of the self and the world, or the self and another as an object in a field of perceptions, purposes, aims, and reactions.

Similarly, the partner is a dialogue is also de-centered toward the world in terms of the meaning given to objects and events by the dialogical partner. Thus, the question of intersubjectivity in a dialogical relationship is quite different from the traditional question concerning a person's relationship to and knowledge of the other. In the dialogical context, the other is experienced not as an object given to the subject to be deciphered, but as a dialogical partner engaged in signifying things and events. In this interchange subjects come to recognize their own positions, similarities, and differences in relationship to the signified events and objects and in relationship to each other.

The dialogical relationship allows one to recognize multiple perspectives or articulations of the world. In this sense, dialogue is literally cosmopolitan, for this encounter decenters and introduces the self to another's reality. Today several schools of thought have articulated frameworks for reflecting on social reality. Even a cursory acquaintance with these perspectives shows they should not be understood as building upon each other and culminating in a view of the world "as a whole," but instead are complementary frameworks that articulate their own object fields and proffer competing futures. The categories of history, individuation, praxis, and power in concrete phe-

nomena have been the case in the language of economics, functionalism, Darwinian evolution, dialectical historicism, culture, and text, to name only a few interpretive paradigms. As suggested, dialogue stands in a metacommunicative relationship to these interpretive explanations of concrete political life. As Nietszche suggests, the cosmopolitan is a player who conjures up the world at will by employing a tool kit of sciences. However, the concept of world must be explored as that which is assumed even in dialogue. The world as the concrete fundament of phenomena persists through the presentation and depresentation of concrete possibilities.

The Ontological Status of the World

Only in an unreflective attitude to human-world relationships appear as an encounter between two things. The relations recognized routinely by people are inner-worldly relationships. In the natural attitude, each person knows that the world is full of things that the cosmos has a typical organization. Yet even the givenness of the world tends to lead to a recognition of difference. Each inner-worldly thing has an identity and a relatedness to other things – the sense of identity demands difference. Already in Plato's writings, Tauton and Heteron were indissolubly bound. This relationship is one of the basic ontological aspects of the Western tradition, which ends in Hegel's dialectic of identity and difference.

The human, seen as inner-worldly, is defined as a "self" in reference to an "other" – to be an ego, there must be an alter. The interlacing of relationships between self and others gives rise to society as a field of exchanges between persons who inhabit specific social roles. As Durkheim showed, this field tends toward progressive differentiation and a concomitant specialization of role structures. Thus, the self is ever more deeply defined within a progressively elaborate and rigid field of differences. Paradoxically, the "individual" appears in conjunction with a civilizing process that lends society a beehive consistency and progressively quashes the free play of the self.8 Thus, like Engel's barbarians, dialogue redeems civilization by fostering a deliberative attitude toward fixed social arrangements. As Robert Grudin suggests, dialogue is a tool of the free mind.

The very possibility of dialogue indicates that the self's destiny, its determination within a social field, is incomprehensible without a much deeper

and hardly accessible sway that pervades the human – the sway of the world. The world is not the most extreme limit and boundary of inner-worldly things; it is not a framework or a container; humans do not take residence in the world as worms in an apple or money in the bank. All the trusted modalities of "being in" of things are not applicable not even metaphorically to understanding the world, and specifically to understanding the worldliness of humans. The world is not an object, a region of all regions, or a time of all times. Evocations of finitude and infinity do not bring one "closer" to the world-sway. Neither is the world the sum of all humanly known objects and subjects. While in the world, one encounters things and others, yet nowhere does one encounter the world as a thing, an object, or the other. Is the world simply an openness to things and of things? After all, the various apprehendable regions of things, the living, the inert, the tactile, the caressable, the aesthetic, and the intellectual, have not been and perhaps cannot be exhausted by human reasoning. But were one a God, an infinite mind, an all-knowing power taking up residence in a most advantageous region, could one then know the world? Indeed, one would know infinitely more, but the world is not one of the objects of knowledge.

If the world is not accessible to any thought, then perhaps it is nothing at all. Should one not assume a skeptical attitude, if the world resists all articulation? But is everything an object of experience? It has been noted that not everything is present to experience; to have experience we must already have the "conditions of experience." Neither space and time nor movement and stillness appear as objects, but "by way of objects." Each experienced something is in a horizon that takes the experiencer on an endless journey. The necessary conditions for experience are present "in" the world, yet these integuments of worldly relationships are not the world-sway. If one succeeds in thinking cosmologically, space, time, and movement turn out to be equioriginal world dimensions.

Similarly, the concept of environment should not be confused with the notion of the world. The environment is a daily slice of the world. The unthematic clutch of one's everyday field is accompanied by a thematic grasp of the contours of the universe, both in time and in space, thus indicating a way of in-being. But the indeterminate hint of the all-pervasive wideness of the world overshadows the thematic and unthematic environs. One sometimes intuits a

difference between in-being, the beehive world, and the all-pervasiveness of the world. This is a hint of the cosmological difference. Against this indeterminateness stands the flattened vision of the world as the largest of all things, a box of all boxes. One task of world-thinking is to de-flatten the world by showing the difference that allows all differences – the cosmological difference.

World-thinking requires one to pay careful attention to those whose work has established the edges of all ontological interpretation of the world. One such illumination is offered by transcendental phenomenology. Via the epoché, thinking dislodges world-belief from its traditional ontological anchors. The totality of things, the inner-worldly things, and the world of stretches, courses, distances, and nearnesses are reflexively arrayed before a form of reasoning attuned to its constitutive agencies. At the same time, a region opens that does not belong to the in-being of the beehive world. This region cannot be located as one of the inner-worldly objects or events. All inner-worldly events and things, including the thinking subject, manifest themselves on the background and foreground of this opened region. Husserl called this region transcendental consciousness, but this phrase is misleading.

In the transcendental turn, noetic-noematic consciousness rules. In the existential-ontological and the Heideggerian aletheological turn, the transcendentals of Being are reannounced. In world-thinking, the corresponding ground is the inner irruption of world and world-dimensions. Thus, world-understanding is perhaps the last "purification" of the transcendental turn from its terminological enmeshment in subjectivity, consciousness, awareness, act and orientation, and of the aletheological Being-quest – Being's compulsive historicality and ecstatic projection.

World understanding encompasses the notions of Being, context, consciousness, and self-understanding. The transcendental turn foregrounds the issue of how the inner-worldly ways transmute into objects for consciousness. But Husserl leaped over this problem and failed to note that the objectivity of an object is a speculative stance. True, events appear either in themselves or for us, but is this all there is? What of timing, spacing, lighting, changing, and so on. Intentionality falls short in apprehending inner-worldly objectivity-subjectivity.

Is the move toward establishing the world-openness of the human a reflective move; that is, a move where subjectivity turns upon itself and

reflects on its acts, functions, traditional immersions, and ontological divisions? Such a move propels one toward the Kantian limits of reason, or to the transcendental notion of the world's background in the form of absolute subjectivity. Indeed, there may be reflective activity on subjectivity and its relationship to objectivity, but world-thinking pierces this limit. The context that permits reflection is a world context. Accordingly, reflection is a temporalization of a temporalization, with pregiven distances and nearnesses of time and space, of significative dimensions assumed both in pre-reflective moves and reflection on such moves. Realization is, therefore, a world-reflex that allows a movement of temporalization within time. Note that time as such must here be understood atemporally (alpha privation).

World-thinking raises the question of what lends inner-worldly events their appearance as modalities. Certainly it is not subjectivity as a being thrown or thrusted, nothingness, or self-projection. Rather, the phenomenality of phenomena is a formation that inscribes and carries its own implicit reflectivity. The world-dimensions lend all phenomena their manifestations the emergence, duration, and demise of all things and events. Yet world-time is not simply a transition between dimensions of inner-worldly horizons.

World-time is distinct from "real" and phenomenal time. Both forms of timing belong to the beehive world. Real time, the form of time accorded seignorial status in the modern world, is understood in terms of relations between things. Each world horizon can thus be said to have its timing. The modern technological world, for instance, exudes the clock, which then, as Lewis Mumford notes, begins to manufacture time. This substructure of temporality, however, is nested within phenomenal time. The epoché opens up time as durée and allows one to recognize the elasticity and multidimensionality of time. Both these forms of time subsist on the ground of world-time.

Is it possible to glimpse world-time, even in a sketchy manner? To do so, one must think of the world-expansive dimensions and how they foster emergence into presence and demise into absence. The beehive world and world-time are distinguishable in terms of cosmological difference. One habitually believes things and events show themselves only in the now, with the past no more and future not yet. But if things and events are not essential but temporal, then one cannot think of an event without the tree beehive horizons and the transitions between them. Thus, each thing or event is an ap-

pearing and a disappearing. Appearance should be understood as a temporal formation of something or an event whereby phenomena are lent their configurations along the transition of the world-expansive beehive dimensions of not yet, present, and no longer. There is not only the tension of a thing or event, but also a formation-deformation. This means one cannot proclaim validly that the thing or event had a form that is lost, as the loss is a moment along a series of traces.

This is one aspect of depth-time. Phenomena, as formations and deformations, have a transparent depth. This depth is possible if one understands phenomena not as ontologically determined things or events, but as a self-formation of temporal configurations. Temporal depth is the transparent visibility of things.

If one things along the three temporal dimensions, one encounters a formation-deformation whereby the present is a temporal configuration transparent through its temporal depth "toward the past" and its "temporal future." Every phenomenon is not merely an appearance as a property, but a transparency of the dimensional depth of time. Hence, the world-expansive transition lends a thing or event its face, which, from the beehive perspective, has the semblance of a thing or appearance.

The inner-worldly appearance is a cross-section of the time dimensions. The problem of world time lies in the way it "lets phenomena be," that is, reveals the phenomenality of the phenomena. What lends phenomena their phenominality is the dimensional shift, which is not identical with the now characteristics of things. Understood this way, phenomena here are not appearance unto the subject; at best the subject is identical with the shift of the temporal dimensions. Nevertheless, even if still in terms of the beehive world-dimensions, one can gain a glimpse of world-time as all-pervasive rather than a relation between things.

Thus, the ontological status of the traditional notion of appearance is lost. World-thinking presents appearance neither as an appearance of a thing nor a phenomenon present to a subject; rather, the phenomenon is ultimately a dimension that lends things their while and apparition. The worldly apparition is not only temporal, but also spatial; apparitions are space-lent as well as time-lent. All the beehive configurations including material configurations and kinships are in a world-space that is not a place of all places. The

world-space wells up the spacings of the beehive world and gives coloration, resounding, and touch to all temporal phenomena. Space as spacing lends things their size, weight, expanse, and location in a way that streams across all things and events without being identical with them.

Thus, both world-dimensional time, as lending phenomena their phenomenality, and space, as spacing the beehive things and events in their locations, affinities, and remoteness, have a "movement" that is not one of the inner-worldly movements and cannot be understood in the categories of traditional philosophies. World-dimensional time is a cosmological notion.

Thinking of this motion as a transition from future to present, or present to past, mistakenly applies inner-worldly, successive movement to the world. To glimpse worldly movement, one must attempt to think of the transition between things intransitively. The nonontological presence of past and future is not simply an absence of things or even nothing. Rather, this presence has a temporal sense that is exceedingly difficult to capture. The presence of past and future should not be thought of in terms of absence, as absence is prepositional. Yet traditional thinking on this matter raises further issues.

In explicating time, Aristotle and Augustine employ a spatial model. Augustine establishes a disjunction between space and time; space is external, while time is in the soul. When discussing time, Augustine points out that a moment can be long or short. He thus operates with spatial stretches as a model for understanding time. Yet is time a stretch? Of course, people routinely speak of time in terms of spatial metaphors. One refers to the present century or the present year in terms of a length of time, but how is 100 years presented? Obviously, this period is not given contemporaneously as a stretch in space, like a length of road. People refer to a century as "theirs," yet most of its years are already gone or remain to be accomplished. Only the current year is present, but, obviously, even this year is mostly in the past or future. By extending this thinking, one ends with the Zenonian and Aristotelian division of time into an infinite point, but such an indivisible point is never encountered. All attempts to consider time as present slips away into past and future. Consequently, one should not think of the present as an extension.

To think of world-movement, one has to trace back from the world-expansive dimensions of not yet, present, and no longer to the mundane

movement of space-time. To think of the world means to show how the world-movement manifests itself in and makes possible the appearance of the future, present, and past and the phenomenality of phenomena. One cannot say that world-expansive dimensions are in the world, nor that world-expansive time is an infinite period, as the infinite stretch smacks of a line from now in both directions.

World-time is not a while or a duration, as all whiles and durations are in the world. Hence, world-time does not endure. How does world-time "time" across all world-expansive dimensions? How does world-space "space" all inner-worldly events and things? How does the world institute the movement of spatiotemporal dimensions? How can one think of the world depth?

For phenomenology, experienced elements, such as chromatic qualities or audial durations, are no longer the qualities of things or qualifications of the subject. They belong to experience, which can be said to be worldly in the sense that such configurations are more akin to the traditionally neglected world than to subjects and objects. The same can be said of space and time. Time and space are certainly not "in" the subject. Neither are objects, described phenomenologically, "in" time and space. Transcendental phenomenology, by excluding the objective and subjective prejudice and the inherence of things and subjects in time and space, reveals an area of investigation that is not identical with the beehive notion of space-time. Hence, the thematization of transcendentally understood space-time places one in an entirely different region that that of Augustine and Kant.

The world has at least the same status as this neither objective nor subjective transcendental region. One must also avoid mistaking time for the objectivation of the transcendental region, since objectivation assumes an inner-worldly subject and a specific locus for an inner-worldly object. Although the transcendental region "includes" the meaning of both objective and subjective events, of the beehive notion of space and time, it is nevertheless distinct from them. Perhaps various phenomena experienced across the transcendental region comprise a world formation-deformation and their significations? An exploration of the phenomenon of time in terms of the perceptual field may answer this question.

The things present in the surrounding world constitute the region of one's perceptual field. In diverse ways, persons are oriented to their surroundings in

terms of use, misuse, valuation, interrogation, wonder, and habit. In all these modes, people relate to their surroundings perceptually. Thus, the perceptual field and the person are copresent. Yet things in the perceptual field, one's surroundings, are not closed from moment to moment. This field forms a horizon, a perceptual island or "aura" that is neither objective nor subjective.

Yet according to the transcendental stance, the aura is given differently than the perceptual field. The aura is represented, it is absent in the presence. Yet this representation must be interpreted in the worldly sense. Representation is not an act of consciousness, but a temporal event of time within time. This mode of analysis shifts attention from the protensional act, or the retentional capacities involved in perception, to a time arc, a time curved "within" itself. Although one may represent things of the past, what makes the representation possible is the past's presence and the future's presence within the perceptual field. The perceptual field's aura spreads not only toward the past and future, but comes from the past and the future toward perceptual presence, the "now."

In the phenomenal field, one is related to objects and events in presentational and representational modalities. One relates presentationally to things in the surroundings and representationally to remembered and expected surroundings. Thus, persons, understood nondualistically as configurations of the world's present, have an immediate stance to their surroundings as presented and represented.

Several things must be done to make this analysis useful for thinking through the cosmological difference. First, the terminology must be shifted from its enmeshment in the distinction between the "immanent" and "transcendent" to the primary category of world. Second, one must bracket the notion of consciousness, with its ontological residue. Third, one must cease looking for a knower as some essential point of reference or departure. Fourth, one must interpolate the analysis with an exploration of world-time as that which does not possess an attribute of being an all-encompassing something toward which one relates from a particular "point."

Bracketing the protensional-retentional distinction allows one to open the field of possible temporal orientations toward the past and future. Common parlance suggests that if an object or event is distancing, then it must be sinking into the past, while if nearing, an object or event must be coming from the future. This construction is an analogue of the scientists' "arrow of

time," and may indeed be its founding insight. But note that something could be distancing into the future. For instance, a goal that yesterday was near may be much more remote today. Conversely, some unholy deed in the past may finally catch up with someone. The vent is approaching from the past. Thus, prior to temporal localization there is depth.

The present does not emerge from a primal impression. Rather, all impressions emerge, approach, and distance without a seignorial temporal orientation. Thus, time-understanding is not derivable from the subject's position in the stream of time. Terminologies such as experienced, lived, projected, and so on add nothing to the way we "are" temporal. The present is a way that all events are, including humans. By means of inner-worldly corporeal arrangements, humans plumb the depth of the present and articulate a field of presences.

In this respect, references to the no longer and the not yet do not imply the past and future but the present depth. If one says that something is coming from a future, one would be merely saying that it is traveling toward one on a line from, say, Paris, traversing space, and has not yet traversed sufficient space to arrive. Yet the traveling is present and is not coming from the future. Concretely, one waits. The traveling is already occurring, and the traveler will simply emerge from the horizon that is neither the future nor the past. The present is not an impressionable moment, but a depth that can be best articulated, at least for now, in Husserlian terms of determinable indeterminacy, rather than in the Heideggerian notions of nearness and distance, which smack too much of spatiality.

Yet the discussion of time as depth still suggests spatiality. A further analysis can clarify the notion of world-time. Appearing from the depth is not coming from the future. If one says that Bruce is coming from Toronto but he is not yet here, he does not sit perched on a future horizon; he is present in the expansive world-presence, and the "future horizon" is merely a modulation of the present. Hence, when something shows up on the future horizon, its presence is already in the depth.

This suggests that the horizons are articulations of the present depth, perception or consciousness being only one modality among others. For instance, the swaying of a sapling in the wind, a movement which corresponds with protentional-retentional consciousness, does not require that each pre-

vious sway "fall" into the past, but constitutes, instead, the continuously self-configuring depth. The horizons are also configurations of the depth that constitutes the indeterminate determinable limits of the sway, of protention and retention, of memory and expectation. Hence, Bruce's coming from Toronto is a movement at the present with horizons, such as farther and nearer. Note that the horizons may be parallel with the depth, yet they too have horizons of determinate indeterminacy, with their own depth.

Perhaps less determinate imagery can help one grasp the manifold quality of the depth. The irrupting time shaded by a flicker of light inscribes waning protrusions that are immediately pervaded by others and dominated by intersections, thus building a constantly spreading depth that is not complete, but intersected, pervaded, and re-dimensioned by other irruptions. It is not light that pervades light, but time dimensions that pervade time dimensions that are themselves temporalizations of time. Commonly, one thinks that light pervades and dominates space and time in some way, but this assumes that darkness is space to be shaped by light. Yet the converse is just as valid; darkness protrudes and pervades the light. One is thus faced with a play of temporal dimensions that cannot be anchored. The depth wells with light and darkness, sound and silence, as colorations and echoes of time. The "edge" of this upwelling of a particular time dimension constitutes a horizon that may be called a consciousness horizon. This horizon is no longer future or past, but a dimension of depth that pervades another dimension that includes "me." I am in darkness and light. These metaphors are mere colorations of a more fundamental sway.

The present is a dimension with depths, horizons, pervading configurations, and defigurations. But the present is also worldwide. Every "expression" of a thing is a spatiotemporal configuration in motion. Each phenomenon spreads a depth and a horizon. Hence, one can no longer speak of the place of a thing as its outer limit or of its space in terms of other spatial things, as every aspect of the thing shimmers with incessant configurations and defigurations.

Is the sum of the self-configuring depth, with its intertwining auras and intrusions, identical with the all-pervasive present? To answer this question one must undertake a critique of an experienced temporal event, such as a sound. When conceptualizing sound as "flowing," one must think in terms of

horizons of time within which the flow takes place. This is an inner-worldly manner of thinking. Even if one assumes that the sound is continuous, as if on a line, one would also be present to a silence that is not identical with the continuation of the sound, but present before and after and during the sound. The silence is present in such a way that it is not only the sound that breaks the silence, but the silence also resounds in various ways in the sound. The sound thus ceases to be a continuous flow of the future into the present and into the past, but already implicates a silent dimension of the present irrupting in the very sound. The transcendentally constituted continuation is pervaded and irrupted by the cosmological dimension of presence. Hence, if one recognizes that the transcendental was never anything else than a metaphor for the world, nothing is lost by dropping this term except residual vocabulary. The transcendental temporalization is nothing other than a name for a self-temporalizing event with a constant presence of a world-depth. Thus, moving from the natural attitude to the phenomenological, one finds a cosmological dimension that beckons with its own intentionalities an answer to a question.

The present is therefore not an un-impression, but a movement where impressions, be they audial, visual, or tactile, already have a shape and trace the memory of the "coming" and the expectation of the "passing." The present is a continuous constitution of a depth, with memories and expectations. The present is "before" the differentiation of time into transcendental protention-retention. Reflection is a tracing in the depth, and the act of reflection is cocontinuous with the traces, rather than a superimposed act toward the past. The conscious flow of audiality is a complex trace of the world-depth. Protensional-retentional activity is identical with the continuous layering into depth of the sway of the tree in the wind. Consciousness thus begins to vanish in favor of identity with the world-traces. By losing the subject, one gains the world, but not in the sense that the subject somehow mirrors or reflects the world and thus becomes anonymous.

Thus, world-thinking involves a shift from the transcendental to the cosmological mode of thought. Protensional-retentional consciousness in its ultimate atemporal sense refers to a constant shift that expands and continuously deepens. This expansion and deepening are not articulations of a pre-given temporality or field, but are identical with an emergence of the field. This is why atemporal protension-retention is nowhere to be found, and the

instituted pretending and retending acts are at best secondary. Protension-retention in this full sense is nowhere and at no time, because it is the very presence of emergent and self-articulating temporality manifested or given a presentational value by consciousness.

The movement toward cosmological or worldly understanding places on in a position to employ world and consciousness as synonyms, and at the same time to get away from the Heideggerian notion of "being in the world" as a shepherd or Being or Dasein as a gathering of the world. Even if Heidegger stressed the priority of Being over Dasien, Dasien was the mouth-piece for Being, while everything else remained in a dumb posture awaiting the announcement of its being by Dasien. In cosmological understanding, one and all bespeak the sway of the world, and Dasein, being present to the evercoming Being, is only one modality of the temporal upsurgence. Indeed, "where word breaks nothing may be" announces the anonymity of linguistic signification, which also introduces Being into the picture, but misses its trans-signification as world. One can only suggest here that world-thinking is not at all identical with the future transcendence of Heideggerian being, nor with any ontological interpretation, precisely as it is the world wherein any notion of Being is either permitted or discarded; indeed, interpreted.

In terms of the present, "by the time" sound emerges for consciousness comes with the consciousness horizon it has been welling up in its silence, and consciousness constitutes its continuous articulation. Consciousness is one modality in which sound becomes audible. Here again, the horizons of consciousness provide a clue to the world. But these horizons are a way that the upwelling sound sifts through, pervades, encompasses, and indeed constitutes consciousness. The articulation of sound in world-time constantly transfigures the horizons and thus constitutes the temporalization of consciousness in the form of concrete, beehive audiality.

Transcendental consciousness, as retention-protention, sinking and drawing, is identical with the emergence of time echoed by sound or shaded by color. For this reason, transcendental phenomenology can refer to the empty form of time, the silent upsurge that wells into horizons of sound. Strip away the found and one is left with "pure time", except that its conscious horizons are an articulated limit, a trace across the depth and a constant waver from horizon to horizon. The present, then, has a worldwide depth that

does not come toward consciousness but is always through consciousness. When consciousness discovers its self-temporalization, it also discovers itself in an "incessant streaming." This streaming is one articulation of the presence shaded in chromatic endurance of echoed intonicity.

The temporalizing of cosmological difference at once reveals the world-depth, and allows one to abandon consciousness as the repository of desires, myths, and magic. Among such contemporary mythologies is the reduction of communication to a transmission that occurs between self-contained objects in the beehive world. The simultaneous and multiple articulations of the world undercut the ontological pretensions of technocratic communication.

Conclusion

Computer researchers tend to ignore the problem of the world. Although computerization constitutes a world – a "micro-World," as Papert says, the existential base of computer use is intentionally obscured. In fact, the strength of computers is predicated on the ability of these devices to overcome the contingencies of everyday existence. If computers were plagued by the eccentricities associated with interpretation, for example, their utility would be seriously compromised. Contrary to the world, the computer micro-world is supposed to be ahistorical.

As described by the Dreyfuses, computers are disembodied. An epistemology is presupposed, in other words, that allows facts to be treated as objective events. The binary logic that sustains computerization treats all data as if they are unequivocal and thus divorced from praxis. This input is given exact parameters that cannot be found outside of the computer micro-world. The world of the computer is the beehive world in which things have an objective givenness, not the world-sway. The symbolic rule of identity, A = A, rules this lifeless domain.

Within this region there is no need for protention and retention to solidify a particular rendition of facts. Because every fact has a self-same identity, clarification is simply reiteration. Within the world, on the other hand, clarification requires the reinforcement of a particular interpretive modality of reality. One interpretation must be given prominence over others, and this process reflects interpretive acts. In other words, piling interpretations on top of prior interpretations creates what is real. Consequently, the world

is characterized by multivalency and historicity. In this regard, the computer micro-world is a sedimentation of the world.

But the computer micro-world has been sedimented in such a way that this worldliness disappears. The relation A = A obscures time and emphasizes speed and power. Nothing ever needs to be remade, recalculated, or reformulated. Classification, for example, proceeds undaunted within a pristine regime. Therefore, computers increase in size and devour more information in lessening periods of time. The end point of this project is a utopia where all information is available instantly in all places. Far from liberating humanity, this project would require that the totality of things be subjected to the requirements of information, resulting in a lifeless, crystalline cosmos that obscures the world's historicity. The equivocation associated with worldly time has no role in computerization; there are no temporal limitations associated with a here and how within a micro-world.

As a result of overlooking the world, computerization represents an abstraction. Computerization is severed from its experiential source. No wonder many critics argue that computers are harbingers of alienation. After all, a world based on the denial of experience is used to reconstruct and overwhelm everyday life. Indeed, the computer micro-world is given latitude to expand indefinitely. The world is thus pushed to the periphery of existence, instead of serving as the original of computerization.

However, computerization would not make sense in the absence of the world. Without the world, the objectification, linearity, and (binary) dualism inherent to computerization could not be understood. For example, in the absence of the world, (binary) dualism could not become an object of reflection, meaning that this logic could not be envisioned and used to constitute a field of objects. Thus, the world is only momentarily occluded by computerization and never entirely vanquished. The world process is present even in domains that are allegedly objective and ahistorical. The world is never completely repressed, even in reductionistic schemes, such as computerization.

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CHAPTER III

NIKLAS LUHMANN'S THEORY
OF POSITIVISATION AND REFLEXIVITY

Introduction

Although widely known from citations and his close relationship and cooperation with Habermas, Luhmann is hardly ever represented as a social theorist in his own right. This is perhaps due to the lack of translations of his works. This essay is designed as an introduction to some of Luhmann's major concepts exemplified by the institutionalization of justice, ideology and concrete modalization of social systems and history. While by no means exhaustive, these concepts reveal the style of thought and the problems in which Luhmann is engaged. To avoid a major and quite common misunderstanding of Luhmann the following must be observed: as noted in the first section, Luhmann functions in the context of contemporary European thought whose one of the major preoccupations since Husserl is the question of "the conditions for the possibility of ..." The conditions that are relevant are not "factual" but structural. Hence when one uses facts, such facts constitute an exemplification and not a substantiation of a theory. In this sense, the theory is not "explanatory" but expository of the structural requirements without which something could not be experienced. Hence it ranges beyond what is commonly designated by the term "theory," as it investigates the "conditions for the possibility of theories themselves." Again such conditions cannot be empirical-factual but structural or, to use Luhmnn's notion, systemic. While we may know all the empirical facts about Newton, such facts will neither yield Newtonian physics nor the structural conditions for such a theory of physics. While pointing out various factual correlations during specific historical periods, Luhmann uses such correlations to exemplify the conditions that are assumed even if not explicated. One difficulty in dealing with such assumed systems is that linguistic habits, laden with various ontologies and even metaphysics, shift the interpretation of such structures toward one of the ontologies.

While explicitly Luhmann adheres to the systems theory and to some aspects if the critical school, implicitly, and perhaps more fundamentally,

he is influenced by Husserl and his pure, eidetic phenomenological analyses of invariants in transformation. Hence while dealing with Luhmann, it is essential to keep Husserlian eidetic phenomenology in view. Of specific importance for Luhmann's theory of reflexivity is Husserl's analysis of time constitution and structures, not to mention his notion of the "conditions for the possibility of scientific knowledge." It would be redundant to offer a brief exposition of Husserlian thought, as by this tine the literate public is well acquainted with its major outlines.

Positivisation

Although the concept of positivisation is distinct from the concept of reflexivity, it requires the use of reflexivity for its explication. At the same time, it may be exemplified through the selected concepts of justice and ideology. The concept of reflexivity as such will be explicated in its fullness subsequently. According to Luhmann, it is no accident that at the time when the concept of value begins its philosophical career, there appears a disdain for ideology. At the same time, the concept of justice also attains full positivity, i.e. it is left to the political decisions of a social system. This contemporanaiety suggests that there is a hidden relationship between ideology and justice. Such a relationship cannot be found in the similarity of content. It is sufficient to attempt to decipher any paragraph of law and to compare the content with ideological statements in order to be convinced of their differences. Their commonality must be found on a more abstract level: it does not lie in the content but in the form. The form is one of positivisation. It means that the commonality between justice and ideology is found in their distance from themselves. This form of distance to something constitutes the basic aspect of positivisation.

But what does positivisation mean, for example, for the concept of justice? First of all, Luhmann discards any notion of juridical foundation in "natural right" as a higher form of truth or in a concept of justice which has an enduring permanence. For him the principle of variation is more fundamental. That something can be changed is the foundation of all stability and legitimation. Moreover, we fail to think of the concept of positive justice adequately if we see it as one of the lower steps in the hierarchy of rationales of justice. The concept of positivity must be derivable from the process of de-

cision. Positivisation of justice means that any content can attain legitimate juridical validity and this through the process of decision. Positive justice is legitimated through decision, constituting a reflexive process which takes a distance to socio-political affairs. The condition of positivisation is that the decisions are being made not only about activities, but reflexively about decisions. Obviously it is impossible to subsume all considerations of a particular juridical process under one, even if complex, decision. The decision process must be subdivided into various processes wherein one process may constitute the premises for other processes. This of course makes sense only when the burden of decision is also divided and not that all deliberations and decisions are repeated. For example, when a new law is decreed, it is unnecessary and indeed impossible to foresee and pre-establish all situations to which the new law would apply, nor must all the foreseen and pre-established alternatives be actualized. In brief, cooperative decision is advantageous and indeed necessary when such decision must be achieved in a highly complex environment and society.

The mastery of high internal complexity is a condition requiring the strengthening of the effectivity of social processes through positivisation: processes of the same kind must be applied on themselves. Such a system must have the possibility to define concepts (to use language to speak about words), to apply money (to exchange possibilities), to teach learning and teaching, to research about research and so forth. These reflexive processes, or as Luhmann calls them, "reflexive mechanisms" are an example of a much broader principle. It is a process of positivisation constituting the condition for the application of any process upon itself. Social orders, having positive justice must possess norms which can be addressed to an organization of decision-making which at the same time regulates the process of establishment and relinquishment of norms. These norms must be minimal conditions for the decision about a juridical question and whether such a question could be oriented toward a new norm in a society. Since norms cannot be based on some changeless principle, the existing or the newly instituted norms must be treated with consistency, i.e. applied with consistency to various situations even if such norms would be subsequently replaced by others.

According to Luhmann, a stabilizing influence is provided by political processes of a society. One of the conditions is that the political process in a

society cannot be seen as playing an auxiliary role (to economy, religion, education or family). The political processes must be institutionalized in such a way that they would be the processes of positivisation of the various social aspects and hence one of the main processes of reflexivity of the society as a whole. As already mentioned above, such a reflexive process must be divided among various functionaries. This is necessary not only because the labor is vast and complex, but because the process of positivisation and hence reflexivity can never be completely institutionalized. New situations, novel interrelationships of social processes appear requiring the application of the norms in ways previously not yet tested. This means that the institutionalized reflexivity is in principle inadequate for positivisation of social processes; political decisions must be made and various social spheres reflected upon and coordinated. Hence Luhmann claims that political process is one of the most fundamental processes in social life. While lending stability, it also constitutes deliberate order of transition from one set of norms and their applications to various circumstances to novel norms (or justice). Of course it follows from Luhmann's thesis that the political processes must be themselves positivised through an institution of reflexive mechanism, otherwise such processes could not be coordinated to their own directions, performances and to the other factors of social life.

Another factor of stabilization of positivised justice is found by Luhmann in the discrepancy between the complexity of the entire juridical structure and the capacity of individual processes of decision. In complex social orders, it is impossible to change everything with one decision. Even the establishment of new rules requires a time of maturation and of course such times of maturation constitute socialization of the novel aspects and their adaptation to the rest of the social processes and factors. Moreover, stabilization of the positivised justice also depends on subjects who cannot accept rapid changes and function normally. A rapid fluctuation of rules would be unbearable and the very process of reflexivity, required for positivisation of justice, would in this case become overburdened with a multiplication of political processes leading to chaotic if not anarchic decision process. For Luhmann, of course, the subjective factor does not imply that the stability is gained from some superior principle such as "human nature" or "natural law" based on such an assumed "human nature." Rather, the subject is one

of the factors of stabilization of positivised justice. Further processes of stabilization will be discussed after offering a brief sketch of positivisation of ideology and the process of reflexivity.

It is only too well known that ideology has been if not completely banned from the halls of social thought then at least regarded with suspicion and neglect. For Luhmann ideology has its function if understood within the process of positivisation. In fact, if properly understood, the function of ideology in society is as valuable as that of justice and its norms. While positivisation of justice is made possible by the reflexive process of regulation of norms, the function of ideology is related to the valuation of values. In most general sense it can be maintained, according to Luhmann, that any preference of one activity over another can be characterized as valuation. These valuations become ideologies when these preferential or selective functions are reflected upon and used to evaluate all other activities and hence values. Values thus are evaluated from a viewpoint of selection of activities and at the same time are seen as exchangeable with other values. As soon as the function of valuation becomes visible, it becomes a standard of "value evaluation." Thus absolute values in this process discredit themselves. It is no longer possible to evaluate values in terms of "highest" values, as such values will also have to be positivised through reflexivity as one set among other sets to be compared, selected, discarded or accepted. Valuations are variable and ideology is what enables the variation. At the same time, it is ideology that allows for a relative stability among values. To achieve this, ideology must respect two conditions: ideology, on the one hand, must introduce selected programs and thus accept corresponding sacrifices of other programs while steering such programs through various changes. In this respect, it has a pragmatic or instrumental function. On the other band, it must retain the consensus of those who must remain waiting with their specific values by guaranteeing that their opportunity is also in the making. Thus it has a symbolic function.

Ideologies must also contain other symbolic structures, enabling the reflexivity of valuation. Such reflexivity increases the manageability of the decision process with respect to valuation. Thus an ideology must create in its symbolism a space for the alterations of values as well as activities and indeed the latter in relation to the former and conversely. At the same time,

it must be in a position to master the dangers inherent in the complexity of a mutually variable relationship. In brief, an ideology must have symbols that are reflexively distanced from the values of an ideology in order to be able to correlate such values with activities and conversely. Such a symbolic structure cannot be evaluated within an ideology and it is guaranteed by a political party as a continuous institution of the interpretation of an ideology and its values. Wherever there are values, there are ideologies and wherever there are ideologies, there must be political parties.

A political party is the most convenient condition for the institutionalization of positivisation of ideology and its selected values. Of course, Luhmann sees a problem with this approach: it perverts at times the political process, specifically in a multi-party social system by exchanging the values of ends and means. In general view, political activity must attain specific ends where political power is granted to political figures in the form of competence for decision-making to attain the proposed aims. Yet in many cases the aim of political parties is perverted to the maintenance of power while the proposed programs, based on ideologies and their values, are evaluated with respect to their potential to maintain the political power of a given party. The programs become subordinate to the ends of power that should not be ends but means. This perversion makes all ideologies and hence all values dangerously variable and the valuation itself extremely reflexive where all values and valuations are instrumentalised.

According to Luhmann, such dangers can be neutralized by the following conditions. Specific norms, symbols and institutions must be distanced from political process, i.e. they must be politically neutralized. This can be done through a basic organization of state power, the decisive role of the judicial praxis and even the economic praxis. That such neutralization remains formal, i.e. does not hinder the change of values in politics, is an important condition for the retainment of reflexivity of values in ideologies. Another guarantee against total arbitrariness of the decision process consists of the mechanism of election. As political parties can never be certain of the ideological persuasion of their constituents, such parties must interpret their constituents in terms of the lowest common denominator, namely materialistically. Thus political materialism fulfills the role of a basic ideology and at the same time constitutes a hindrance to political arbitrariness.

Positivisation, at least the way it is understood by Luhmann, presents various difficulties. It is indeed a fact that there can be institutionalized processes of decision-making which have a distance to various social functions, such as justice and value. It is possible to judge justice and to evaluate values, and do so institutionally. The problem is that (i) the judgements and the evaluations are not performed by institutions (although institutions may provide a formal mechanism) but by persons appointed politically to manage such institutions, (ii) it is possible to judge the judicial norms through positivisation, but such judgements presuppose some standard in terms of which the norms can be evaluated. Firstly, Luhmann does not provide any criterion or means or even a description of such a standard. Secondly, the criterion or standard by which judicial norms could be evaluated cannot be one of the judicial norms, as in that case we would have a comparison of various norms but not a judgement about such norms. It means that such a criterion could not belong to the same domain of discourse that is being judged, specifically since Luhmann rejects any notion of "hierarchy of norms." However, in this case it is difficult to understand how Luhmann could maintain the thesis that positivisation consists of a process of distanciation made possible by reflexivity where a particular process is applied on itself. Obviously, here we would have two distinct processes, one of which is the process of justice with its norms and another is the judgmental process of the norms, using implicit criteria that do not belong to the realm of the judicial norms. This is a clear case of mixing two levels of discourse, or two levels of experience.

The same objection can be held with regard to Luhmann's treatment of positivisation of values through reflexive mechanisms. He himself has briefly noticed the problem while pointing out that an ideology, which deals with values, i.e. selects, accepts, rejects and postpones them, is not one of the values nor can it be reduced to a value. Its level of discourse, its implicit criteria seem to be different from values; yet Luhmann does not tell us what such an ideology is, an ideology which constitutes the reflexive mechanism enabling the positivisation of values constituting one of the most fundamental social processes, the political process. Here again Luhmann cannot maintain that positivisation is a distancing and an application of a particular process upon itself, viz., an application of value on value. Even ideology, at its most primitive level, is a process of justification of values, a process that includes

in its considerations such factors as economy, ethics, technology, political procedures and even evaluates the judicial processes. In brief, ideology is not a reflection of value upon value but a more encompassing domain wherein value plays one role among various other functions.

One of the most fundamental problems that Luhmann would have to resolve is that of the relationship between levels of judgements and valuations. In all positivisation, which assumes reflexivity, there are two levels of "discourse". One is the level, for example, of judicial norms and values, the other is the level constituting the process of reflection and hence distancing from such norms and values. The latter level, which permits positivisation, is never reducible to the prior and its mode of operation is completely different from the prior. Even in an institutionalized form, the decision process and what is being decided constitute two distinct realms operating with different criteria and range of implications. One and the same value or a judicial norm may mean one thing in one decision-making process and something else in another, depending on the criteria that such processes employ. Once again Luhmann seems to leave the decision process end its implicit criteria in the hands of political process. Such a thesis is exposed to extreme dangers of political arbitrariness and indeed to political totalitarianism. After all, political party members are the ones who ultimately make judgements about the judicial norms and ideological values and if no criteria are given in terms of which the political parties must decide about norms and values, the political parties may assume an absolute right to make all decisions. It is to be recalled that the Twentieth Century has and still is experiencing such politics.

Reflexivity

Reflection is defined by Luhmann as a process applied on itself or upon processes of the same kind. Such an application increases the function, efficiency, and management of such processes. Social processes, which become reflexive in this manner, are subtended by a selective process of informational management. This selective process is the reflexive dimension capable of managing a complexity of contents by reducing it to their proper spheres and by using mechanisms of simplification at increasing levels of abstraction. Thus, for example, the choice of commodities for the consumer is magnified through a monetary mechanism (the possibility to exchange possibilities).

The same thing can happen with power, when power is applied to power where the power of one or various processes is placed at the disposal of another process.

Luhmann sees in this process of reflexivity a basic advantage over other processes. Dealing with justice and value, he points out that any basis of justice in "natural law" would necessarily limit the number of possible judicial decisions. The extreme expansion of judicial areas during the Twentieth Century was accomplished only through positivisation and institutionalization of reflexive mechanisms enabling the subsumption under the judicial process even extremely fluctuating situations and behaviors. The significance of the reflexive processes and positivisation does not lie merely in its temporal aspect of transformation of old norms and values into new ones, but also in the fact that such processes allow the restructuration of the content of norms and values. The same is valid for values; the reflexivity multiplies value viewpoints that must be taken into account during the process of decision. This leads to an increment of satisfaction of values through the employment of other reflexive processes.

With the increased complexity of social factors, positivisation and its subtending process of reflexivity are unavoidable. It is, according to Luhmann, the only possible way in which complexity can be managed and also expanded. Hence, institutionalised reflexivity and positivisation offer greater opportunities for the establishment of greater number of norms and values. Of course, complexity should not be multiplied to such an extent that it would surpass the capacity to manage information. To guarantee that such an event is avoided, the process of information must become reflexive and hence positivised. That this reflexivity is already institutionalised is obvious from the fact of the objective studies of languages, information systems, communicative capacities and even pre-linguistic gestural behavior as informative.

As noted at the outset, Luhmann's thought is more concerned with the conditions for the possibility of ... than with facts or data. The question that emerges is the following: "what are the conditions for the possibility of the process of reflexivity and positivisation?" It must be pointed out that Luhmann has a strong aversion to metaphysics and is not willing to accept anything that suggests extra-temporality or eternity. Everything must be understood temporally, in a process and hence from a perspective of socio-his-

torical variations and even radical breaks. As will be seen subsequently, such a temporalisation of all social factors toward history introduces a concept of theory which is no longer merely explanatory but above all critical. In brief, the foundations of the critical theory will appear in the discussion of the conditions for the possibility of reflexivity and positivisation.

Any reflexivity presupposes as its condition the distinction between the real and the temporally possible or, as Luhmann terms it, the modalized. Thus a particular social history does not vary only in terms of the presently given and selected facts, but also in terms of constitutive conditions of selectivity based on possibilities that are temporal. The insight into the selectivity of facts in any social process is a key to the constitution of the relationship between social facts, their structures and the temporal horizons or possibilities. Thus the fundamental condition for possibility and for the selectivity of facts within a social process is temporality. This means that the condition for the possibility of a social system as a process is a modal generalization constituting the temporal horizons - in both temporal directions - of such a system.

The consequence of such a modalized conception is that all selectivity and all delimitation of facts is based on a system's structure conditioning in its turn the horizon of possibilities out of which events are selected. This selectivity is a process of reflexivity in that it allows a distanciation from the present and its evaluation in terms of the various possibilities of the future. As a condition for the possibility of reflexivity, the temporal horizon offers a distanciation from the immersion into facticities and opens various options in terms of which the present state of affairs could be evaluated. Yet it must be stressed that the options are not absolutely arbitrary. The social system itself may be used to reflect upon the horizon of possibilities and indicate the limitation of such a horizon: here emerge the socially possible and the socially impossible.

It could be maintained, according to Luhmann, that more complicated social systems require more extensive, abstract and more differentiated temporal horizons for reflexivity than the simpler systems. They reach a higher world-complexity, richer with options of norms and valuations, which in their stead constitute a basis for a more refined selectivity of living and acting. Such a reflexivity from a horizon enables the synchronization of inner-social histories of systems that are divergent (e.g. moral systems) with systems of

economic production, education and others. Yet it must be said that complexity is a multi-dimensional quality of a system: thus it is impossible to say without any further qualifications whether one system is more complex than the other. Hence a higher complexity of a system does not mean a higher complexity in temporal horizons - or in any relationship to the environment. More complex social systems do not necessarily have a more complex history, let alone in each respect a more complicated history. Researches concerning cognitive and volitional complexes of psychic systems have indicated that more complex (more abstractly structured) systems gain in capacity to have simpler or more complex environmental relationships. The structural abstractions open a set of complex and simple, differentiated and undifferentiated relationships to the surroundings and offer the possibility to specify the surroundings sectorially in terms of depth and differentiation and, if need be, to shift the specifications. Language here is misleading: more complex systems do not require higher complexity in everything.

At the outset, it must be obvious that it is too simplistic to assume a one dimensional, linear advancement of relationships between the complexity of social system and the temporal horizon. The growth of more complex social systems does not have a more complex history; rather on the basis of the complexity, they neutralize history, illuminate it by differentiated selectivity and in many cases, reject its lessons. When history becomes relevant in more complex societies, it becomes at the same time contingent, it becomes memory and forgetfulness, detailed interest and indifferent neglect of a conquered past; all of these coexisting possibilities is the situation that correlates to the complexity of the system.

In their common work, sociologists as well as historians do not ask what is time. Although this question may be asked with total directness, it cannot be answered with such directness. At the same time, the danger is great if one does not critically reflect on this question, leave it open and think in simplistic terms such as the metaphor of river or a clock or a calendar. Such notions of time are at best abstract, having no capacity to determine which of the temporal points are past and which are future. It is simply an indifferent quantity.

The temporal conditions for reflexivity are quite complex, although they can be managed by higher levels of reflexive inclusion. By this Luhmann means that modalized aspects can be again modalized under more

inclusive possibilities and wider horizons. One can discuss the possibilities of reality and reality of possibilities or even possibility of possibilities, necessities contingencies and so on. The complexity of the temporal condition of reflexivity can be characterised in the following way. There can be a present future that must be distinguished from the future present even if only on the grounds that the present future contains more possibilities than is possible for future presents to become reality. One must also distinguish between future presents, present presents and past presents, between the present of the past as history and the past present. If one begins with the two temporal horizons of the present, namely past and future which in each point can be seen as presents with their own pasts and futures with further possibilities of reiteration, then one begins to constitute the conditions for the possibility of all possible processes of reflexivity. This suggests that the indefinite modalizations of time horizons can be seen as temporal reflexivities in time. The immediate future can be reflected by a more remote future and both in turn by a still more remote and perhaps encompassing future yielding the structure for the reflexivity of possibilities in possibilities. This process is the condition for any distancing from the present facticities and environment. It allows the positivisation of the environment, be the environment "material," "ideological," "juridical" or even "ethical." The judgement of current events, environment, or facts is a judgement from a horizon of time and its possibilities requiring no hierarchical arrangement either of values or of norms. This free ranging reflection of time in time and possibilities in possibilities is the condition upon which all reflexive processes are based. For our purposes it is not necessary to deal with further complexities of Luhmann's theory of time reflexivity as a condition for social reflexivity which may be institutionalized to allow the complexity and management of an indefinite multiplicity of social events. Suffice it to say that such a reflexivity allows the possibility for decision-making without being one of the interest-laden social events, ideologies or juridical norms.

Our most limited discussion of the conditions of reflexivity has opened the possibility to consider further the shift of the concept of theory to a concept of critical theory. First of all, it must be noted that in the current European thought theory has no longer a privileged status to be an extra-social, extra-historical or extra-temporal process, surveying events indifferently from

a non-participating observer's stance. Theory too functions in society and history and in its stead changes the very "objects" of its explanation. Hence a critical theory must (i) show how its very explanations of events will influence such events, as such an explanation can be subsumed under reflexive process and its predictions either enhanced or thwarted; (ii) it must evaluate social events from a temporal horizon of possibilities showing what is possible and what is impossible within a given social system and its sub-systems. This means that a critical theory must correlate all factors and show how, in this correlation, some possibilities are realizable, others probable, and still others made impossible. For example, it must show how an economic capacity may be thwarted by a political incapacity, a moral stance or an economic misapplication; or how an economic capacity, yielding certain options, may become impossible due to a technological incapacity. At the same time, the critical theory must show the limits of the possibilities of a social system and delimit the changes that must be instituted within certain social sub-systems to surpass the limitations. Critical theory thus constitutes the most encompassing process of social reflexivity in historical and ultimately in the complexity of world time.

Conditions of Stabilisation

Relying upon Luhmann's own insights, we have mentioned above that his theory may lead to a process of arbitrariness due to the very fact of the complex reflexive requirements so that major and final decisions may fall into the hands of political parties and ultimately the members of such parties. Luhmann points out that the emergence of reflexive social mechanisms led to an increased achievement and progress in every social area, but at the same time opened a proportionate increase in risks. How can one have faith in justice if its norms are exposed to constant change and finally to decisions by political figures? One thing is certain for Luhmann: the reflexive mechanisms are unavoidable if the attained niveau of social complexity is to be maintained. Moreover, it is dubious whether the risks could be avoided by a retrogression to some prereflective conception of order, such as natural law or true values. The expectation that a measure of dynamism and motility, of change and time would reside in something changeless becomes a disfunctional ideology.

The question addressed to sociology is the following: what presuppositions and conditions must social systems or societies possess in order to institutionalise reflexive mechanisms? It is to be assumed that only social systems of high complexity of social processes can be transformed into reflexive mechanisms sufficiently trustworthy to orient other social processes. High complexity, in its own stead, allows functionally structural differentiations and such differentiations are conducive for reflexive decision-making processes. Thus complexity and the resultant differentiations of functions constitute a condition for the institutionalisation of reflexive mechanisms. Yet this is insufficient, as according to Luhmann the reflexive mechanisms must be employed for the orientation of the whole society and hence must be oriented by some political mechanism. Such mechanisms must of course be reflexive so that political decisions could be reflexively corrected or changed.

If a political system is to be established on the basis of complex decision processes, then it must establish social mechanisms for the nurture and testing of political talent, for the creation of consensus as well as the initiation, preparation and control of binding decisions. This introduces far-reaching restructuration in politics and considerable changes in bureaucracy dealing with juridical norms, governing processes and value adjustments. Political support cannot be guaranteed by traditional institutions, as it is related to an extremely differentiated process of decision-making. It must be constantly readjusted and this readjustment must be institutionalised only temporarily. At the same time, the state bureaucracy, all state agencies must be specialised for the implementation of diverse programs. These two functions, the political and the bureaucratic, leads to a strict distinction between politics and bureaucratic agencies. Such a separation must be strictly maintained in states with more than one political party. It separates not only roles but also purposes and behavioral expectations; at the same time, the criteria and rationality are distinct for each. Even states with a single political party no longer maintain a political hierarchy within state agencies but distinguish between party and state bureaucracy. Only in the developing nations such a distinction has not yet been fully developed. This at the same time means that the reflexive mechanisms, for example of justice and ideology, are also underdeveloped. Functional differentiations in a society raise the complexity of decision process and this in turn requires reflexive, political processes.

At the same time, such reflexive processes enable a stricter differentiation between various social segments, delimiting their autonomies and instituting their changes with respect to other social segments. In brief, the reflexive mechanisms strengthen the functional differentiations of both various social segments and of the political system itself. Such differentiations and delimitations of functions act as stabilizing force, as each segment assumes a relative autonomy and resists any arbitrary intrusions by political figures. At the same time, no political figure or even a group could manage the complexity of functions, strengthened through various institutionalised reflexive mechanisms. This, according to Luhmann, guarantees stability and prevents arbitrariness in political decisions.

Luhmann's theory comes closest to being adequate to the complexity of modern social life, yet using the very premises of critical theory it can be evaluated as to its shortcomings and problems. It may be correct to maintain that complexity and differentiation of functions through reflexive mechanisms is a guarantee of stability, but at the same time it may also be a guarantee of stifling bureaucratization of all social segments, an entrenchment of positions which would resist any change. In fact, instead of promoting change, it would tend to differentiate itself into more "refined" functions and hence use the reflexive mechanisms to expand itself and not to constitute a benefit for society. Moreover, the institutionalisation of reflexive mechanisms capable of differentiating the temporal horizons into an indefinite set of possibilities may lead to an investigation of empty sets and not of concrete problems. To correct such vaster effort, other reflexive mechanisms would have to be established to decide on the reflexive mechanisms that are not accomplishing anything. It is the same as having congressional committees to investigate a particular problem and its possible solutions and then to form another committee to see whether the other committees are solving the problem and then to hire a consulting firm to check whether the last committee is adequately equipped to pass judgements on the previous committee: a song without an end.

Luhmann fails to respect the tendency of institutionalised functions to maintain themselves and in fact to proliferate themselves indefinitely and hence instead of becoming aids in social process, they become burdens and hindrances. This is perhaps the weak link separating political and bureau-

cratic spheres. With political changes, some bureaucratic functions may become redundant; in order to maintain themselves, such functions (or the functionaries within them) might accept subservience to political whims and thus break down the strict distinction between the two spheres. Despite the dangers, Luhmann is one of the few scholars squarely confronting the socio-political complexity of our times. The problems inherent in his approach do not detract from his contributions.

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CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND MODALIZATION OF TIME

World-Time and Systemic History

For Luhmann, the naive relationship of man to his history can be interrupted in various ways by reflection. One possibility is to regard the past as one specific region of objectivity and to raise the question concerning the conditions of its knowledge. If in this perspective one wishes to scientize knowledge above recollection, one may interrogate the conditions under which such knowledge can be validated as scientific attaining at the same time an intersubjective validity for the results of historical research. If one takes this "epistemological" foundation for granted, then it is valid to maintain that past is something that has been and that furthermore the themes worthy of research can be selected from the plethora of objective pasts in terms of the interests of knowledge. It may be granted that an ideology could disrupt such interests of knowledge (always: interests of knowledge) without losing greater or lesser optimism that such disruption could be eradicated. Social history, as a scientific discipline, would then be concerned with the knowledge of past social structures and processes. For the evaluation of interrelationships and as an aid of selectivity, it could apply to currently recognized sociological theories that have proven themselves in research. In this sense, it is possible to employ theories concerning the interrelationships between social differentiations, autonomy of partial systems and symbolic generalizations.

The right and possibility of this procedure cannot be challenged. Yet it must be recognized that in this broad area problems are skirted that still fall within the competence of sociological theory. They are concerned with the social conditions of the constitution of time and history. The constitution of temporal modalities and the selection of what is relevant in them is not only a question of knowledge; rather they inhere in the object itself. This must be granted if one accepts that the object of sociological as well as socio-historical research consists of sensible and self-reflective human experience and

activity for which the possibility of reflexivity inheres in their own selectivity. The extent to which a sociological theory includes the problem of sense, temporality becomes a constitutive dimension of its object and can no longer be treated merely as a condition of knowledge of an object.

The historical research can possibly liberate itself from the "historical consciousness" and its investigated object, society, as well as from following the old and at all times simultaneously present omniscientia Dei. Be this as it may, the road is long and can only be entered after an analysis of the temporality of the object and the recognition of the manner and the object from which abstraction must eventually be initiated. In sociology it is a common-place that time consciousness varies with distinct social systems depending upon their social structure. The thesis is elaborated with a view to the tempo of temporal flow, time shortness and length of time horizons that are relevant for activity – specifically in view of economic or "civic" aspects of time. Yet all these are at best partial aspects of the general problem of time. Beyond this, the bourgeoisie society discusses since Hegel and in wake of Marx the historicity of the given contemporary social consciousness - states and their reflexive means, although in this case without clear distinction of epistemologically theoretical questions. Our further deliberations aim at the unification of these individual elements with the aid of more abstract, theoretically systemic questions. It ought to be shown that and how social systems constitute time, time horizons and specific explication of temporal relevancies. And to constitute should not mean "to produce" or to create ex nihilo but rather to render it sensible as a condition for the construction and reduction of complexity.

Corresponding to the theme of this volume of collections, we shall limit ourselves to the past horizons of time. The constitution of an open future would require, from the same theoretically systematic point of departure, additional considerations. It is possible to distinguish between experience and activity in a different manner than was previously the custom with the aid of a theoretically systemic point of departure. By experience we understand the consciousness process that is accessible to self-experience insofar as its selectivity is not related to the selecting system but to the environment. The relationship to selectivity (and thus the constitution of experience and activity) is only possible on the consciously maintained and stabilized difference

requiring simultaneous presence of (at least) two elements, for example of the possible and the real, the present and the non-present, of the known and the unknown, etc. We wish to characterize this simultaneity of two levels as modalization of the process of selectivity. This means that we maintain the presence of those two levels that lend to the selection process its character of selection.

On the basis of these brief considerations, we could characterize the contemporary experience of time pointing to nonactual temporal horizons, as the modalization of the contemporary experience. Expressions about the past are, for example, present expressions in the mode of past. In other words, one can modalize the present experience in such a way that its contents retain the general character of the past. Besides the temporal modalizations, there are various other forms of modalization, such as epistemological dealing with knowledge; knowledge of possible world, theories concerning the conditions for knowledge: idealism, materialism, empiricism, language games, social conditions, pragmatic needs; conditions, such as religious, ideological, moral ones that select certain aspects as knowledge while rejecting others. The classical discussion of modalities and modalizations was at first related to an ontologically interpreted logic, then to language and finally to the conditions of knowledge without attaining a complete, analytical separation and equilibrium of these distinct kinds of modalizations. Thus there is a lack of a sufficiently abstract and functionally capable concept, i.e., a concept that would permit us to grasp temporality as "a case of . . . ." In this regard the theoretically systemic deliberations could be of further assistance.

Talcott Parsons has accomplished the way for the first step. His famous systemic problem schema (adaptation, goal attainment, integration, latent pattern maintenance) presupposes two axes in its construction. One expresses the difference between a system and an environment, the other is the axis that is dichotomized into the distinction between the present and future fulfillment. This contains the recent and clearly formulated fundamental thesis that the differentiation between a system and environment produces temporality because it introduces a difference between theoretical time as a basis of sequence of events and the time of open possibilities as a horizon of selection of past and future. No longer can everything occur contemporaneously. The retension requires and has time. A critical effect of a part of the

systemic processes appears later and even then a sensible relationship to the environment must be found; otherwise, the difference between a system and environment dissolves again.

Luhmann can now make a connection with another step in thought. Systemically and theoretically, all modalizations can be conceived as generalizations of systemic structures. Generalization means that the structure is compatible with more than one environmental condition and respectively, systemic condition; a concept assumes a difference between a system and environment. In this sense, we can for example identify modally generalized possibilities either with the real as an otherwise possible or with the possible as either real or not real. Temporal modalizations are generalizations of another type. They are based on the maintenance of an identity of a world or a system through a succession of conditions.

All further considerations are constituted on the assumption that such accomplishments of generalization vary with the systemic structures themselves, i.e., they neither occur purely arbitrarily nor are they a mere "decoration" of an epistemic process, a kind of transcendental illusion. This supposition leads to a task of a more exact investigation of the interconnection between time horizons and the structures of social systems. As a point of departure, this requires two added premises; the concept of sense and once again the difference between system and environment.

The sensefulness of human experience and activity is constitutive for time and history insofar as they have the experienceable selectivity of all determinations. All that occurs sensibly, occurs in a horizon of other possibilities. This is the case even when other possibilities as possibilities are negated and the event is introduced as necessary; negations can (!) and this "can" is in its own right necessary - in turn be negated. Historical events are not relevant in their pure facticity and not in their factual, procedural interconnection but rather in their selectivity. World history makes sense as a self-selectivity of being and thus can be grasped theoretically as an evolution - in a society that enables and establishes not only political or theological but also scientific interests in history. Modern understanding of history includes a difference between facts as given at a particular present and what is possible. What counts as facts are selected on the basis of our knowledge or in terms of their significance for society. Yet facts will change on the basis of what is relevant

for the possibilities that comprise criteria of selection and definition of facts such changes in the status of what counts as a fact cannot be abolished because modern society constantly includes novel possibilities and interprets facts even around the globe in terms of some lacks of possibilities available to the west. Let us look at an example: it is almost unavoidable that we observe societies without politically organized possibility of a binding decision in juridical decisions from the viewpoint of the "absence" of such possibilities and analyze transitional situations as if both possibilities were "given" where the one and then generally the other became realized. Today one must disregard, negate the possible in order to reconstruct the horizons of experience and activity of the past social systems. This hardly controllable thought operation which is difficult to delimit conceptually and which is only attainable fictively presupposes science as the condition of its very possibility (and thus again the present). Thus under the title of reflexivity we are returning to the understanding of time.

This insight into the selectivity of historical facts offers us the key for the establishment of the relationship between social structures and time horizons. History emerges as a selection from horizons of possibilities while possibilities presuppose as the condition of the structures of systems. Once again it is clear that we must transport one of the concepts used in epistemological theory, viz. "condition of possibility" into a systemic theory. The insight gained in epistemology that possibilities are dependent on the conditions of possibility and distinguish themselves in accordance with what conditions of possibility are meant, allow themselves to be transferred to systems through the concept of modal generalization. Systemic structures must be assumed if the possible is to be distinguished from the impossible and they must be further presupposed if one wishes to differentiate various kinds of the possible such as the politically possible, the economically possible, the technically possible, etc. "Presupposing", "separating", "differentiating" are here meant as operations of daily life although also as processes of knowledge. Ultimately this means that not only in knowledge but also in all conscious operations, i.e., by inner reconstruction of selectivity, modal generalizations are possible in various directions and can be attained through differentiations.

The result for the theory of history is that all selectivity and hence all eventualities of facts are based on systemic structures that condition the ho-

rizon of possibilities from which, regardless by what processes, events are selected. In a system there are distinguishable projective possibilities in accordance with the degree and form of differentiations resulting in a differentiated selectivity of events in their past horizon. For example, the concept of nature of the classical Greece (and thus the beginning of the societas civilis of the Old European tradition) designates the limits of the possible with respect to the political-juridical sphere and thus the historical or positive selection of the law and determines the supersession of archaic family relations through the political constitution of society. By a similar conception, the Chinese legalists designate the contingency of the environmentally dependent satisfaction of needs to be overcome by a politically planned economic order; for Greeks, whose economy was outside the civil society, such thought was unrealizable. In the bourgeoisie society of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the limits of the economically disposable are finally designated. The distinctions are conditioned through the differentiations of the institutionalization of systemic differentiations and of the relative priority of economy and politics. In all cases they are applied to the reproduction of the given history of the social system. In archaic societies, with slight differentiations and hardly developed consciousness of possibility and selectivity there is a corresponding lack not only of a depth of history but also of a discriminating concept of nature.

If it is correct that the systemic history as a history of selectivity is constituted in dependence upon the structural conditions of possibility, then memory is a most preeminent process, namely not merely a grasp into stored and present signs of past facts but rather a reproduction of the selectivity of events. This presupposes not only the acquaintance with the history of facts but also with the memorableness of other, not actualized possibilities. The distinction between a system and environment and resultantly the differentiation between systemic and world history becomes more significant in a way to be discussed in detail. Reproduction of the selectivity of events places such high demands that one cannot start with the notion that they succeed with equal sense in all sense transformed psychic and social systems. A system reproduces in recollection its own history of selectivity, the history of selectivity of its experiential and active relationships to its own environment. Moreover, there is a reconstructed world history of unaccomplished

selectivity necessary to grasp its own adjoining selectivity. The differentiation between systemic history and world history need not become thematic for the system; at the same time it introduces conscious operations in that the functioning conditions of the possibility of the world and of the system differentiate themselves.

There is a difference between systemic history and world history. In systemic history, the experiences and expectations are limited and can be recognized when repeated. Therefore, in communication a social system and its history are accepted more readily as obvious with all rules and expectations than the system's pre-history or the history of the environment. One can deny before the judge that one has committed a murder; but it is much more difficult to deny in the same system that one has denied that one has committed a murder. In other words, among the participants in a social system the rule is valid that one assumes the identity of the commonly experienced systemic history, thus expecting the commonality of recollection. Systemic history thus serves as a natural (non-technical) guarantee for connected selectivity of further experiences and activities. In this function it can be replaced only through complicated, technical provisions (e.g., through jurisprudence). However, when and insofar as this assumption functions, history can serve as a systemic structure. Under more or less extensive conditions, certain freedoms or private reconstruction can be legitimated and made factually possible against world history, as they would not be harmful to the system.

A commonly experienced and recollected systemic history is an essential presupposition for mutual understanding that cannot be replaced by an objectively established world history. With diverging sharpness and depth of recollection experiences and premises of communication can no longer be mediated. Thus there appear barriers in understanding between generations and also in the cooperation of organizational committees with frequently changing participants who can only have an extremely short memory of the social system; thus the participants can only presuppose a commonly known world-history. In any case, the only consequences that can be drawn are from the established facts of the past but not from the selectivity of such common facts so that the past selectivities are not advanced but only repeated or abolished.

Luhmann's main thesis at this juncture can be formulated at the beginning as follows. It states that more complex social systems constitute more

distant, abstract and more differentiated time horizons than the simpler societies. They attain a higher, richer in possibilities world complexity enabling them to attain higher selectivity in experience and activity. In this manner, they can synchronize better inner-historical systemic histories most varied in kind incapable of contentual (for example, moral) integration; this is applicable also to systemic histories having a long and divergent duration or differing pace of their course.

The abstract thesis of a correlation between social complexity and world complexity will direct our further deliberations. Nevertheless, and this warning must at the same time be inserted, it is formulated too simplistically from systemic-theoretical grounds and thus cannot be maintained in this rough form. Prominent complications will have to be incorporated to the extent that social theory makes progress. Experiences from other areas of application of systemic theory, above all of organistic theory, the theory of psychic systems and organizational theory show that the concept of "systemic complexity" does not yet designate any empirically usable variable; the historian would experience the same if he were to attempt to confront the complexity of a given social system directly with historically transmitted time and historical systems. Two modifications are required above all else: First of all, complexity is not a simple, one-dimensional, measurable quality of a system but a multi-dimensional concept so that one cannot state in every case without further specifications whether one system is more complex than another; secondly, a more complex system does not imply, without qualifications, a more complex world in all of its laws and components, or in all relationships of the system to the environment. Thus, more complex societies do not necessarily have correspondingly more complex history, not to speak of a more complex history in every respect. Moreover, primarily researches concerning the cognitive and motivational complexity of psychic systems have shown that more complex (more abstractly structured) systems acquire the ability to have simple as well as complex relationships with the environment. Their environment does not become increasingly complex in every respect - this would demand too much even of the most complex systems - but rather the structural abstraction opens a co-existence of more complex and simpler, more differentiated and un-differentiated relationships to the environment, thus constituting the possibility to specify sectorially and if necessary to shift

the depth sharpness and differentiation of the environment. The linguistic formulation is misleading; complexity is not a characteristic of a system; more complex systems, simply because they are more complex, need not experience this as more complex.

Social Structure and Modalization of Time

Historical events are not pure facticities nor are they relevant as a connected process of facticities; they are relevant in their selectivity. World history has sense as a self-selection of being and must be grasped theoretically as explication and not as an explanation. Explication is what makes sense, what forms significative connections among selected environmental factors, and indeed, what comprises open possibilities as temporal. In one way of saying, for Luhmann the concept of sensible history is based on the difference between the real and the possible. The historical picture does not vary only in terms of the presently given and selected facts, but also in terms of constitutive conditions of selectivity, above all the ineradicability of possibilities of other possibilities given today. For example, it is almost unavoidable to judge societies that do not possess a politically organized possibility of a judicial process in terms of the lack of such possibility; while analyzing transitional periods, we do so under the aspect as if both possibilities were given, whereby the first one, then the other achieved realization. One must exclude what is possible today in order to reconstruct the experience and activity horizons of the past and a consequent reconstruction of the social systems; it requires fictive process which is difficult to constitute conceptually and precisely and whose operations are hardly controllable in that they constantly assume a condition called science. To proceed, we must return to the notion of the reflexivity of time understanding.

The insight into the selectivity of historical facts yields a key to the constitution of the relationship between social structures and temporal horizons. History arises as a selection of possibilities and their horizons, while the condition for possibilities assumes the possibility of building a system. Here it becomes obvious that we must introduce the epistemologically loaded term "condition of possibility" into systematic theorization. The epistemologically gained insight that possibilities depend on the conditions of possibilities, and differentiate themselves in terms of specific conditions, allows itself to be em-

ployed as a concept of modal generalization of a system. (Kant's discussion is a generalization of traditional questions of modality in the sense that it is insufficient to ask the question concerning possibility, but concerning the possibility of the possibility notion as such and hence the conditions of possibility; what are the conditions that permit critical operation with modalities). Systematic approach must be assumed in order to separate the possible from the impossible and it must be further assumed in order to differentiate among the various kinds of possibilities, such as politically possible, economically possible, technologically possible, etc. and differentiation between the possible and the impossible.

The consequence for a theory of history is that all selectivity and all occurrences of facts are based on a system structure conditioning the horizon of possibilities out of which events are selected. The selectivity of events depends on the degree of differentiation and the form of differentiation yielding various open possibilities concerning the past. For example, the Greek notion of nature delimits the possibilities of political and juridical actions and thereby the historical and positive selection of the laws which at the same time surpasses the archaic social relationships; in Chinese thought, the notion of nature implies contingency and environmental dependence for the satisfaction of one's needs which can be enhanced by socio-economic and political planning – for Greeks this is an impossible thought; their economic system was outside the limits of legal citizenship. The differentiations are based on the grounds of institutionalized systemic differentiations and the relative primacy of economy and politics; they are employed in all cases for the reproduction of the history of the social system. In archaic society, lacking differentiations constitute a lack of possibilities, there is also a lack of history and a lack of the notion of nature.

If it is the case that the system history, as a history of selectivity, is constituted in terms of the conditions of possibility, then memory is a pretentious process in that it cannot be an apprehension of given signs of the facts of the past, but a reproduction of the selectivity of events. (This demands that the concept of information and the concept of conscious functions must be related to the process of selection). This assumes not only an acquaintance with the history of facts but also the presence of non-actualized possibilities. This will make the differentiation between a system and an environment

and the difference between the history of a system and a world history more significant. Reproduction of selectivity of events presents great demands that we cannot simply proceed from the notion that the selectivity is successful in the transformed significance of psychic as well as social systems. A system reproduces a memory of its own history of selectivity, a history that selects its own world-relationships of experience and action. It also reconstructs a world history of non-accomplished selectivity. The difference between the history of a system and the world need not be thematized by the system.

Our thesis can be formulated quite simply; it says that more complicated social systems require more extensive, abstract and more differentiated temporal horizons than the simpler systems. They reach a higher world-complexity, richer with possibilities which in turn constitute a basis for a higher and more refined selectivity in living and acting. In this way, it is possible to synchronize the inner-social histories of systems and indeed histories of systems that are vastly different (e.g. moral systems) and were thought to be incapable of integration; also histories of systems that are old, that run their course fast or slow.

This abstract thesis of correlation between social complexity and world complexity will guide Luhmann's subsequent reflections. Yet two modifications are required. First, complexity is not a uni-dimensional quality of a system; it is multidimensional, so that without further specifications it is impossible to say whether history of a system, world history, must now be given more precise delimitations. By way of events and their selectivity, time constitution arises because selectivity is profiled against and in terms of a constant structure of possibilities which yields to the selectivity its "event characteristic"; it is oriented. Even physical systems constitute time insofar as they are distinct from the environment and can assume an independent stance from it. The possibility to assume more than one stance is based on an incomplete interdependence, i.e. not each change changes everything. The gaps in interdependence that are possible through system building are a condition for the differentiation between future and past. In a system of significations, the selectivity of meaningful events is experienced in a horizon of other possibilities which, insofar as they outlast the process of selectivity, become experienced as time horizon. Time consciousness is a necessary condition for selectivity in the relationship between system/environment,

constancy and change. This the most abstract notion of time leaves open the possibility for the most various consciousness of time in terms of various social structures. Greater precision is possible only when time is relativized historically in terms of various social systems and not in terms of one kind of temporal structure as a general premise.

Time horizon arises with the experience of selectivity and already in the experience of the closeness of one's own history of a system. Such a time horizon can be very closely associated with concrete events, their immediate conditions and consequences – almost become identical with events - whereby it is not required to differentiate between time and the events. This situation is found in the development of children and archaic social systems. It arises when social systems begin to experience the history of their system and their need to reproduce history is limited by their contemporary situation. Their time understanding remains dependent on the events of the history of the system. Without a more abstract notion of time, past and future are not sharply differentiated. On this basis, we find a widely accepted differentiation from a near and a distant past (also future), whereby distant times are not strictly times but dim zones that are relevant for beliefs and their prescripts. The basis for this is that in the immediate past and future, the individual intentions are quite divergent and are homogenized in a distant time-horizon. For these societies, there is no consistent universal history.

The first need for temporal dimensionality must be closely related to religious differentiations in myth and then in conceptual thinking. Primarily, when prominent social processes arise, be they ceremonial or political, and when they are no more experienced as a part of natural process of religious events, but are seen as tasks to be performed in terms of correct activity to guarantee the harmony of cosmic events, there arises a need for time as a specific dimension of experience and activity. Only then will the consciousness of failure arise and the social processes will become contingent and dependent on variable factors; only then there arises a need to grasp this contingency in terms of a double possibility of success and failure in terms of divine powers, ones own actions or the interference by strangers. A dimension is constituted that orders the events in terms of relative selectivity.

One of the most successful extensions of a history of a system to a world history, which clearly reflects the inner contingencies of the system, is the

Old Testament. The politically shifting history of Israel can be seen as an unfortunate and contingent history. However, under the monotheistic premise, it was not presented as a history of a particular people in their particular environment; hence the "outside-world" had to be interpreted as a work of the same god and related to the society as an evil visited by the god. Due to the supposed sins of the people, the simple dichotomy between the system and environment in the sense of the congruence of near/distant, accustomed/strange, good/evil was destroyed. The problem of contingency, in the form of system and environment, had to be expanded into the world-history and demanded the generalization of one's god to world ruler. The later prophecies found a final solution for this social problem in the notion of eschatology, whereby eschatos is no more a local notion but a world orientation.

The need for abstraction toward a relatively context-free time horizon is closely related to the increasing differentiation in the social system. In societies with increasing differentiations, which must surpass its systematic limits in communicative interaction, the memory of one's history of the system is inadequate. One requires abstractions as coordinating generalizations, which permit him, if not to integrate, then at least to relate the various histories of the systems. The comparison demands that one's own system assumes an abstract time with datable events. In other words, the increased functional differentiations in a system also increase the interdependence of the histories of systems, so that more abstract forms of mediation must be established. World time must become the coordinating generalization and generalized coordination as homogeneity, which means independence from specific movements and their speed, be it in one's own system or that of the strangers; reversibility, which means the possibility to calculate backwards in spite of the irreversibility of events; determinability by way of dating and causality; transitivity as a condition for comparison of different temporal periods.

The formulation of world-time, above all the notion of linear succession, corresponds to this need. Linear time is a very late product -- in fact a product of modern times. It makes possible a differentiation between future and past as either continuous or discontinuous heterogeneities. The relationship between past and future is contingent. A generalised time, which is posited as independent of any history of any system, is world-time and constitutes a dimension of a world-horizon. The synchronically measurable

world-time permits all actual and contemporary systems to run and constitute a condition for a world-wide communication. It also is a systematic time of world-society, i.e. an all-encompassing system of communication of human experiences and actions. The identity of world-time and a systematic time does not destroy the difference between a system and world. It is based on the thesis that a society is a system which reduces an indeterminable complexity and constitutes the world as a horizon of determinable possibilities.

In relationship to the social reflexivity, it can be asked whether there can be "meta perspectives" that would enable, through their institutionalization, a higher degree of individual subjectivity and many-sided expectations, without at the same time being hound to a concrete expectation of biographically describable subjects, i.e. without privileges. Some of the main symbols of the bourgeoisie system seem to point in that direction. The right to choose one's profession, religion, to express one's opinion, as a con possibility of subjective freedom, love as passion (and not as a religious duty), money, yet these are late winnings (these meta-factors are posited as equivalent for everyone even if in practice accessible in most unequal measure). One could raise the same question concerning time reflexivity; are there "meta perspectives" that differentiate the time horizons of various systems and correlatively fulfill the demands of consistency and changing growth of selectivities? One could guess that these must be future perspectives because future is the time-horizon with the highest complexity which must be worked out in a theory of planning.

The question we now must raise is: How are social structure's need for history and temporal horizons related? How does the need for time and history arise out of the increasing selectivity in the system/environment relationship, i.e. how do social systems choose their notions of time and history in order to develop their possibilities of selectivity and at the same time their limitations? This we can best show in terms of examples.

1. Early archaic societies have a short time-horizon of a simple system of interactions. They live in present orientation which is not in opposition to past and future, but carried by a concrete, contemporaneous net of lateral social relationships. An interest in history, which was not lived through by the individual, arises through the differentiation of political roles in connection with their radius of legitimation. The history of a system becomes a genealogy

in late archaic times and finally it becomes a history of deeds of the ruling house or politically conceived history of the clan. It takes on moral implications, teaches the ways and un-ways of action and prescribes the required memory of the clan. Time consciousness expands. The archaic differentiation between mythical and genealogical time is unified in terms of construction of history with predominant religious coloring, the continuity of which includes the present. From such a history one draws moral, practical and even rational directives. The differentiation between the political, religious and economic roles is slight and the religious-moral thought plays a role of integration which covers up the political motives. Here there is an extension of the present time horizon and hence of the possibilities of ethical and political achievements that in their turn presuppose a further expansion of the time-horizon. In juridical area, we get guilt and forgiveness in the sense of temporally limited events, such as atonement; promissory oaths and general consensus which demands a temporal horizon without the presently given factual basis.

2. Scarcity makes history insofar as it sees possibilities as interdependent and selectivity as contingent, i.e. as success at the price of … But scarcity is not the same for all societies. It can be generalized as a form of contingency that is made independent of gains, needs or given quantity of commodities by the employment of quantity called money. Here we get factors that neutralize history. The process of gains and production can be relegated to the past and released from the present and relevant history if they have no significance for the present operations; these factors, in short, do not count in principle of constant quantity of production. In this sense, the bourgeois society does not require history for its operations. History can be eliminated in terms of contracts, money and property. It can reach a state that was impossible on the basis of politically conceived history - historiless concept of potentialities (almost Aristotelian), and yet this, due to scarcity, makes history.

3. Science is becoming a very important aspect in the total system of social life whereby the history of science depends very much on the selection of open possibilities which in their turn are dependent on the projects by the given needs of society - praxis and technology are priority rules. The history of science is understood to be a history of problems and their solutions; hence the difference between the horizon of possibilities and the constituted realities is the difference between problems solved and problems requiring solution

(with the assumption that there are more solutions than one). This assumes that independently of any specific solution of a problem, it can be pointed to where the conditions of solvability lie: concepts of potentiality, disposition, truth-value as a possibility of a proposition to be true or false, verification, falsification, quantification, etc., although not totally clarified, are nevertheless assumed. These notions constitute the horizon of possibilities in terms of which science makes history. The history of the scientific problemata indicates the contingency of scientific process and diminishes dogmatism.

4. The history of love is usually overlooked in favor of more serious endeavors. Not the private affairs, but the historical need for love. Romantic, passionate, detached, etc., love prescribes the cultural norms of behavior and at the same time institutes instabilities. Instability, chanciness, suffering, unconditionalness, and hence incertitude are presuppositions of a wide horizon of possibilities to legitimate the modalities of partner-selection, education, family organization, etc. This means that love is not a specification of rights and duties, that sexuality is not a quantity of mutual performance, but all constitute an indeterminate horizon of possibilities that are mixed with historically sanctioned strategies and reduced to a system of expectations. If you marry, you are respectable and pay less taxes, etc. These strategies are related to the production and continuation of the historical system.

The varied and brief descriptions were employed to indicate that the spaces of selectivity of a history of a system vary with the generation of possibilities and the selectivity interests of a system. But why history, when our society claims to have opened a horizon of possibilities that seem to be endless? Is it the case that we have reached a context-free situation that has made us free from all that has been done? In order to deal with these questions, we must assume a systematic structure. We are not asking concerning the natural principle of release from the memory of the past but assume a social system that inhibits this "natural process" by presenting the history of the system as a context of possibilities which yields meaning to individual experiences and actions. For example, in an over-documented society, there are institutions that allow a relatively free context of selectivities that disregard history. One uses history not as an immediate process of comprehension and meaning, which is the case in simple systems, but rather distances oneself from it through the construction and reduction of historical complexities.

This can be made manifest in terms of expressions that would point to subjects and temporal situations and their comprehensibility would depend on an interaction in an immediate situation. Expressions such as "I", "you", "today", "yesterday", "while longer", etc. are replaced by context-free system of symbols that perform the complex selectivity to correspond to the most complex social system. It sees the past as completed, closed and not given immediately in terms of living with one's predecessors and their ways.

The neutralization, discrediting and objectifying of history through technology can be seen in terms of a few examples. Let us take organizational structures built in terms of identification of positions. Positions are abstract points of identification of roles in terms of which persons, tasks and organizational manipulations could be altered. The identification as a position allows arbitrary breaks in the continuity of technical functions, whereby persons, tasks and organizational functions can be easily exchanged. The limit of meaningful exchange of, for example, a person, does not reside in the predecessor which would be inclusive of a past time dimension, but in the requisite functional capacity in terms of the factual requirements of the system and its determined positions. An observation oriented toward the historical past is not adequate; it is a temporal horizon that always implies the other, the future. No historical investigation can leave the future out of consideration. The inadequacy of the notion of history as past has been explicated in the section of time reflex.

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CHAPTER V

MEANING AND ACTION IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING: AN INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

Building a review of the traditions that led to the cultural perspective and treating organizations as framework, this article uses Luhmann's neofunctional model as the conceptual device to illuminate cultural theory. Organizational cultures are seen as systems of signification and as communication media by which the premises of action are developed, maintained, and transmitted.

Employing the concept of culture in the study of organizations raises a number of important questions. For instance, in what ways do organizations resemble cultural systems communication meaning across time? Is there a unit of analysis in the organizational setting that corresponds, even if only roughly, to the usages of culture by social and symbolic anthropology? How do the cultural texts, reputed to underpin organization discourse, get created? Are research practices constructed around the concept of organizational culture necessarily forced to take either underlying communication processes? Can interpretive methods focused upon the cultural aspect of organizational life be employed to examine the practical factors with which organizational members must continually cope?

Organizational culture has provided an opportunity for advocates of interpretive approaches to gain a foothold in the organizational arena. Theory development with respect to the concept of organization culture is certainly a desideratum. In too many cases, however, interpretive methodologies appear more intent upon exorcising the ghosts of positivism and functionalism than upon articulating principal methodologically and theoretically accountable tools of their own. Therefore, even while accepting the legitimacy of the "cultural perspective", it is also acknowledged that adequate theoretical explication of this perspective remains unavailable. Given its underdevelopment as a theoretical framework, reasoned assessment of the research outcomes emanating from the cultural perspective must await clarification of some of the core concepts attached to this perspective.

For present purposes, the explanations offered here presume the three following points. First, we distinguish between the socio-psychosocial perspective and the communication perspective to delineate a "cultural" domain within organization theory and research. Where this differentiation of fundamental viewpoints is wither absent entirely of incompletely worked through, "organization cultural" will yield products like atheoretical ethnographies, reformulations of traditional "climate" variables, and storytelling. Second, we believe that organizations are by nature practical domains or "action frameworks." Consequently, the cultures of organization are first of all functional configurations and performances, and only secondarily theoretical or even mythopoetic phenomena. Third, organizational culture serves the maintenance and development of organizations by providing important ordering mechanism that further the organization's domination in complex information environments.

The point of view elaborated in this chapter draws liberally upon contemporary European phenomenology with the Husserlian tradition. It employs especially Niklas Luhmann's neofunctional system's model, which contains a particularly elegant extension of phenomenological principles in application to the analysis of social action systems. The chapter highlights generalized communication processes at work in organizational life that furnish the raw material molded by particular organization in creating their particular cultural forms. Because this cultural process is a communication process before it is a socio-psychological process, the discussion begins by distinguishing between questions more appropriate to social psychology than to communication, and by briefly characterizing organizational research traditions in the light of this distinction. Next, the discussion offers a specific interpretation of the "cultural perspective" that treats it as a functional construct bound by the practical requirements of achieving tasks, producing products, and effecting organization aims in its environment. Finally, the chapter surveys some particular ways that cultural meanings "work."

The Problematic of Organizational Communication

For conceptual as well as practical reasons, the field of human communication needs to develop a more clearly communication-based perspective of formal organization behavior. To this end, it is necessary to begin by dis-

tinguishing such a perspective from a standpoint of organizational research based upon social psychology. Organizational communication research has looked at issues related to, but apart from, that of communication among individual members of organizations, and sought to measure that interaction through employee self-reports and an assortment of observational protocols, or in terms of productivity and efficiency. Only rarely has the literature suggested that organizational communication might involve a level of communication that differs significantly from interpersonal or group interaction. The absence of a clear distinction between social and psychological and communication perspectives has resulted in this heavy dependence upon interpersonal and small group designs by communication research and theory treating organizations and organizational behavior.

For a social psychological researcher, the primary object of analysis consists of intra-individual psychological processes; these processes are by definition hidden to the researcher. Consequently, the social psychological researcher turns to communication behaviors and employs them as *indicators* for the purpose of accessing psychological events. However, regardless of how much effort is devoted to interpreting communication behaviors, it is ultimately the underlying psychological processes that the social psychologist is interested in. Psychological observations and theories about them establish the baseline for any explanation about actual behaviors and fix the guidelines for any possible interventions. In other words, from the standpoint of social psychology, communication behaviors and events are *secondary* operationally and *derivative* causally. Human psychological behavior forms the major object of concern for social psychological investigation.

Even among current writers and organizational researchers, there is a persistent and sometimes overwhelming tendency to fall back upon speculation and description of these inner and hidden psychological properties and occurrences when examining communication in the organization. Often, where these are not descriptions of communication traits or context stimuli, the resulting analyses are remarkably similar to literary analysis. For present purposes, it is important to acknowledge that although the socio-psychological aspects of human communication are fascinating and undeniably contribute to *our* self-understanding as communicators, such accounts of communication behavior do not augment our knowledge about how mean-

ing is shared and structured among individuals; instead they describe how individuals *experience* the transference of that meaning. Little or nothing is disclosed about the transference process itself or about its social construction. Examination of the communication process needs to emphasize the extra-psychological, the extra-individual aspects of meaning transmission. An emphasis upon process characteristics views communication behaviors and events as operationally primary and causally effective. In other words, communication processes take precedence over individuals, whether singly, in dyads, or in groups.

In the first chapter of *Organizations and Communication: An Interpretive Approach,* Karl Weick (1979) assumes the considerable task of presenting possibilities for the development of a new research agenda for researchers examining organizational phenomena. He begins by reminding the readers about Berstein's description of the field of organizational communication as "a discipline in search of a domain" (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983 p. 2). For any communication researcher seeing to address some aspect of organizational research, this reminder is still the place to be (Etzioni, 1971; Goodall, 1984; Perrow, 1979; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Warren, 19984).

What is the province of organizational communication? It is the question that arises from the lines of research reports, journal articles, and conference papers, amidst which once quickly becomes lost in a sea of variables, of aspects of behavior frequently encountered in the organizational setting. Such studies offer examinations of cohesiveness, conflict, competition, task orientation, leadership emergence, fantasy themes, and the relationship between groups within the larger organizational structure. These all represent applications and elaborations of socio-psychological models.

The examination of group behavior focuses inevitably upon the behavior of the individuals composing that group, more specifically upon how individual behaviors are affected by group dynamics. It presupposes a circular model, the outgrowth and extension of the interpersonal model, that is, of the dyad. To the degree that that model is based upon a mechanistic model, including feedback loops, channel noise, and an (assumed) separation between the message and the medium/channel, it thereby focuses the research questions upon isolated communicators in highly contextualized circumstances. The communication variables in this setting are characteristics of

idiosyncratic communication performances. In short, the focus is upon the trees and not the forest.

From the positivistic tradition, in an attempt to import and impart scientific objectivity and rigor in the examination of human social phenomena, quantitative methods and assumptions were applied to studies of individuals, groups, and organizations/institutions. One immediately thinks of the famous Hawthorne studies, which ironically produced the conclusions – the "Hawthorne Effect" – demonstrating that effects are not so simply anticipated when the research object is human behavior (in that case, productivity). Structural and mathematical models continue in the literature surrounding research about organizations, and often form an important part of the curriculum of MBA programs.

An interest in structure as the defining characteristic of organizations has yielded an emphasis upon hierarchy, authority, power, and control, with the complementary view of employees as unmotivated, uncommitted, untrustworthy, and unreliable. Organizational goals have been seen as dictates handed down from above via commands; thus goals are achieved through punishment and reward. It is characteristic of this research that all organizations are looked upon as essentially alike along all important dimensions (i.e., no differentiation is made as to product or to goals) and as essentially self-contained.

The human relations school of thought developed as if in reaction to this report, exercising worker attitudes, self-actualization, loyalty, and an assortment of collateral structures like purchase fishing and decision-making practices. The focus of attention was on leadership, communication, purchased patient, and conflict. Individual self-expression and self-actualization and, in turn, group interaction (often in terms of leadership from versions) became the central concerns. It was assumed that occurs organizations are composed of individuals, understanding individuals and individuals as members of small groups will inform us about organizational behavior, and provide the basis for useful explanatory models.

Despite the differences among these viewpoints, they all nonetheless share the assumption that individuals and collections of individuals constitute the ultimate building blocks of complex organizations. However, as Charles Perrow (1979) notes in his critical essay *Complex Organizations*:

"One cannot explain organizations by explaining the attitudes and behaviors of individuals or even small groups within them. We learn a great deal about psychology and social psychology but little about organizations per se in this fashion" (p. 149). Taking Perrow's admonition to heart, this discussion relinquishes "individuals" as the basic unit of analysis for the study of organizations, and consequently takes issue with the use of "interaction between individuals" as a basis for analysis of organizational *communication*. The complexities of organizing imply a form of communication much more efficient and compressed than can be understood by employing models ultimately derived from face-to-face interaction.

The work of March and Simon (1958) seems at least to be hinting at a domain beyond the social psychological approaches when they observe, for example, that instead of the organization controlling the decision-making process, it controls the *premises* of decision-making. March and Simon distinguish the *premises* of decision-making from an individual's decision-making capacity/ability. In this way, such premises can be said to supersede individuals in given positions by establishing specific role expectations, irrespective of the individuals involved.

Extending the ideas of March and Simon, Perrow (1979, pp. 146-153) directs are attention to the notion of control within the organization. Perrow dismisses the command model and its rules-based extensions as both too simplistic as well as unreflective of accounts of actual organizational life. Carol points out that perhaps as little as 20% of all activity in an organization can be accounted for by such obtrusive control means. He continues by applauding the insights offered by March and Simon with respect to their description of unobtrusive control mechanisms. The slate are mechanisms are to be distinguished from the more common control mechanisms to the plea employed by social scientists to explain daily organizational life: mechanisms like training, socialization, standards, and peer pressure. Instead, March and Simon suggest that there is a more subtle means of critical defective by decisional premises through such forms as the standardization of raw materials, the development of an organizational vocabulary, and the absorption of environmental uncertainty. It is not that socialization and professional training are examples of these premises, it is rather that these premises *ground* and *predetermine* the character of socialization and professional training. In dis-

cussing this aspect of March and Simon's work, Perrow alludes to an entire level of organizational analysis as yet incompletely examined by researchers and scholars in the field of communication.

There is significant dissatisfaction with the current state of organizational research among some theoreticians, which has been reflected directly and indirectly in the work of Karl Weick (1979). Weick takes explicit note as will of the common managerial complaint about the inapplicability of research results and conclusions to actual organizational settings dreaded the organizational research is out of touch with important parameters determining organizational reality. Like March and Simon, Weick attempts to change current in longstanding views of organizations by applying new metaphors and by suggesting radical views of organizing as human behavior. He questions the applicability of the rational model to human individual or collective behavior. Weick also challenges traditional views about the relationship between goals or plans and action. Both rationalization and explanation, according to Weick, are accomplished after the fact of any action. Nevertheless, orders of discourse are built into these rationalizations that convincingly reflect pre-established organizational aims. In other words, first we act; second, we construct an explanation; and third, we ignore or forget that the action preceded the explanation. The mesh between the action and the supervening rationalization is achieved at the organizational level, as distinguished from the inter-individual level, in such a way that rationalization functions as a simple extension of the action already undertaken.

Drawing upon March and Simon, we can suggest that this is possible, as well as not counterproductive for the organization by virtue of the shared base of premises that unobtrusively, yet efficiently and consistently, guide action selection. If this is assumed to be true, then at least two questions are raised for the organizational researcher. How are the premises created? How do these premises come to be shared? For present purposes, a third question is also relevant: Is this directly related to Communication in organizations?

This chapter argues that such premises are to be found in a symbolically generalized form; that is, they are embedded in *communication codes*, which operate at the level of organizational functioning (Luhmann, 1979, 1982). As such, the analysis of these codes and of their operation offers appropriate objects for researchers interested in communication in organizations.

Recently the topic of communication in organizations has begun to be addressed from a cultural perspective. Responding to a sense of frustration on the part of the organizations themselves and perceiving stagnation of research propositions, a growing number of researchers have called attention to the metaphor of "culture" as a tool for understanding certain factors of organizations (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). Utilizing interpretive methods, this effort to apply the metaphor of culture to organizations by and large suggests an attempt to encompass theoretically some evident complexities that are as yet unaccounted for by organizational communications research. These analyses, however, remain for the most part at the level of interpersonal or group interaction; they provide richer descriptive detail, but they do not furnish equivalently robust theory.

Organizational culture in many respects represents a reformulation of variables previously approved under the heading of the political climate" by traditional organizational literature, for organizational culture has achieved a growing prominence in the literature and vocabulary of communication partly in response to several very popular and successful books addressing the issue of success and failure among corporations in America. Perhaps the most well-known of these volumes is Peters and Waterman (1982), *In Search of Excellence*, which presents eight governing principles for corporate success (see also Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Each of these principles is related to four and bodies some aspect of organizational culture; that is, the principles identify in described on real, live rules of daily activity characterizing "successful" corporations (as defined by the authors). But, in fact, the book's net effect amounts to anecdotal description of the paradoxes resident in organizations. Although enjoyable, the book's practical implications are unclear, and its heuristic value not established. Nonetheless, but pointing to these resident paradoxes, the book holds the crew for scholars concerned with a defined communication process operating at the level of your organization; when the effective use of these paradoxes in creating successful organizations points to an ambiguity that can be resolved only at some other level of communication analysis.

At the organizational level, communicating a selected, preferred meaning involves a task of managing such tremendous contingencies that even the language is overburdened. Yet this task is essential to the process of routiniz-

ing face-to-face interaction, making possible the stabilization and development of organizations. Communication within an organization must occur *not only* at the interpersonal level.

Perhaps, as some have suggested, communication of this sort in organizations occurs at the level of culture. While this is an intriguing proposition, actual applications of the cultural metaphor to organizations by communications researchers have often neglected the very object of their research interest—namely, communication. In these cases, communication comes to mean only the collection of activities (labeled as rites and ceremonies) that the researcher identified as symbolic in nature. Left at this level, it is easy to understand the conclusion posited by some of this research: organizations can be comprehended only individually. While such account may inform us about our own culture or subcultures thereof, they do little to further our understanding of the processes taking place in organizations, which make the generation and continuity of cultural forms either necessary or possible.

Niklas Luhmann (1970, 1975, 1979, 1982) provides one possible answer to what that underlying process is and how it operates. For Luhmann, it is communication of a particular sort that makes possible all forms of social complexity. He postulates communication media codes, which are specialized, symbolically generalized codes that reduce complexity by simultaneously transmitting both a selected alternative from among multiple action possibilities and the motivation for the acceptance of that selection. Luhmann suggest, then, that communication lays at the heart of the possibility of all social complexity, including organizations.

The Concept of Culture and Organizational Processes

The first task faced by the researcher who wishes to employ a cultural standpoint for the analysis of formal organizations involves deciding upon a unit of analysis for the organizational setting that corresponds, at least roughly, to an already established concept of culture. Of course, it is unlikely that "organizational culture" correlates to anything more real, though probably no less so, than does any other research dimension upon organizational life. Nonetheless, metaphors like text, fabric, system and the like ought not yield unneeded by hypostatizations that tempt the analyst to attribute efficient causality to them. The organizational interpretive matrix comprising

such elements as symbols, legends, customs, rites of passage, and so forth, does not imply the existence within any given organization or organizational subunit or a cultural unit of analysis. In the realistic sense of a fixed, deterministic constellation, there is no set of inherited practices and attitudes that "defines those" who "belong to it" by constitution a "mighty system of circular causality" (Bidney, 1954). In other words, the empirically disclosed redundancy of perceptual patterns (mind-sets) and symbol-laden practices (customer) can mislead the researcher into supposing the existence of a self-contained communication circuitry that artificially generates social cohesion by regulating and, to some important degree regimenting the behaviors and beliefs of organizational actors.

Keeping these caveats in mind, organization culture can be defined as follows: *Organization culture consists primarily of open-ended context framed by significant symbols and modes of legitimated social action that enables selective responses to changes in the communication environment.*

This definition of organizational culture does not presuppose a particular a priori distinction between intraorganizational and extraorganizational communication relationships or one between formal and informal interpersonal relationships within organizations. Such distinctions are instead regarded as changeable empirical delimitations forming important components of the frameworks that are constructed differently from organization to organization and from environment to environment.

The principle conceptual and research orientation as suggested by this definition of organizational culture can be summarized as follows:

(1) Attention must be paid to the rich diversity among organizations instead of swallowing them up as a whole into an image of formal organization that deprives actual organizations of their intrinsic content. From cultural perspective, which is interesting is not so much a structural or composition form of organization as the largely ad hoc generation of meaning-of works that binds each of them idiosyncratically. Conversely, what is held in common by different organizations are communication process characteristics that furnish the mechanisms for the stabilization of viable core cultural forms.

(2) Bureaucratization should be regarded as a set of *social* relationships composed of meaningful behaviors and not only as the formaliza-

tion of an isolated communication system. This requires a historical and structurational perspective upon organizational bureaucratization that treats it as a purposive of human enterprise. This perspective views organizational goals/ends as internal parameters within the interpretive context delineated by the organization and suggests the variability and indetermination of environmental ends by defining them as historically situated dependent variables construed by the interpretive process.

(3) The relational communication functions performed by an organization with respect to external (so-called peripheral) social forms as well as with respect to the various intraorganizational subgroupings (subsystems) indicates the importance of the services performed by both symbolic differentiation and of the legitimation of interest for the comprehension of organizational behavior from any particular vantage point, either inside or outside the organization. Stated in simpler terminology, organizational cultures are not seamless fabrics; any standpoint upon them or within them is inherently local and partial.

(4) Given the symbolic and functional character of organizational sociology, no reliable prediction of the organization's future can be filtered based solely upon knowledge about the organization's historical conditions, which are extensions of established communication structures and events. The temporal structure of organizational culture is not linear, instead it is spiral-like. The viability and effectiveness of the particular interpretive context endures only by virtue of its continuous reinterpretation and use by the organizational actors. Organizational tradition guides without governing, otherwise the least circumstantial novelty in the communication environment could in principle render the tradition ineffectual, and so vulnerable to irrelevance.

Effective employment of the concept of culture in the setting of organizations requires that one pays attention to the communicative interlocking of sense in situation and the manner that stresses cultural process as well as cultural products, and accordingly looks upon organizational culture as a field encompassing complex variations within present communication events, and not simply as an amalgam of routine traditions made up of typi-

fied communication outcomes. To this end, we propose that organizations be viewed as action systems integrators through the symbolic of reproduction of generalized communication media. In so doing, the focus is a palm function, communication, and relationship, rather than the fine structure, the position, or person.

A cultural scheme provides the setting for self, other, and world interpretation and coordination incorporated into an elaborate system of practices and codes. Inborn predisposition and social invention, purposive ideality and mindless reality, the natural and the fabricated—each of these facets of the human landscape are linked, arrayed, selected, and integrated by a "third common term," by meaning.

Cultures can be viewed as space/time sense-making systems. Regarded in this manner, a culture consists principally of a system of codes interlocked in a semiotic ecology of interdependent communication structures and processes. When they are looked upon as simple classes of objects, human beings, natural phenomena, and technological implements coexist by fact of mere juxtaposition in space and time. But when they are regarded as elements articulated within elaborate communication systems, they take on in the form of lived patterns of meaning, of distinctively cultural unities.

Signification systems express complicated combinations of sense and nonsense discriminations, of "what counts" selections, with respect to an information environment. These signification systems have gradually been fashioned over time into taken-for-granted (often seemingly autonomic) conventional grammars of contingently searchable lived meanings. As a consequence, the "what" and "how" something is or becomes meaningful within a cultural setting depends largely upon a temporally evolved semiotic ecosystem, whose many dimensions and points of intersection include unexplored vectors of meaning orientation upon cultural self-selection.

The complicated interdependence of the many apparently distinct elements framed by the communication structures describing the semiotic ecosystem has regularly been confirmed by the complex impacts exercised by sudden internal disruptions of exogenous influences. The seemingly adventitious collateral impacts brought upon by some alteration in the cultural milieu can generate entire series of unanticipated interactions and problems. The introduction of literacy or of iron weapons are well-known examples

from cultural anthropology. But more to the point, much the same can be said about the advent of state capitalism at the beginning of the last century or, more recently, the introduction of the new technologies into the workplace or manufacturing facility, and the importing of Japanese management techniques by American firms. Novelties like these can tremendously strain the local social capacity for ordering meanings and managing decision practices – hence, discussions about the trade-offs between adaptation versus evolutionary (change) potential.

A cultural world is never given as a totality that can become in principle as "object" of experience or investigation; but it always contains a "more" that is enacted long before it can be represented by thought. It is precisely the apparently inexhaustible human capacity to create, modify, and transform meaning relationships that underlies the complex differential sign-system articulations of their information environments and that consequently makes possible distinct cultural systems. This marvelous experiential plasticity permits the human organism to adapt situationally without thereby becoming "adapted." Cultural "continuity" is constructed upon this basic, experientially rooted sign-system flexibility. By their very nature, cultural configurations describe open-ended context for structure variations and innovation.

The integration or, perhaps better, the cross-fertilization of concepts of communication and concepts of culture by way of these semiotic metaphors centers upon the topics of the generation, reproduction and transformation of bounded domains of signification complexes (actually, "intersignifications"). While keeping in mind that cultures are not languages, and that linguistic analogies can lead to serious misunderstandings, still a comparison of language and culture is useful to this point. Cultures, like languages, display the capacity for complex intercombinations that construe—that is to say, retain, select and invent—relationships between individuals, between human and natural domains and between individuals and them-selves. They integrate complex idiolects of human experience including, to use traditional faculty psychology, cognitive, emotive, and conative features. In saying this much, however, we are already speaking from the semiological, rather than the linguistic level. At the linguistic level, strictly speaking we encounter complicated signaling systems composed of units, combination rules and applications; it is at the semiological level that signaling systems, and language

is only one such system, serve as vehicles of signification (Lyons, 1979). In other words, using Pierce, there is no sign without signification and interpretation; signs in the semiotic sense occur only as part of the intersection of exchange interpretation, and effect (Bailey, Steiner, & Matejka, 1980).

Thus at the level of semiotic ecosystem there exists no such thing as a simple" culture. The forces, tensions, and competitions between avenues for meaning become concretely experienced by individual human subjects in terms of sense-making discriminations available with the cultural milieu. It is, finally, the essential contingency of the cultural communication system's reactiveness to its envenoming that establishes selective orientations, vectors of signification, guiding the culture's flexible management of novel physical, social, political, creedal, and technological factors. Cultures change only in becoming changed; human beings are simultaneously the creatures and the creators of cultures.

Some attempts to apply the cultural perspective in the organizational setting have not successfully avoided the natural tendency to reify their unit of analysis. For example, it might be heuristically beneficial to treat organizations as if they were texts that require patient and skillful interrogation on the part of the analyst in order to reveal the indices of institutionalized signification embedded with them—a kind of organizational hermeneutic (Deetz, 1982). But at the same time it is equally important that we examine the communication contingencies animating the collective authorship of these texts. How do individuals allow themselves to be convinced? How far do these texts genuinely reflect organizational life? Moreover, culture does not consist only of the transmission of complex behaviors through symbolic acquisitions as it did for anthropologists like E.B. Tylor (1889) or Lowie (1937); it also represents a medium for concerted historical invention and individual virtuosity (Landmann, 1974). Acknowledging that the "natives" conceptualized their sociality, however naively, should also product insight into how and to what ends they did so. The analysis of the elements composing the organizational text must be complemented by the analysis of their function.

Cultural inventions generally, and most particularly those produced by organizations, are inseparably bound up with the domain of practical necessity. Organizational culture contributes instrumental and adaptive responses to naturally occurring features of the work environment. As a result, the ar-

tifacts contained in an organization's culture, whether material or symbolic, are practical devices long before they become objects for the researchers' specialized cognitive endeavors. Context and message, structure and function, provide useful analytic distinctions; but the synchrony of codified symbol and action routine has greater significance than the diachronic of the living cultural processing of organizational interaction only from the standpoint of the nonparticipating observer. From the standpoint of the organization and its members, the relationship is exactly the *reverse*: the communication apparatus provided by significant symbols and structured interactions forms of virtual organizational memory that not only contains the organization's past but, more importantly, also sustains a constantly renewed and adaptable living present. Seen in this light, organizational culture furnishes organizational actors with the communication context that enables informed case-by-case specification of the instrumental "how" of work-ability and the epistemic "why" of institutional rationality.

No less important than the definitional and methodological problems of how best to go about conceptualizing the cultural unit of analysis are the empirical as well as phenomenological problems of acquiring insight into (1) how the organizational texts themselves establish reliable interpretations for ongoing organizational actions and their agents, and (2) how through their daily application such texts are subjected to an ongoing process of reinterpretation that guides and is guided by the everyday intercourse of organizational members within their work environments.

But much as the unwarranted reunification of social systems can be avoided by underscoring their indetermination and equifinality in responding to and manipulating their environments, a similar reification of organizational communication patterns might also be avoided if we stress the selective variability and multivocality of symbol use with respect to any organization's communication transactions (Luhmann, 1982; Weick, 1975). In other words, principals of selection and generalization, which can be said to hold with respect to the external boundaries of organizational activity, also apply to its internal differentiations and contours (Luhmann, 1982).

Many concepts of formal organization involve notions of social hierarchy, laterality, collectivity, membership, and share meanings. However, while justifiably acknowledging these factors, researchers often neglect the most

salient characteristic of any formal organization: that it is assembled for the purpose of some particular activity, to accomplish some end through some process, to get something done. It is for this reason that organizations have goals, charters, objectives, and bottom lines. Organizations engage in task activities yielding more or less tangible products; such products may include decisions and technical services. Organizations, then, are "doing" or action environments.

According to Niklas Luhmann (1970, 1982), we can view formal organizations as articulated action systems formed within a larger and more highly complex environment. For any number of reasons, including the limitations of human beings for coping with ever present and increasing complexity in a direct (sensory) way, as well as the temporal and contextual limitations of face-to-face interactions, it is convenient and possible to regard the formation of systems as a response to the "problem" of environmental complexity (Luhmann, 1979). Social action systems, then, take shape in order to achieve the reduction of complexity; that is, they simplify life, make it controllable, manageable, comprehensible (Luhmann, 1982). In other words, social systems represent "islands of lower complexity . . . within fields of higher complexity." They encode "what counts" selections. Social systems become constituted and operate through the communication of meanings (1982).

This abbreviated description of Luhmann's functional systems viewpoint allows us to fill in between the broad brushstrokes of the image conjured by Weick's (1979) evocative statement that "Organizations enact, adapt to, and survive amidst an environment of puns" (p.171). What Weick poetically terms as "puns," Luhmann conceives as complexities that surround and arise within modern organizations. In turn echoing Luhmann's analogy about organizations as "islands of lower complexity", Weick describes the function of organizing in the following way:

> Organizing serves to narrow the range of possibilities, to reduce the number of "might" occurs. The activities of organizing are directed toward the establishment of a workable level of certainty. An organization attempts to transform equivocal information into a degree of unequivocally with which it can work and to which It is accustomed. (p. 6)

"Possibilities" and "might occurs" are the contingencies that concern Luhmann. It is the role and function of communication media to further the

system/organization's efforts at "narrowing the range" and "reduc[ing] the number" of alternative actions. It is in this way and by exactly this means that an organization is able to "transform equivocal information into a degree of unequivocality."

Pattern-engendering differentiation vis-à-vis the environment occurs through the reduction of the environment's inherent complexity. Action systems do not reproduce their environments. Athough rooted firmly in their surroundings, they correspond to their environments neither structurally nor causally, any more than cultures are reducible to geography, climate, or race. Instead, action systems selectively process and reconstitute their environments though selective generalization (Luhmann, 1975).

Selective generalization has immediate theoretical application for the cultural standpoint on the study of modern organizational behavior. Experimental exercises with small groups and organizations that have introduced changes into the work environment, whether physical, social, or organizational, for the purpose of influencing productivity have been sufficiently ambiguous in their outcomes so as to suggest that social interactions are not so rigidly deterministic that specific manipulations lead predictably to dependent variations (Perrow, 1979; Luhmann, 1982). Luhmann (198), for one, offers an alternative conceptualization of these interaction processes. "Typically a system has several alternatives at hand with which it can intercept and neutralize changes in its environment. It is precisely upon this elasticity that its stability rests, as well as its ability to find favorable conditions of existence" (p. 38).

In application to organizational culture, it is important that the concepts of selectivity and generalization not be uncritically transposed from the organic and zoological niveau to the human and social level. These concepts perform their function in fundamentally different senses in the two material regions. Selective generalization serves in the former to close the system upon its environment, while in the latter selective generalization opens the system to the environment. It is for this reason that it makes little if any sense to talk about a natural habitat with reference to human beings.

Selective generalization serves biological maintenance by establishing restrictive "filters" constraining the organism to a limited sector of the environment by making it insensitive to those features of its domain that do not act as "signals" triggering adaptive response mechanisms (compare Kohler's

[1925] invariant valences embedded in rigid gestalts, Washburn's [1968] human utilization of space, Luria's [1981] analysis of animal "communication," and von Uexkull and Kriszat's [1934] discussion of "habitat"). For human beings, by contrast, selective generalization serves not to establish a mesh with the environment but rather to *constitute it.*

Selective generalization takes two general forms in cultural life: with regard to the environment "experience" and with regard to the social system "action" (Luhmann, 1982. P. 291). Selective generalization releases human beings from their surroundings by making these surroundings "available and manipulable in a meaningful way." For human beings, there exists a hiatus between inner drive and external world, which allows the human individual, in the phraseology of Plessner, to live "excentrically" by "orienting him/herself by the world" as well as in the broad sense: It releases human beings from the dogmatism of their milieu.

The need to effect systemic manipulations of constantly shirting environments suggests that the identity of an organization consists in purposive adaptations achieved through processes of selection. Selections are stored, coordinated, retrieved, and recombined through repeated enactments. The vital function performed by selection in establishing the criteria for organizational integrity implies that organizations can be conceived as self-interpreting configurations of meanings. As has already been proposed, the processes steering organizational self-interpretation must involve more than simply deciding between available alternatives; for such decisions already presuppose interpretation, and therefore indicate the ready application of generally accepted premises that are not themselves potential objects of choice. To attend to something past, to study it, to relate it to the present, to anticipate a future that selects a relevant past, to modify, embrace, or endeavor to eliminate what is, was, or will be; in short, the entire temporal organization of information-processing activities invariably interpretively particularizes some generalized premise.

Some of the limitations of the Weberian means/end schemes for understanding organizational decisions are implicit in these remarks. First, structure itself creates as well as manages contingency. Second, ends constitute functional variables that instruct the system in the selection of differentiation maintaining inputs and outputs. Organizations (like cultures)

that fail to adapt means/end prudently tend toward collapse; one needs to think only about the current pressures on the American automobile industry or tray to imagine academic institutions stripped of the political technology of research subsidies and endowments. Third, action systems can successfully maintain more than one systems state, and therefore means/ends orientation, in relation to the same environment; this capacity is perhaps the only remaining functional difference between state and corporate capitalism. Fourth, ends are not always adequately instructive. There are always gaps in the interpretive system. Selective generalization does not provide the details of the institutional and extrainstitutional arrangements. Were it to do so, the organization would risk becoming overly adapted to a particular material or symbolic situation and be therefore deprived of the very plasticity it requires for its structural integrity. Accordingly, effective management not only requires "knowing the ropes" but also their resourceful manipulation. Meaning constellations emerge and become elaborated within an organization on an ad hoc basis; they are rooted in the accumulation of generalized selections *(Including rationalizations) shaping the communication environment* (Luhmann, 1975).

The role of meaning in linking organizational membership independently of individual personalities and attitudinal preferences should not be ignored in any analysis that wishes to understand organizational behavior from the standpoint of an interpretive system. Organizations, understood as systemic units of possible significations, "belong to" no identifiable party or parties affected by implicit or explicit participation in the organization, whether these be stockholders, managers, laborers, product divisions, competency- and task-differentiated departments, social and political interest mediators or regulators, the public, or whatever. Each of these represents legitimate interest roles sharing a "common" symbolic referent. The "meaning" of the organization, and consequently its ontological "what" as well as the legitimated scope of its responsibilities and its power, consists chiefly of the historically evolved communication network connecting the various interacting influence attempts undertaken by all parties sharing the organization as a common point of experiential or action reference.

Conversely, for "its" part, the organization selects and utilizes all relevant communication media within its environment, regardless of whether

these are socially legitimated psychological value-codes like self-esteem, industriousness, honesty or "material" codes like scarcity of employment opportunities or the dependence of local economies upon regular organizational inputs. Such available meaning codes are absorbed and manipulated in order to influence the premises of action for organizational members and non-members alike. Such environmental codes contribute significantly to the organization's ability to discover favorable conditions for existence, to neutralized irritants, and to shape its environment. In exchange, the system responds selectively to external influences exercised by factors like politically mediated limitations upon market and resource exploitation, expectations about minimal working conditions, unions, community standards, competitors, philanthropic pressures, and the like.

The plasticity of the organizational system hinges upon the selective permeability of its communication horizons. This permeability in turn triggers system responses as a whole, producing differentiation along available discretionary dimensions that enable organizationally purposive adjustment to the end of maintaining maximal manipulatory latitude with respect to its environment. In this light, we might understand, for example, how the Marxist critique of corporate capitalism actually promotes the survival of the corporate system toward accommodating potentially dysfunctional contingencies in its communication environment. Through responding selectively, the capitalist system has been able to detach the issues pertaining to working-class interests from the substantive contradiction of class consciousness. By so reconstituting the corporate posture, Marxism assists the capitalists as a class in rendering Marxist polemics ineffectual among the working class. In short, to borrow upon classical imagery, Procrustes and Proteus describe limited cases of organizational communication system states.

Symbol and Action:
The Function of Communication Media Codes

In *Illusions*, Richard Bach (1977) writes, "Argue your limitations, and sure enough they're yours" (p. 100). In a similar vein, Weick (1979) has observed that "people in organizations repeatedly impose that which they later claim imposes on them" (p. 153). These observations point out the mutual articulation linking organizational members and the organization, and

highlight two aspects of that relationship. First, we are reminded that it is people – organizational members—who first do the imposing. Second, the original act of selection is forgotten thereby in effect setting the reality of the organization apart from its immediate (and not just original) context of creation. Thus the "rules" of organization life, the meaningful fabric steering individual actions and orienting collective choices is constantly recreated by everyone and, therefore, by no one. Moreover, these ground rules informing the selection and the interpretation of organizational activity function the most efficiently when they are both invisible and condensed, therefore obviating the need for deliberate reenactment of some original circumstance. Such rules include, but are not limited to, standard operating procedures that enable the matter-of-fact handling of day-to-day work activities.

The importance of this anonymous influence, of a "communal presence," to the organization's efficiency becomes nowhere more clear than when this "text" becomes an object of conscious attention on the part of the organization's members. When it is raised to public scrutiny, it becomes problematic, so that its effectiveness is impaired and can even become lost altogether. To be sure, whatever flexibility is inherent to that which remain unspoken, hence incompletely articulated, is also forsaken because constant examination and the demand for clarification institutes a far more rigid rhetorical structure than is ordinarily encountered in completing daily functions. In such a circumstance, the possibility for individual variation upon a generic interpretive template can become almost nonexistent. Rational perspective is lost because what had served as background becomes foreground, so that only foreground remains. Heretofore self-evident procedures for making sense of action and information become muddled. The organizational environment, previously apparently ordered and balanced, now seems confusing and inordinately complex.

As part of the requirements for functioning effectively, the organization needs to possess mechanisms that communicate meanings that order the options available to the various individuals within the system. As a vehicle for sending clear messages that create the expectation for preferred organizational meanings, namely, guiding choice, the language code is insufficient. By its very nature, language contains both the possibility for affirmation (compliance) and for negation (rejection). The more complex the action system,

the greater the need for a functional differentiation between the language code in general and special, symbolically generalized communication media like power, trust, truth, or money. Such media condition and regulate the motivation for accepting offered selections across entire ranges of different contexts. These devices consequently greatly increase the efficiency of the system by instituting collectively taken-for-granted reality constructs.

In part, generalized constructs of this sort account for what researchers have described as the "climate" of a given organization – for example, the intangible quality of AT&T that distinguishes it from IBM, especially in the mind of the organizational member. It accounts for things like company philosophy, for "the way things are done," for both typical behaviors and the deviations that are permitted to coexist. It accounts for the 1001 day-to-day actions that ensure that business is conducted in an unassuming, dependable, and self-perpetuating manner. It is the stuff that "is" the organization; the living matter that, like the cells of the body, renews itself through passing along the patterns containing blueprints for the entity's structure and purposes. It frames a composite of individual units that is nonetheless more than their simple collection, and so enables growth and adaptation. Such constructs serve as the coding scheme for the organization, and as gatekeepers monitoring ever present and changeable external and internal contingencies. A task this immense would soon exhaust the utility of language, thus specialized communication media carry out these functions for the organization.

A communication medium is defined as a mechanism for transferring meanings in addition to or as a supplement to language; it is a code of generalized symbols that guides the transmission of sections. "The theme of factual experience always relates to other possible, but unrealized, experiences. The world gains its unity solely from the boundaries of this 'et cetera'" (Luhmann, 1979, p.52). Luhmann (1979) also states:

> *Through the generalizing capacity of such media, structures of expectation and patterns of motivation are formed which make it possible for selections made by one individual to be relevant to another, in the sense that he/she is aware of them and does not treat them as an open question, but performs his/her own selections as consequences of them. (p. 48)*

As such, the code guides the purposive selection from among the innumerable cues empirically present in any particular context: It filters sim-

ple context information to permit serviceable "what counts" determinations. Most important, the communication medium can perform this function so efficiently and unobtrusively that the fact that selections are actively being performed never receives a second thought. Seen in this light, communication media clearly have a motivational function; in other words, they "urge the acceptance of (the other's) selections and make that acceptance the object of expectation" (Luhmann, 1979, p. 111). When one member's selection serves simultaneously as a vehicle motivating some other member's choices, a communication medium can be said to have been formulated. Media code is self-reinforcing; it makes the following two assumptions:

(1) *Media-guided communication processes bind partners who complete their own selections and know about this from each other.*
(2) *The transference of selections entails the reproduction of selections in simplified conditions abstracted from their initial contexts (Luhmann, 1979, p. 112)*

The command/consensus dichotomy offers a convenient illustration of the kinds of processes involved. First off, commands are exceptions to the rule of procedure. Indeed, command/acceptance can actually become dysfunctional when it restricts the subordinate so severely as to negate the natural plasticity of individual initiative and competence. Second, the most effective command is doubtlessly the unspoken one. Generalized authority – or, if you prefer, the power to command—selects the other's premises of action in such a way that the subordinate anticipates on his or her own accord the appropriate activity (Luhmann, 1975). When they must be employed, spoken commands can tend to personalize superior-subordinate relations to such a degree that the persons become the theme of interaction instead of the means/end particularity of the task situation. Personalization of this sort can in turn introduce a vast array of communication contingencies that the established channels of communication may or may not be equipped to handle.

Cooperative action among different actors and elements within organizations is not as much a matter of consensus as it is a matter of the coordination of particular interests. This coordination is accomplished through the elicitation of commitments from the affected parties. Networks of mutual obligation form important, if often covert, communication systems in their own right. Commitment transforms private concerns into public themes,

while permitting continued relatively free play to personal rationalization and interpretive mechanisms.

From the process standpoint, what is happening is that commitments, regardless of how obtained, generate communication structures that are indifferent albeit hardly irrelevant to individual premises (ideas, values, motives, etc.). Formally or informally achieved commitments, whatever their grounds, frame communication relationships that can readily be evaluated by the affected parties in the simplest, more immediate terms – namely, as the *irretrievable allocation of scarce communication resources*. Trust, goodwill, influence, information, command, respect, integrity, self-esteem, and the like are examples of such resources. More than that, an individual's personal evaluation of the relationship readily becomes translated into palpable behavior for organizational actors on the basis of the relative cost/benefit to each party of reneging/honoring/extending the commitment. Thus commitment secures both a basis for cooperation and a framework for evaluation against which various interests can assess their allocations.

The processes of simplification and abstraction highlighted by the nature of relational commitments presuppose symbolically generalized codes. To take the analysis one step further, the illustrations provided by Luhmann's (1979) discussion of power furnishes a clear example of the motivational role of media codes. Power serves as a communication medium by ordering situations containing binary selectivity (yes/no). Power assumes the following:

(1) *Uncertainty exists in relation to the power holder's selections. In other words, for whatever reason, the power holder has more than one available option. Moreover, executing this choice produces or removes uncertainty with respect to the power receiver.*
(2) *Alternatives are available to the power receiver.*

Power can be said to be greater if it can exert influences in the face of attractive alternatives, and it increases proportionality as there is an increase in freedom for the power receiver.

Because the function of a communication medium is to transmit reduced complexity, rather than to emphasize actual applications of power, Luhmann's (1979) perspective underscores the structuring of the other's possible selections. In this way, power as a media code regulates contingency by relating to a possible, and not merely an actual, discrepancy between the preferred selec-

tions of the power holder and power receiver, and removing that discrepancy. Power secures possible chains of effects independently of the will of the power receiver; not against the receiver's will, but indifferently/independently of that will. Because, from this point of view, power is not a cause but rather a catalyst: It accelerates events, and thereby increases the probability of the ratio of effective connections between the system and the environment. In other words, "power is an opportunity to increase the probability of realizing improbable selection combinations (Luhmann, 1979, pp. 113-114).

To recapitulate, power within an organizational (action) system exhibits the capacity to influence individual choices among available selections simply by translating preferred selections into expectations. In this way, power helps articulate and integrate the organization's "doing" environment without constraining individuals.

By defining power as a communication medium, it becomes possible to avoid the concept of power that regards it as either a possession or as an attribute of individuals. Rather, in order to employ power successfully within any organization, the individual must learn to access the power code. It is true that such theories of power abound in sociological literature, and are imported by a number of disciplines, including communication. One characteristic shared by most, if not all, of these theories is the view that power is somehow communicated and not something that *communicates*. This is a significant and theoretically useful distinction, for it follows from this distinction that power, as a communication medium—something that "communicates"—is an extension of the organization system much in the same way that any technology generally represents an articulated extension of its environment.

Luhmann (1979) points out that "in organizations, power creates countervailing power" (p. 179). This is to say that, speaking from a structural viewpoint, the power of subordinates resides in their position *as subordinates*. To deny in some respect the subordinate condition can become, then, a means for management to recognize purposively the power of subordinates. This final illustration offers a vivid example of code functions.

"Employee involvement" and "worker participation" are phrases that, in retrospect, heralded the arrival of quality circles onto the scene of contemporary corporate management strategies. Although quality circles represented attempts to increase employee input into the decision-making process, and

sought to engender greater employee identification with the organization, Weick sees such innovations as direct threats to the survival of an organization. Luhmann (1979) also criticizes these attempts by management to systematize, domesticate, and legislate the power of subordinates by means of "participation."

> *Thus "emancipation" becomes management's last trick: denying the difference between superior and subordinate and thus taking away the subordinate's power base. Under the pretense of equalizing power, this simply reorganizes the power which subordinates already possess. (p. 180)*

We could say that through the institution of quality circles, management has further elevated its own position with respect to subordinates by asserting control of the definition of the relation between management and subordinates—in this case, as one of peers. Such an assertion on the part of management in effect extends its control over the behaviors of subordinates.

Conclusion

It is important to recognize that the word *communication* is among the most often bandied-about pseudotechnical terms; created as a by-product of a genre of popular literature that flourished particularly in the late 1960s and well into the 1970s devoted to self-help that consisted largely of popularized psychological concepts. In many cases, "communication" became a catchall panacea through its regular employment as a social psychological Band-Aid.

The eagerness with which popular writers took up "communication" in a wide variety of contexts is matched perhaps by the efforts of scholars and researchers to dissect and more perfectly understand communication as a uniquely human process. However, the perspective of communication scholars differs dramatically from that of popular practitioners, and it is at least in part this dramatic difference that accounts for the complaints from those employed in nonacademic professional organizations that the promises implicit in communication as a *slogan* do not match up with the actual accomplishments of communication as a *science* of human behavior. Each side begins from different assumption and employs discernibly unique vocabularies, so that even should they arrive at the same conclusion, it is likely that neither party would be able to recognize the scene the other describes.

As obvious and simplistic as this point may appear, it still bears men-
tioning and requires a moment of elaboration. Far more than agreeing upon
definitions and sharing a common set of concern is needed to bridge this
difference. For theory, research, and analysis cannot be restricted to the plane
of everyday experience, as though it might somehow be of greater scientific
value to limit oneself to the view from the inside, in contradistinction to the
researcher's customary "outside" perspective. Instead, the lesson to be drawn
here is much more troublesome to put into practice. It is that theory and re-
search need to be informed by the "inside" vantage point while retaining the
freedom to seek comprehension of a larger and more intricate picture, that
is, an enlightened view from the "outside."

It seems difficult, if not impossible, to imagine an organization that is
not based upon an information economy. Organizations are composites of
units differentiated according to certain types of information, knowledge,
and skills. Under this circumstance, there is a clear relationship between in-
formation and mobility, power and control. That it makes conceptual sense
to equate information, mobility, and power reflects a significant part of daily
life within the organization. However, what is important for our purposes to
recognize is that elements such as these are driven by emergent, structura-
tional communication processes.

In *The Social Psychology of Organizing* Carl Weick (1979) writes, "Peo-
ple in organizations repeatedly impose that which they later claim impose
on them." In an important sense, this remark epitomizes what he means by
the "enacted environment" of organizations (p. 153). For Weick, enactments
articulate environments, such that it is more representative to say that in the
case of organizations what takes place is the "invention of rather than dis-
covery of environment" (p. 166). It is at this point where analogies for an
organization based on the relationship of an organism to its environment
break down. Not only are human beings capable of altering their environ-
ments, they also are capable of creating that environment. The creation of an
environment, as distinguished from sheerly inhabiting an environment, is
precisely the capacity for culture.

These enactments determine the contours and character of an organiza-
tion, defining at the same time external organizational borders. The cultural
"text" is the totality of the guidelines employed for the interpretation of all

organizational action; it grounds the "hows" and "whys" giving meaning to the already enacted "what." It is the stuff of imputed motivations in the organization setting. Luhmann (1979) describes the relationship between social action and motive in the following way:

> *Motives are not necessary for action, but are necessary if actions are to be comprehensively experienced. A social order will thus be much more closely integrated on the level of the attribution of motives than on the level of action itself. The understanding of motives thus helps retrospectively in recognizing whether an action has occurred at all. (p. 120)*

From an external perspective, it may not be immediately obvious why and how organizing or some dimension thereof can become problematic. Nor is it likely that the repercussions of such a situation are easily discernible. Organizations, particularly bureaucracies, often appear to be tremendously stable, powerfully well-rooted, and blessed by incredible inertia. Weick suggests a very different sort of an image of organizations, one that anyone with experience informal organizations would regard as all too familiar: "Organizations enact, adapt to, and survive amidst an environment of puns" (p. 171). To be sure, the larger the organization the more clearly this image rings true. Elaborating upon this analogy, Weick (1979) contends that organizations must find ways to deal collectively, efficiently and internally to the organization. There exists, for this reason, tremendous pressure upon the organizational system constantly to interpret and rationalize, so that there develops a great "need for context . . . to reduce the population of puns and the meaning of puns" (p. 183). This leaves open the possibility that given a shift or break in context, previously unequivocal information would likely become equivocal.

Speaking from an analytic perspective, one typically is restricted to the social psychological level; for "failed communications" raise questions such as these: "How is it possible to identify more reliably which of the meanings is intended by the speakers?" "Do individuals hang consistently onto one definition, or alternate definitions as circumstances or personal/professional roles alter?" "If organizations are such highly structured entities, then how is such instability in usage possible?" "Are definitions tied directly to roles/positions or to the individuals, and why?" "Why is communication a topic at all?"

It is the last of those questions that is perhaps the most convoluted, and for a variety of reasons, the most intriguing: Communication is a social

bonding agent, even in the case of disagreement and conflict; participation is presupposed. So how is it that communication can become a point of fracture or be blamed as a source for a variety of organizational ills? It is an amazing feat of human creativity, epitomizing our remarkable capacity as human beings to be able to transform a complicated, ambiguous, changeable information environment into permitting dependable, even routine, exchanges of an entire spectrum of meanings. It is the wonder that lies at the heart of human communication as a discipline. It is a process presupposing that individuals step beyond their individuality, that is, get beyond immediate and idiosyncratic sensory experience. For human beings, it is the actuality of communication that undergirds the reality of their social nature.

Each individual is shaped by culture as the enabling condition of participating in his or her social milieu. Cultures, like organizations presuppose the individual in the very instant that they surpass him or her. Still it is the reciprocal articulation that describes cultural life: In anticipating the individual, culture is anticipated by the individual. Preservation and transmission are accomplished only through use and signification. The mere fact that the cultural text is written by no one does not change the fact that it must be written nonetheless, nor does it make any less valuable the understanding of the means, orientations, and processes through which communication processes effect its authorship. From this standpoint, organizations represent communication systems symbolically interlocking sense and situation, meaning and action.

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CHAPTER VI

GENDER AS A COMMUNICATION CODE:
VALUING THE DIFFERENCE

The study of gender has taken several directions over the last 15 years, led by many feminist scholars from a range of disciplines. This paper lies at the intersection of two of those several paths: the search for the location of gender, and the critique of the value placed on (each) gender identity/characteristics. It is the major thesis of this paper that there is a relationship between the locating of gender and the valuing of that gender. Broadly speaking, locating gender either physically or meta-physically within or on an individual confuses a social prescriptive with that particular individual, burdening her with specific valued/valueless characteristics. Further, this very act obscures the valuation process.

By modifying Nicklas Luhmann's theory of communication media to adapt to an analysis of gender as a media code, we can accomplish two goals. First, we can separate the social prescriptive from the individual(s); and second, we can understand the process and function of "gendering" as an operation of our social system. That is, by separating gender from people (e.g., an individual's personhood), we can more clearly identify the valuing of certain gender characteristics as (social) system functions. This clearly distinguishes them as **not** being psycho-emotional extensions of biology, nor products of the interaction between personality and environment, nor, in other terms, the imperfect products of a kind of genetic/psychogenic/sexual manifest destiny.

Although locating gender is rarely raised as a thematic in feminist and other gender-related literature, it is nonetheless an implicit concern among feminist scholars. Therefore, why does it matter where gender is located? The answer is it matters for several reasons. It matters because the location of gender will, in part, determine the research agenda of the immediate future by the creation of specific criteria for what constitutes gender. That is, the location of gender will prescribe the legitimate, useful, sensible, possible, meaningful, interesting and fundable questions to ask. It will influence the selection of, or preference for, certain methods of investigation. It will influence the selection of articles to be published, of conference papers accepted,

of job candidates hired. And it will greatly influence the pragmatics and tenor of the political agenda of feminists, and thereby code the social, political, and economic standing of women as U.S. citizens and as world citizens. Finally, it is important because focusing research on the location of gender is often used to obscure the issue of valuing (presumed) differences. Sadly, in spite of the work of scholars, such as Stephen J. Gould and Anne Fausto-Sterling, the locating of gender in the biological/genetic, or psycho-spiritual "nature" of women is frequently brandished as a means to rationalize and justify oppressive interpersonal, social, economic, and/or political practices.

While this is not news to feminist communication scholars, it raises another question. Is the search for the biological basis of gender itself a conclusion (albeit disguised) of a patriarchal system, and not actually a question at all? The very difficulty of attempting to answer a pseudo-question (conclusion) renders secondary, even tangential the issue of valuing this presumed difference. Taking for granted the desirability of shifting this focus from presumed difference to the process of valuing, the work of Niklas Luhmann offers one possible way to communication scholars of accomplishing this shift.

The remaining part of this paper will be divided into three sections: a discussion of locating gender in biology (in our genes) by way of the work of women scholars in the biological sciences; an encapsulated description of Luhmann's theory of media codes; and an application of gender as a communication code and the implications for valuing difference.

Gender, Biology, and Social Scientific Process

Understanding the role of expert and authority in Western and American culture as it is manifest in social and natural scientific community is one way to begin to understand the issue at hand. In doing so we are able to demonstrate that the agenda of social scientific inquiry is controlled by cultural and political forces and does not arise from the object of research. Gender as a topic or theme of research provides a clear (and socially relevant) example of confounding a cultural perspective with the research subject.

To return to the issue of authority/expert, it can be observed that "facts" are whatever scientists say they are, and what have been called "facts" by scientists has varied both by technology available, and to a much greater extent by the (historical) socio-political climate of the times. The earth was once flat

and the center of the universe, taking baths was dangerous to one's health, and riding trains could lead to contracting venereal diseases. Obviously, none of these remain facts today, yet our collective belief in the eternity and universality of contemporary facts remains unaffected by this knowledge. This is not mere coincidence, nor ignorance nor stupidity. It is a derivative of a belief in <u>scientific</u> authority and is a technological vision of progress as science pulls us ever closer to complete knowledge and truth. It is an index of the explanatory power of this belief system that still only a handful of people are so jarred by the incongruity of this vision of (technological) Truth with the potential of nuclear disaster to mobilize and take political action.

Because gender appears to be based on biology (sex and the ability to bear and suckle children), scholars such as Ruth Bleier have taken on the task of critiquing the role of biology in the formation of public policy, as well as the research methods and practices employed (Bleier, <u>Gender and Science: A Critique of Biological Theories on Women</u>).

Bleier capably traces the interplay between scientific research and maintenance of the white male dominant status quo in modern society. She traces how scientific "evidence" of racial and sexual inequality was gathered and utilized by political leaders to support the racism and sexism in American and in European social policy of the nineteenth and twentieth century. This included measurement of skull size and shape which "proved" that blacks and all women were "naturally" inferior to white males – smaller skull size, presumed to mean smaller brain size, presumed to mean lesser IQ. And since it could be "demonstrated" that brain size increased as one climbed the evolutionary ladder, it was only logical to conclude that blacks and females represented less developed stages of evolutionary ascent as compared with white males (Bleier, <u>Gender and Science and Women, Biology and Public Policy</u>, edited by V. Sappiro.) In reaching their conclusions, scientists both found what they were expecting to find and also explained away (usually by discounting) conflicting results. In this way, what counted as "facts" were not empirical results, but the interpretation of those results. What is also significant here is that a <u>biology</u> (hence "natural") explanation was offered for a social and cultural assumption, as well as for certain social conditions (e.g., that black urban poor people are destined to remain poor because of their genes). The provision of a <u>biological</u> explanation lends an air of inevitability

and universality to such reasoning and allows people to believe, in the words of Gould, that their "social prejudices are scientific facts."

As the feminist critics have pointed out, the sub-cultural assumptions that underlie scientific inquiry are drawn from the larger culture of which they are a part, and serve to determine what questions are worth asking, how a given problem is to be defined and whether the problem is seen as solvable, and if so, which alternatives are considered viable. Both the social and natural sciences have been broadly criticized for the presumption of male dominance and superiority and for their valuation only of those qualities associated with the cultural definition of masculine. In her critique of biological and medical research, Anne Fausto-Sterling (Myths of Gender) points out how male physiology and psychology are assumed to be normative; hence, female physiology and psychology are regarded as deviant or even pathological in comparison. This becomes clear in the medical profession's talk and treatment of menstrual problems and includes even the of menstruation of a healthy female, who is treated as though this monthly cycle were a disease, a malfunction of the ideal, the normative male body. An example of this can be found in a chapter by William Graham from Women, Biolojzy and Public Policy in which materials and texts used in sex education classes are evaluated. An example of a text recommending that girls suffer from severe menstrual cramps often as a result of tension and ambiguity surrounding their sexuality is cited. While such tension and anxiety may or may not contribute to such pain, at least one physiological cause of severe cramps has been well documented. Fausto-Sterling emphatically questions the assumption that significant gender-based differences in abilities exist. More specifically, she questions the validity of incorporating the assumption of such differences in research proposals and agendas. She points to articles whose main body of prose discusses the single indication of a statistically significant gender-based difference in some performance measure, ignoring standard scientific practice to report the majority finding, even if the null hypothesis holds. This is also a reflection of the editorial policies of a discipline's journals, which in turn reflects the implicit rules about the production and process of social scientific investigation held by the scientific community.

After her review of the biological research, Fausto-Sterling concludes that in some areas, such as upper body strength, there appears to be an advantage of males over females. She cautions that not all the data are yet in

concerning athletic performance, as women have so recently received comparable training and development. As for other differences, such as brain hemisphere dominance, mathematical ability and other popularized differences, Fausto-Sterling concludes that in most cases the evidence indicates that there are no significant differences in ability based upon gender and in a few other cases, the evidence is inconclusive, often as a result of questionable research designs and procedures.

For Fausto-Sterling, Sappiro, Bleier, Leacock, and others, the confounding of gender with the scientific process is significant for reasons beyond the heuristic and academic. Such research carries substantial policy implications at a variety of social levels, including education, training, medical care, child care and is an issue vital to the continued survival of humanity. Many scholars and others feel that in order to constructively meet and solve today's problems the abilities of <u>all</u> people will be needed. Here there is a division among feminist scholars and activists. The division occurs at the point Fausto-Sterling begins: Are there genuine gender-based differences? If we answer to the affirmative then we also conclude, as does Margaret Mead, that "women will see the world differently than men." This view leads Mead to be concerned with understanding each gender in terms of its limitations and its potentialities <u>Male</u> <u>and</u> <u>Female</u>).

Many feminists would side with Mead, concurring that women's experience in the world is as a consequence of their biological sex distinct from the experience of men. These same scholars and activists believe that not only has the voice of women been systematically ignored/overlooked by male historians, but that that voice can only be adequately represented by other women, and that at some level must remain always outside the ken of males, including academic and professional colleagues. Other feminists feel that the political implications of such a position are dangerous to the socioeconomic position of women, for separate is all too easily construed as inferior/subordinate. These same scholars support this latter position even in the face of the reported experience of a female scholar who recognizes in herself different emotions/cognitions than her training in academe acknowledges.

Yet, as Sappiro points out, even if such gender-based differences as mathematical ability are found to exist, even more critical is the interpretation of these differences. Framing the situation in male terms often presup-

poses a subordinate and inferior role for women. Examples abound in the literature, but one from Sappiro will suffice for present purposes. Among the perceptual studies conducted is the one that assesses "field dependence" or "field independence". According to the researcher's conclusions, females are more field-dependent than males. That is, women tend to perceive problems as wholes, rather than tending to identify single units within a larger pattern. Social scientists, including some communication researchers, have borrowed this concept and results to deduce (for example) that women would therefore make less competent architects and engineers. Such an "androcentric" (man-centered) interpretation is not the only possibility. For example, as Sappiro points out, instead of defining the context in terms of dependence one might instead describe this same finding in terms of "field sensitivity". Thus, women are more "field sensitive" than are males (who would here be considered "field insensitive") and by deduction, women so inclined and trained would make superior urban planners – they would be far less likely to build a building inconsistent with its surroundings.

If this link between the biological and the social sciences still appears to be attenuated, sociobiology certainly closes any gap. It is the work of E. O. Wilson which is the most predominantly associated with sociobiology, a field which links the behavior of animals, including insects, with the behavior of humans, drawing freely and loosely upon evolutionary theory. Wilson and his colleagues use presumably genetically coded and evolutionarily conditioned behavior of animals, prehistoric man and so-called "primitive" cultures to explain contemporary behaviors. In an article in the New York Times Book Review, Stephen Jay Gould criticizes Wilson and sociobiology for, among other things, using circular logic through the use of anthropomorphizing the behaviors of animals e.g., using the word "rape" to describe the behavior of mallard ducks and then reusing the term in the context of the behavior of human males, lending an air of genetically determined "naturalness" to their socially aberrant violent behavior. Yet, sociobiologists deny any of the political implications of their collective work and writing.

To recap briefly, we have demonstrated two ways in which the social scientific investigation of gender and the cultural articulation of gender are confounded: the first is in focusing investigation through an "androcentric" lens, from the formulation of the research question to the interpretation and

suggested implication of the results, and second is the wholesale and often erroneous application of a biological/genetic implicitly causal explanation of complex, socially **defined** human behaviors. Women and other concerned scholars have sought to create balance of perspective by focusing research not only upon women, but also allowing women to speak for themselves, revealing their own assessment of their social roles and position.

Unfortunately, tying gender to biology does not aid in clarifying "fact" from sociocultural bias, including valuing certain gender traits above others and creating a polarity of differences. Perhaps communication scholars have a perspective to offer which can redirect the focus of current research on gender.

Luhmann's Theory of Communication Codes

The potential contribution of Luhmann's theory to communication and the study of gender is primarily an outgrowth of his systems-based assumptions, including the view of system characteristics as not structural, but as process. Concentrating upon the phenomenon of highly complex (differentiated) systems, Luhmann places a particular conceptualization of communication at the core of system generation and recreation. It will be useful to provide a summary statement of this much of Luhmann's theory before discussing its potential applications to gender research.

Complex social systems require an economic deployment of communication strategies/media/codes in order for the system to not only operate but also to recreate itself. In this context, communication includes all forms of meaning creation, co-creation, coordination, and manipulation. Communication enables the creation of a social reality, and in highly complex, or in Luhmann's words, highly differentiated societies. These social systems require as a precondition the possibility of a symbolic order that is simultaneously a product of, yet abstracted from, the immediate here and now and from the historic past and present. Such an abstraction from the actual lived and historical circumstances of its ontology releases a symbolic reality from the tyranny of experiential time (of an individual or group), as well as, from the necessity of accounting for the idiosyncrasies of lived experience. The ability to create such an abstracted social order/reality is itself predicated upon a form or forms of human communication which are not wholly (or even mostly) limited by temporal and physical immediacy.

While systems theory is readily employed by a host of communication scholars in the examination of organizational, interpersonal, intercultural, and mass mediated communication, the above synopsis of Nicklas Luhmann's application and modification of systems theory to the problem of social process is unique. Its potential appeal to communication scholars resides <u>in the formulation of communication as essential to the formation and maintenance of modern society and culture</u>. Moreover, Luhmann squarely addresses the atemporal quality of much contemporary communication as a key characteristic.

Luhmann's perspective can be summarized as follows. For a number of reasons, including the limitations of human beings for coping with everpresent and increasing complexity in a direct (sensory) way, as well as the temporal and contextual limitations of face to face interactions, it is convenient and possible to view the formation of systems as a response to the "problem" of environmental complexity. Social action systems, then, take shape in order to accomplish the reduction of complexity. That is, they simplify life, make it controllable, manageable, comprehensible. In other words, social systems represent "islands of lower complexity ... within fields of higher complexity." These social systems are constituted and operate through the communication of meaning. For Luhmann, systems involve not only great complexity but also respond to a high level of contingency. This saturation of contingency, in turn, makes problematic the very survival of social systems because those same social action systems are based upon the possibility of meaning and, therefore, of communication. As will be clarified shortly, communication is problematic for a system as communication employs symbols, e.g. language.

For Luhmann, meaning is system contained (system-driven). In this respect, his viewpoint can be regarded as the other side of the coin implicit in the phenomenological viewpoint. This later viewpoint regards meaning as actor-determined, and addresses the conditions for the possibility of meaning. For Luhmann, the object of analysis becomes the state of affairs for which meaning is the condition; in other words, what meaning makes possible. And what meaning makes possible are remarkably effective complexity reducing mechanisms.

As part of the requirements for the effective functioning of the social action system, there arises a need to communicate meaning that provides for the agreement between possible selections, ordering the alternatives (selec-

tions) available to the individuals within the system. Because communication accomplishes this only through the employment of symbols, the situation is one of high contingency; this contingency further complicates selection. In high contingency situations, it is necessary to develop and employ some means for efficiently and effectively guiding the transference of selections (guiding choice) from one social member to another.

Contingency is a key concept in Luhmann's theoretical framework, because it underpins the relationship of communication and communication media to social action systems. It offers a possible explanation for how and why the creation of shared meaning enables the formation and functioning of social systems. Luhmann sees the regulation of contingency as critical to the existence of social systems. Such systems presume two areas of contingency:

1. rules for joining/leaving because there exist members/non-members
2. the role of membership rules determines the behaviors to be enacted in the social system.

The level of contingency of each of these two areas is higher than is the level of contingency of the relationship between the two areas. For the purpose of communicating meaning, namely, guiding choice, the language code is insufficient. Because, by its very nature, language contains both the possibility of affirmation (compliance) and negation (rejection), what Luhmann calls "double selectivity." The more complex the action system, the greater the need for a functional differentiation between the language code in general and special, symbolically generalized communication media (like power, truth, trust, or money), which serve to condition and regulate the motivation for accepting offered selections. These devices greatly increase the efficiency of the system by creating generalized motivational reality constructs.

In part, generalized motivational reality constructs account for "the way things are done", for both the typical behavior and the deviations are allowed to co-exist. It accounts for the thousand and one day-to-day actions which conduct business in a manner unassuming, reliable, and self-perpetuating. It is the stuff which is the system, the living matter which like the cells in the body renews itself, contains the patterns that are the blueprints for the entity's structure and functioning, is composed of individual units yet supersedes mere collectivity, enables growth and adaptation. These constructs serve also as the coding scheme for the text of the system, as the gate-keepers

of everpresent and constantly growing contingency. This task exhausts the utility of language, and therefore specialized communication media develop to carry out these functions for the system/organization.

A communication medium is defined as a mechanism communicating meaning <u>in addition</u> or as a <u>supplement</u> to language; a code of generalized symbols which guides the transmission of selections. Communication media also have a motivating function, which is to "urge the acceptance of (the other's) selections and make that acceptance the object of expectation." When the manner of one partner's selection serves simultaneously as a motivating structure for the other, a communication medium can be said to be formulated. Such formulation is self-reinforcing; it makes the following two assumptions:

1. <u>Media-guided communication processes</u> bind <u>partners</u> who complete their own selections and know about this from each other.
2. The transference of selections means the <u>reproduction</u> of selections in simplified conditions abstracted from initial contexts.

The processes of simplification and abstraction presuppose symbol usage and the formulation of symbolically generalized codes. It can be said that communication codes secure possible chains of effects independently of the will of the receiver. Not <u>against</u> the receiver's will, but <u>indifferently/ independent of</u> that will; for a communication code is not here a cause but rather a catalyst: accelerating events, thereby increasing the <u>probability</u> of the ratio of effective connections between the system and the environment. In Luhmann's words, a communication code is an "opportunity to increase the probability of realizing improbable selection combinations."

This makes it possible to make a distinction between the code and the communication process, so that gender is not considered to be the possession either of an individual or a group, that is, not as an inherent attribute or as a characteristic. Rather, the rules for gender attribution are themselves <u>contained in the media code</u>. The implicit and socially embedded nature of communication media makes such a reflexive posture possible. This reflexivity greatly increases the efficiency of the system and serves also to aid in guaranteeing its future and continued effectiveness.

Proposing to examine gender as a communication code is also a way of suggesting that communication between individuals can also be understood and examined by looking at those aspects of communication which **transcend**

the here and now and the individuals involved. While it is generally acknowledged that interaction patterns are basically socially conditioned, relatively little research attention in communication has been focused upon the **ahistorical** and **atemporal** aspects of that social conditioning. What this suggests is that serious consideration be afforded the definition of what is meant by "socially conditioned." If it is not meant to mean only that children repeat the interaction patterns of their parents, then consideration of how concrete, idiosyncratic events are translated/abstracted into a portable "pattern" is required. Luhmann labels what results from this abstracting process "communication media" or "communication codes." For Luhmann, the existence of such codes enables the enormous complexity of modem society and is necessitated by the limitation of language, which he claims would be quickly overburdened by any effort to explain the patterns (of expectation) carried by the codes.

This seemingly sweeping dismissal of language requires further elaboration. It is easy to misread Luhmann's intent, and to therefore regard all conversation as irrelevant in any attempt to uncover these communication media/codes which so efficiently condense and impart interpretation as well as motivational patterns of action. Communication media differ from conversation in the information-exchanging sense in that communication media or codes are not neutral in regard to action selection, nor are they sensory in an ordinary sense. Codes do not carry any explicit sense of alternatives or choice, rather they carry a motivation force of an expected/anticipated action or behavior. Codes are akin operationally to the motivational force that causes American drivers to stop at stop signs and red lights, regardless of time of day or traffic conditions (or rather, the absence of other traffic) and to the presumed influence that both detergent packaging has on consumer purchasing or the public announcement to vote for a certain candidate has upon voting behavior.

Luhmann suggests that the motivational power of the communication codes is partly a result of its embedding in the web of social conventions which constitute a society. What Luhmann is observing as regards language is that it would take at least one and possible several lifetimes to explain all of the social conventions and expectations that underlie both the daily activities and the pivotal life decisions faced by each member of a social system. This difficulty is magnified geometrically in the case of a highly complex and

differentiated social system, within which individuals are often members of more than one subsystem, each in a variety of ways and differing to various degrees. If individuals were bound by linguistic explication, such crossovers of multiple sub-system memberships would be impossible. Likewise, if language (e.g., natural language) were the only communication medium available, the development of social complexity would be restricted by its natural limitations. Luhmann does not preclude the possibility that language might function in an adjunctive capacity or even an elemental capacity to other communication codes. In looking to language as a code adjunct, it is necessary to bear in mind the salient qualities of communication codes: because they are condensed and motivational, these codes must be atemporal and ahistorical. In order to relieve the need for explication, the content of communication codes must be in a highly abstracted form, comprehensible instantly, as well as independently of the context of its origin.

Talk, or verbal exchange, can in some regard be said to function as a model for all communication research. Often in communication, research language is largely taken for granted as a code. Communication researchers are frequently concerned with the content of that code, and occasionally with its surface structure (e.g., syntactic characterization by sentence type such as interrogative, command, etc.) and thereby focus on language as a noun.

In seeking to examine language not only as a noun but also as a process, communication must recognize and distinguish its approach from that of other interested disciplines currently cooperating under the rubric of cognitive science to examine language as a psychological or cognitive process, as a neurophysical, neurochemical and neuroelectrical process, and as a mechanical process. Luhmann's communication codes provide one means of examining linguistic phenomena as a <u>social</u> process or social code.

The examination of language as a social code would require a shift in focus from the now predominant psychological and cognitive emphasis to those aspects of communication which transcend (yet encompass) individual use and divergent episodes/acts. I am not here referring to the schema of communication act with which all communication scholars and students are familiar; a sender/encoder, a medium, a message, a receiver/decoder, an environment potentially disruptive. While this scenario clearly depicts a great many communicative acts and enables a kind of post hoc analysis of a given

event, it possesses little capacity to explain those aspects of human communication which create and recreate the necessary social knowledge to in turn facilitate social process. Put another way, inasmuch as individuals both feel themselves and can refer to membership in a collective, non-material entity labeled as "society", what role or roles does communication play in the maintenance of such a dynamic entity? Luhmann might suggest that the (communicative) mechanisms by which individuals accomplish social interaction are the product of the history of the social system. In this regard, these mechanisms are also in process, so that they are comprised of the past episodes and all contingencies to these episodes. Yet these mechanisms/codes are abstracted from that history and time.

What makes the codes (or mechanisms) ahistorical is that they compress and abstract elements or features of their original social interaction in a manner that does not require knowledge of that original context and episode as a precondition for use of that code. These codes are atemporal in their abstraction of information and motivation, so that through the employment of these communication codes, the action choice of individuals is structured to produce a selected outcome moments, months, even generations removed from the original "context".

In some sense, all language employs, or can employ, atemporal and ahistorical qualities. It is this potentiality upon which the poet draws in creating meaning. The use of these qualities in the form of metaphors and metonomy appears to be a common linguistic phenomenon (see Pragmatics by Levinson and Language by Clark, et al). While communication has turned some attention to metaphor, additional investigatory possibilities exist. An example of one such possibility is the work of George Lakoff and his recently published Women" Fire and Danizerous Things: What Cateizories Reveal About the Mind. As the title suggests, Lakoff uses linguistic data to uncover cultural models that are assumed to inform our reasoning.

In the chapter of Cultural Models in Language and Thought (editors Holland and Quinn) Lakoff et al. examine the possibility of a cognitive model of anger resident in American English. Lakoff discusses a model of anger in cognitive and not affective terms because one of his goals is to tap into a larger model, one operative at a cultural level. Anger, or at least its expression, becomes an aspect of a larger social system. An extension and application of

Luhmann's systems theory conceptualization would focus at this point: the code that transmits the conditioned expression of anger. However, the justificatory structure connecting some version of Luhmann influenced theory to any specific (in this case linguistic-based) methodology does not exist.

Because communication media are system elements, they potentially provide an explanatory structure for a large range of actions within the system which appear to otherwise be irrational. While Luhmann's theories require an abstraction from lived experience (most people don't consider which code must be employed to achieve a goal), they concurrently require a system-participant view and knowledge.

Gender As a Communication Code: De-Coding Value

If we are not to locate gender in biology, and instead locate it in a social practice-labeled "communication code", then perhaps we can begin to delineate the valuing that is inherent in the coding process. Following Luhmann, we can say that gender as a code carries with it a motivational force for selecting specific behaviors over others in a range of behaviors. Put another way, the individual at the receiving end of a gender code transaction is limited by the expectations embedded in that code. To select a behavior inconsistent with the code's expectations carries the real threat of sanction, which eventually means exclusion from the group. To elect not to participate in the code is ultimately to risk exclusion (in principle) from the largest social system: from humanity.

This sanction (exclusion from humanity) is devastating to individuals. Unlike electing to not participate in the social communication code known as money surely places one at the fringe of this wealthy society. But exclusion from humanity places one beyond even a hint of fringe. Gender is one of the most basic of social codes. And it appears to be fundamental to all other identities or memberships in sociocultural groups and sub-groups. Witness the awkwardness with which one addresses a newborn infant who's sex is unknown at first. In fact, adults seem to be uncertain how to interact at all with a child of indeterminate sex. There is some evidence that the tone of voice, the manner in which one handles the infant, the content of one's speech, and even the attributes one accords to the infant are all coded in large part by one's knowledge of the infant's sex/gender. What this suggests is that without gender identity, one

can have virtually no social identity whatsoever. Not engaging in the gender code renders one all but unable to participate in the system at all.

Perhaps things have changed a bit in the last fifty years, and a gender identity is less vital than it may have been historically. After all, women are no longer confined to secondary job positions, no longer automatically cease working in order to raise children, they may participate in physical activities once reserved solely for males, and they may choose to remain single. On the other hand, marriage is experiencing an upsurgence, Christian fundamentalism appears to be politically strong, and abortion may soon no longer be protected by the federal court. If the gender code has been altered in the recent past, it has not yet been broken.

It is possible to find evidence in many places for the gender code in operation, serving to pre-select specific behaviors over others, and thereby ordering the potential chaos in freedom of choice. Perhaps this is the reason that much of our popular media carry messages which all too clearly delimit human behavior to a narrow and highly predictable range of behaviors: the system itself responds to the "stress" of new variation in acceptable actions by displaying highly encoded messages as morality lessons and as a means of ensuring the incredible efficiency of code deployment – stability of the status quo.

In order to provide an illustration of the gender code in a particular setting, I am drawing upon some preliminary research findings from a project funded by the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority from July 1988 to June 1989. The research initially entailed two goals: the first was to assess the collective state of affairs among the residents of a specific federal housing community. The second was to develop a plan for engendering leadership among the residents. The discussion that follows draws upon the findings described in a preliminary report filed with CMHA in early April 1989.

Residents of the CMHA facility are primarily young, single, head of household females with multiple dependents. It appears many of them are second or even third generation residents of public housing. How does that come to pass? Our interviews and observations yielded the following version of how this comes to be. Beginning with a child (female) of grade school age, there are only two sources of role models: their mothers and grandmothers, and women in the mass media. It is the case that teachers do not fill this function for children of public housing. What seems to happen instead is that

these children are tagged very early on as "low achievers" by the school personnel and so treated accordingly. This serves in part to disenfranchise the children who seem to feel as though they are merely visitors in their schools, and not a part of the system. This reduces their exposure to alternative life choices by reducing their active participation as well as their engagement in extra-curricular activities. The system so miserably fails them as a group that most drop out by age sixteen and never graduate. The young women often leave because of pregnancy. Because they cannot apply for their own ADC and housing until they are 18, their mother's assume responsibility for the child and claim it as a dependent until such time as the girls reach 18. Bearing multiple children is seen as a large part of the ordinary definition of being a young woman in this community. At the same time, it serves as the only viable economic alternative to illegal drug-related activities.

This scenario can be easily contrasted with the same gender code modified by white, middle to upper class culture. At the risk of oversimplification, young girls from this particular socio-economic background are early and thoroughly initiated into the educational system, including extra-curricular activities. As the consequence, they are exposed to a variety of alternative role models. This translates into a greater variety of choices for these girls, although the gender code is also well-established with them, lest they forget their primary responsibility to family and caretaking. For example, as the girls approach adulthood, they may well be exposed to notions about balancing a career and a family, or at least a husband. For the most part, they are encouraged to seek a husband, especially in the case that their future plans entail children. And even though it has become increasingly popular for single and independent women to talk about bearing and raising a child without the interpersonal involvement of a male, no woman is encouraged to bear a child who does not also have sufficient fiscal resources to cope with this plan easily. By expanding their social horizons through advanced education and career-tracked employment, these young women must come to terms with balancing their gender identities with their career role expectations.

For this certain segment of the population, economic independence is touted as mandatory. For the young women in public housing, economic independence is the major lesson taught during their tenure as children and adolescents. Yet, in a convoluted, almost paradoxical way, the young women

raised in public housing and on public monies are also encouraged to be economically independent in the sense that they are not socialized to depend upon (even partially) the earning potential of a male. The irony here deserves further attention.

Remember that communication codes serve to condense information and to carry motivation for certain action selections. The need for these communication media arises from the incredible complexity of the social environment which overwhelms human capacity to cope. In particular, this is true for modern societies that are comprised of highly differentiated social systems. Communication codes serve the system's need to manage this chaos which they do by reducing complexity, by pre-selecting actions. In allowing the definition of economic independence to be largely tied up with rhetoric associated with feminism or the women's movement, the system (in this case the articulation of it through the federal government) defines female gender in a way which suits the particular needs of two different sub-systems: the upwardly mobile segment, and the permanently economically marginal or dependent segment, or rather the subsystem that subsists on supplying this societally suppressed population.

How do we know (or at least what makes us suspect) that this is evidence for the existence and operation of a communication code? There are two factors that substantiate this analysis. First, we know that communication codes serve to pre-select actions, and carry a motivational component with that action pre-selection. To return to a point made earlier in this paper, it is one of the contentions of this writing that no operational definition of what is meant by "socially conditioned" exists in the relevant communication literature. It is herein suggested that communication codes might be adapted to meet this need. Thus, to employ the explanation of "socialization" to this phenomena is unsatisfactory. To put it another way, our young women are socialized by the deployment and participation in a communication code labeled "gender". It is not language alone which can account for their patterned behavior. None of the women we interviewed spoke of encouraging the daughters to become pregnant as teenagers and drop out of school. In fact, they counseled against such behavior.

Second, codes serve to bind partners as they operate extrinsically to the will of the individuals involved. Perhaps nowhere else in American society

is there a more clear illustration of a social sub- system and group of people bound by a code in a pattern of behavior neither party appears to find desirable than the case of welfare mothers in public housing and the entire social service delivery system. In this case, gender as a code is interacting with at least two other of the codes identified by Luhmann: power and money. The intersection of gender here is especially dramatic in the case of female gender. Mothers on welfare are allocated benefits on the basis of their number of dependents. In order to increase their economic benefits, they must increase the number of dependents. While this is now a cliche of the critique of the welfare system, it places blame upon the women who are seen as draining the service delivery system by thoughtlessly bearing multiple children. If we restate the premise in this way, that the welfare system rewards only a very few select behaviors, such as lack of initiative in regards to employment and bearing children, the burden of responsibility suddenly shifts. It also serves to delineate the <u>reciprocity</u> of the (coded) relationship.

If we assume that a highly condensed code that carries pre-selected action choices is at work in this situation, we can make some sense of the fact that the system has remained largely unchanged (until very recently) in spite of much public rhetoric against its operation, as well as the obvious fact that the majority of welfare recipients would prefer that viable and genuine employment opportunities were available to them and that they were better prepared to take advantage of such opportunities. The sense here is at the system level: the inertial force of the codes involved is what works to keep in place the relationships. In other words, the system has produced a code which is itself differentiated, and which orders and reduces complexity in such a way that its participants are bound together in a pattern established in another historical time and place. The code (gender) pre-selects actions that ensure the continuity of the relationship between the system and the sub-system. In doing so, the contingencies of the economic realities which are altered from those of the original context are nonetheless dealt with in way that maintains this predictable pattern.

Gender as a social/communication code serves the larger system by reducing the complexity of human variation and differences to a highly simplified and therefore predictable set of possibilities within the sphere of social action. It does so by dealing with the complexities of contingencies (such as the variation inherent in humans) in such a way as to make salient only those

features the code pre-selects and which it further motivates social actors to enact. In this way, value is placed on specific types of actions. But these actions are not necessitated --- only limited in range --- by our biology.

Specialized communication codes enact culture. They make possible the density of meaning resident in and transmitted through human interaction. As such, they may be considered the focal point for one kind of examination of collective human action. This examination places communication at the center of the analysis and opens for analysis the social process of valuing.

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CHAPTER VII

THE POLITICS OF "SOCIAL DIFFERENCE": CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIALLY CONDITIONED INACTIVISM

It is the politics of "social difference" that can provide the analytic orientation sufficiently comprehensive to make sense of this pervasive theme in the central urban setting, we need to examine the unique aspects of "social distinction", "social difference", and "minority" (racial, ethnic, and therefore social) in order to fully elaborate and finally explicate the socio-political and theoretical significance of the politics of social difference forming the basis of critical politics. The meanings of difference and minority first need to be contextualized within the framework of social organization. That is, we must understand difference/minority within the principles of modem social organization. Traditionally, social organizing is understood as a set of elements whose interrelationships are best characterized as hierarchical. The notion of hierarchy implies a particular pattern of interrelating: that these relationships can be placed on an abstract continuum (like complexity or power) and thus each element stands on this scale and can be understood and identified by its position on the scale in relation to the position of other elements of the scale and to each other. Consequently, each element must be identifiable in at least two ways: by its distinctiveness and by its connectedness/interrelatedness. Therefore, we can say that the individual element must be marked by both distinction and connection. Social distinction becomes essential to having a social place or position. However, if distinctiveness is essential to position or place, the connectivity is essential to social mobility, for motion or movement within the framework of social organization requires the coordination (cooperation) of or with other elements. Mobility without such coordination places individuals at risk of exclusion from the system. Social distinction and connection, then, form opposite faces of the same coin: The former providing the means to anchor in a kind of (social) harbor, and the latter providing the sail of social and economic mobility. Social difference, taken to the extreme of minority, however, marks a place in the social order without contemporaneously providing genuine connectivity. Without social connectivity there is

no real possibility of social mobility. To (socially) institutionalize difference as minority is to have created an intranscendant social category. Acceptance into this category is tantamount to entering a room with no exits. In the case of a central city community's self-identification as a social and racial minority the perception of this kind of intranscendant difference (self-identifying as a minority community) is often combined with an acceptance of broad cultural goals, and a rejection of the traditional methods of achieving such goals. It is a particular and contemporary form of social and economic disenfranchisement, an attitude, if you will, unfortunately reinforced by both popular culture forms and by the socio-economic realities of most minority neighborhoods. There is a difference between, for example, wanting attainment or acquisition and wanting achievement; in the first case one wants to be famous, win the lottery, and so on, and in the second, one hopes for a level of skill warranting reward and recognition. For a large part of the central city community, socio-economic disenfranchisement means having no access, understanding, or acceptance of the socially approved means (mechanisms, channels, vehicles) of goal achievement. This mixture of wanting materially but not apprehending a means of attainment leads to a displaced sense of agency. The means of social success are tied up in the rules of a game biased against minority participants – only the rule-makers have power or agency. In this case, the rule-makers are White Members of the social system. And because cultural values and goals are common currency, and because American mythology still contains the empty promise of equal and ample opportunity for all, a curious sense of entitlement has evolved among minority members. However, it is entitlement to what others already have, and not to the means of that attainment. If one believes that agency lies external to oneself (because the system treats one as without agency), then one is unlikely to value access to the means of attainment, for only agents can transform means into ends. Indeed, even minority members who gain access to an attainment means such as higher education will frequently manage the opportunity as a chance to manipulate the system and not as a chance to develop and hone new skills. This is to suggest neither that scamming the system is tied in any way to racial or ethnic membership, nor that this is an unreasonable or ineffective strategy. Rather this is to point out a difference in manner participation between what is socially prescribed and what IS (sometimes) enacted.

To continue, the sense of agency seems to be displaced into a sense of identification as a minority, as though enacting an identity as a minority were both a means and an end. Although most socio-cultural acts of identification are certainly ends by themselves, the particular nature of central city community identification as a minority has at least two qualities that render it significantly different as a subcultural identity from many other minority (subcultural) identities. The first of these is the displaced and abbreviated sense of agency previously described and the second is a cultural (systemic) characteristic described in the anthropological literature as liminality.

In socio-cultural terms that which is liminal is the element or group whose identity is sufficiently ambiguous as to contain at least one set of paradoxical conditions, such that Its members are disenabled from participating in the larger social system in a meaningful, productive adult way. Thus what are the paradoxes comprising the label minority in application to central city communities? To begin at the most general (and pervasive) level, to be black is to be not White (or some other color binary). If to be White is to be successful by working inside of the system then to be Black is to be successful by working against or at least outside of the system. The problem this appears to create is that for a Black to succeed in a WASP society by following conventional (white) means is to simultaneously reject one's minority membership or identity: a crippling paradox.

For example, the educational system is viewed as oppressive of Black historical experience and repressive of Black cultural expression. This is an identity based not on some particular cultural articulation, but rather on difference, if not opposition to mainstream (White) culture. This stands in contrast to some other minority groups, who embrace much about mainstream culture (goals, values, etc.) and who demarcate difference or subgroup membership by the use of primarily ritualistic events (i.e. specific marriage customs, customs and costumes, religious displays, food preparation, rites of passage jewelry) emblems and organized community activities or events). However, each of these cultural demarcations, although emphasizing unique subcultural features and a sense of community and identity, occurs while individual members participate in general and on a daily basis within the structure of the (White) socio-cultural hegemony. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to comment on or evaluate the gains and losses of such accultur-

ations, except to note that both parties are affected by the process. The exact nature, extent, significance, value, and meaning of these changes is a difficult and elusive topic. Rather than seek to assess such a process, our intent here is simply to observe and partially characterize it, as it relates to the issues at hand, and in doing so assist in illuminating system characteristics and processes relevant here. The point is to make note of the fact that ethnicity need not be equivalent to social and economic marginality.

Clearly, this conclusion flies in the face of the partially articulated perspective underlying many of the comments and explanations offered by "minorities", many of whom have voiced the sentiment that they are denied success as well as access by virtue of their race. At this point, the question seems to be: is their lack of access and success the result of self-imposed minority identification or the result of socio-cultural racism? In fact, both perspectives are partially valid because the social system and the subgroup each participate in the articulation of minority membership as agentless and liminal. Each participates in the communication code that articulates "Blackness, Brownness or Yellowness", as specifically evident in central urban areas (Columbus, Ohio) and this code binds its participants in a kind of reciprocity that perpetuates the code and the social system.

One of the key consequences of this code is the lack of consistent economic cohesiveness. What does not occur is the sort of economic solidarity that would take the form of central city Blacks purchasing primarily from other Black business owners, which would generally mean patronizing neighborhood businesses. For instance, as one respondent noted, Jews living in the far northwest corner of the city commonly travel to the east side, a 20 to 30 minute trip, to patronize Jewish-owned businesses, whereas Blacks living only several blocks away make no effort to patronize Black-owned businesses. In short, as a group, they seem not to display economic solidarity, and yet, this is not to suggest that as a minority group central city Blacks lack a sense of community, but rather to make note of the manner in which "community" is articulated: it is an interpersonal-phenomenon and not a socioeconomic one with one obvious exception – the ease of neighborhood-organized drug dealing. In public housing, the money generated by such endeavors was not funneled back into the area and local businesses, and most certainly it was not the neighborhood that gained in any respect from drug trafficking.

Adapting how we can understand this theoretical and practical theory of communication codes has an intellectual and political benefit in that such codes are posited to operate throughout a system (e.g., society) without distinguishing among cultural variations. These codes reduce contingencies that might overwhelm an individual, and thereby enable great amounts of social differentiation along economic lines, while enabling the now differentiated segments to interact predictably. Thus, the codes provide the means to relatively stable system ends by providing or perhaps "enlisting" a kind of compliance on the part of all individuals. Because the codes remain out of conscious consideration of most system participants, compliance does not require consenting cooperation on the part of these same individuals. Because their behavior is compliant only in terms of the system's needs, and not in terms of the needs of an individual's psyche, it is not necessary to resort to either personality characteristics nor to hypothetical genetic or cultural predispositions to explain, and understand the behavior of individuals and groups. In short, in applying this theoretical construct, it is not necessary to blame individuals in order to explain social phenomena.

Communication codes are characterized by both reducing the field of alternatives, and reciprocity. Communication codes are complexity-reducing mechanisms that are accomplished through the management of fields of contingency. In a social system, the fields of contingency are the alternatives (action and meaning) available to individuals. One way to define meaning is as a reduction of these alternatives through the mutual acknowledgment of the participants. In this way, meaning is created by the increase in the probability of the selection of some very limited actions on the part of the participants. The net result is that each participant can be said to understand the situation in the sense that it is predicable to a large degree for the participant. This is, of course, a limited and specific way of defining meaning, and is not meant to deny or invalidate other ways of defining the term. It is also not to suggest that alternative or additional kinds of meaning both actually occur and are possible to discern given the same parameters as are utilized here. The point, instead, is to sharpen the focus of this theoretic discussion in a way that will enable us to more clearly understand the detail and application of communication codes to minoritization. The first step is to determine whether any set of transactions can be said to be constitutive of, or at least indicative of

a communication code. We can judge communication processes for clues to the existence and enactment of codes by looking for the following pattern in the exchange: participants who complete their own action selections and know this from each other. Immediately, the participants are linked because both the selection choices and their completion require confirmation by the other. Once this takes place, the participants become bound as their future exchanges and action selections are predicated upon confirmation on the part of the other. It is, in part, this particular kind of interdependence that earmarks the formulation of a communication code.

Communication codes seen as mechanisms, as catalysts that guide transactions, the specifics of the selections, are not as important as is the motivating quality of the selecting process. It is motivating in terms of the selections made by the other. That is to say that, when the manner of one partner's selections serves simultaneously as a motivating structure for the other, a communication code can be said to be formulated. Clearly, if it is the manner and not the content of the selections that is the compelling or conditioning aspect of the transactions, then a code is formulated, as it can be said to be both abstract and ahistorical in nature. By encoding the manner of the selecting, a code is freed from the boundaries of the here and now and can operate out of consciousness, because, in fact, it is the code that now orders the situation and not the situation that determines the encoding.

One of the benefits of employing the concept of communication codes is that it provides a way of specifying how that which communication scholars call context affects human interaction. Thus, we can operationalize the variable context as the presence of a specific code or set of codes that co-condition the selections of the actors, so that the interpretation or meaning created is wholly a product of a highly reduced field of contingencies perceived by the participants. Contingencies are further ordered by a code so that some specific combinations of selections are rendered highly probable. Because probability (determined by codes) greatly enhances predictability and predictability constitutes one basis of/for meaning, context operationalized as communication coders directly affects the range of possible and likely meanings available to the participants.

Because codes manage complexity by reducing contingency, they not only reduce the number of action alternatives available to the participants,

but they simultaneously order those contingencies, the remaining preferred alternatives, and in so doing, significantly increase the probability of a few of those remaining selections. This sequence of contingency reduces motivation because of the net effect: the high probability of selections of the selection of some few alternatives by the participants for a selection of options appears to be intrinsically limited, that is, limited due to the nature of the world or of the situation, not as the consequence of the operation of codes. Two results follow from this apprehension: limited and narrow changes seem possible, if any do, and the actors do not see themselves as participating in the mechanism responsible for the curtailment of their options. This net effect is further reinforced by the fact that codes are ahistorical and atemporal in nature, and these qualities render them invisible to social participants. When a mechanism is invisible and only the effects of it are manifest, it is easy to conclude that either some completely different mechanism is at work, or that nothing in particular is at work; that the effects merely constitute "reality". In this respect, codes gain potency and efficacy by being ahistorical and atemporal, in contrast to the more typical assumptions communication researchers make about the nature of context: that it is very much a product of the specific histories of both the parties involved and their joint history (their relational history) in addition to immediate situational variables.

Reciprocity, the second key characteristic of codes, is crucial to both the success of the social system and to the ability of the individual to participate in the system. It is a marker of inclusion. It is also, in principle, the characteristic responsible for exclusion from system processes, without the reciprocation of the other during interaction, the field of selection remains relatively unpredictable, which is to say that compliance of any kind is not a likely result. The other is not responsive to the individual's manner of selecting alternatives, so that the individual cannot seem to influence the selection of alternatives (the behavior of the other, a situation of relatively high contingency and low predictabi1ity). Given the potency and efficacy of codes when enacted, being unable to enact a code would cause an individual to feel excluded and ineffective, and over time, possibly impotent and/or helpless. It is the reciprocity that serves as boundary marker for the system participants. Not that it demarcates members from nonmembers, but rather, it indicates points of differentiation within the system. That is, the failure to

engage reciprocity of the code (any code) occurs as a means of distinguishing subsystems within the larger social system. In fact, it is exactly because codes as atemporal and ahistorical phenomena possess the potential for guiding communication processes throughout the entire system: that the points at which there is a failure of reciprocity are functionally equivalent to actual physical borders. From a system perspective, it is highly efficacious to utilize a mechanism that simultaneously serves to cohere the system elements and to differentiate among subsystems.

Responses need to be carefully examined in the light of both their original context and from the perspective of the actors, thu highlighting the difference between the sensibility of the system and that of the actor: what is functional for one is not necessarily optimal for the other.

From a system perspective, the need for self-replication may consistently override the option of optimization for/of system elements. At strategic points, the deployment of a code (maybe "socio- economic mobility") or codes minus the component of reciprocity creates the economic marginalization of the inner-city regions of urban areas through the replication of subsystem divisions that, in turn, maintain a particular simplification or balancing of a host of symbolic and material contingencies. This, in turn, enables the continuation of a particular pattern of resource allocation while minimizing both the likelihood of and potential success of any challenge to that pattern. By encoding specific behavioral expectations into variations of communication media across the spectrum of social differentiation, and by the selective engagement of code reciprocity, the system induces replication of itself, including a segment characterized by economic and social marginalization.

From the perspective of the social actor, such marginalization is certainly not experienced as anything nearing optimal. Nonetheless, from a system perspective, such a component serves various functions, and because system elements are interdependent, altering this component is difficult and implicitly threatening to the future of the system which is biased in favor of actualizing any future: state as a replication, if not near duplication, of its present state. In other words, the system itself, although potentially adaptable, is inherently conservative, favoring preservation of the status quo. Replication more commonly wins out over optimization. In offering up greatly reduced alternatives and in favoring the selection of one or several of those alterna-

tives over others, codes provide the sort of information on which individuals predicate their understanding of self, of the world, and of the relationship between the self and the world. In so orienting the individual to the world, codes influence the ability of individuals to generate new or different perspectives. Because one can only ask questions about what one understands (or believes oneself to understand: I must be able to articulate what it is I know that I don't know in order to formulate a question), one can limit the extent and range of, questions an individual might raise. Put differently, that people often don't know that they don't know is, to some extent, a byproduct of the nature of communication codes. The net result is that they don't know what questions to ask because they don't understand the relationships that constitute the encryption scheme for locating the information they need but don't know they need.

These are two of the problems that emerged as thematic in the interview data: asking the right questions to get at relevant information and determining that one does in fact know what one believes one knows. The way a social actor knows factually anything is from engagement with the social system (e.g. with other actors and/or institutions). Here again, reciprocity is a key to the communication process and its social consequences, if successful engagement is characterized by the articulation of code reciprocity, then disconfirmation would be characterized by a lack of reciprocity. If a communication encounter does not activate reciprocity as anticipated by a social actor, then there is only disconfirmation of the assumptions and understanding that predicated the interaction. The result is that the actor must conclude that he or she does not know what he or she thought he or she knew or understood, and without the engagement of the reciprocity, there is a sudden and steep rise in contingencies and therefore a complexity accompanied by a parallel drop in predictability. The interaction is now characterized by uncertainty, and the actors experience discomfort and possible dissatisfaction. Furthermore, without the engagement of reciprocity of the code, the linking and binding functions of communicative transactions are not accomplished or at least not in the ordinary sense in which connectivity is recognized and understood as a positive force in the sense that it is the presence of some relationship. In a back-handed sort of way, the failure of reciprocity links individuals in the sense that it firmly establishes the absence of connectivity, but the context of

a social system, demarcation of relational boundaries (exclusion as well as inclusion) is still acknowledging a relationship in terms of the larger system. That this negative linking is still a form of social relating reflects on the need of the system to replicate itself and on the idea of socio-economic competency and mobility. In terms of the system, it may be necessary, or at least desirable, for certain elements to remain, in socio-economic terms, immobile, in which case it is inaccurate to label those elements as socio-economically incompetent. For, from a system perspective, such immobility is really a form of competency, of accurately enacting the expectations of the system.

It is clear that codes must, in fact, order the social situation and constitute the context of an interaction, what Luhmann (1995) so elliptically refers to as "code-guided communication processes". Minorities attempting to deal with bank loan officers clearly illustrate an example of the effect of code-limited alternatives restricting the possibility or probability of a social actor asking the appropriate and relevant questions in order to secure the necessary information and understanding to accomplish his or her goal (i.e., to secure a loan).

This difficulty is further exacerbated by the fact that much (legal. etc.) information is encrypted in a way that renders it incomprehensible to the very people who might most benefit from access to it (in this case, inner-city small business owners). At one level, untangling this kind of encryption problem can be managed if dealt with in a conscientious and systematic way. That it remains a problem in light of the attention afforded it at local, state, and federal levels is an indication that something more pervasive is at work in the situation. One explanation is that changing that situation will result in a direct challenge to the governmental and financial networks that enmesh such programs as those designed to offer support and technical assistance to small businesses, especially ones located in inner cities. However, it is beyond the scope of any single case study to provide sufficient evidence to determine whether a specific code or set of codes is directly implicated here. What can be noted is that such a significant reallocation of resources raises contingencies within several social system domains, and so constitutes an implicit threat to replication.

To shift perspective from communication codes to more general system characteristics, the need for a system to ensure its continuation by means of

replication is closely related to a system's tendency toward homeostasis, that is, its tendency to maintain equilibrium. There are two primary means for a system to maintain equilibrium in the face of newly introduced forces. It can either adapt itself to the new condition or it can reconfigure the new force into a shape which the system can assimilate and/or manipulate. In the first case, the system must make some significant self-adjustment, whereas in the second, it conversely causes a change in the new contingency or force. One can argue that a sufficiently robust system would tend toward the second alternative, which is more conservative, requires fewer changes or manipulations, and does not require the nearly always risky application of the principle of equifinality.

An example of this kind of homeostatic response is the taking over of specific symbols, images, and issues by the dominant culture and the telecommunication media of "minority" efforts to shift some aspect of the social value system. This is otherwise recognized by scholars as cooptation. Although social movements arise from within a social system, partly as a result of high levels of differentiation, the mechanisms that cohere the system (those that cut across the differentiation) operate to co-opt such movements in order to manipulate or reconfigure them into forms the system can better direct and control. Trivialization of a social movement effectively co-opts that movement and reduces its potency in two ways. It presents the issues around which efforts to create change are focused as insignificant and frivolous. It also reconfigures those symbols into forms, already dominant and meaning-laden, and so the new meaning is overwhelmed by the old, dominant, easily recognized, and commonly embraced meanings. The new message comes to merely reiterate the old.

In the case of the articulation of a minority identity, and the articulation of an identity as a minority, this kind of cooptation appears to characterize the efforts of generations of central city minorities. Although it is true that there is no necessary (e.g., genetic or biological) connection between an underclass status and race-indeed, there are Blacks at virtually all socio-economic levels, there appears to be an institutionalized form of racism which serves to facilitate social and economic differentiation in broad terms across the system.

It may be the case that racism is one of the key triggers of the suspension of code reciprocity, a means of activating differentiation while deploying a mechanism that otherwise coheres system elements by reducing contingencies to ordered alternatives. In this respect, racism serves to assist in the attainment and maintenance of homeostasis of the system. To the extent that this is the case, cooptation of the efforts by minorities to initiate substantive change in their social status and valuation in the system clearly reflects the conservative and robust nature of the system. The capacity to enact the transformation of new forces to fit standard formats means that replication of existing codes will be favored as a means of ensuring the continuation of the system. In this way, the potential for significant and substantive (social) change is subsumed by the system while being made possible in part by the potency of communication codes and their ability to reduce complexity and order alternatives into mutual expectation.