

Beyond the opposition of individual and society

Part II

The 'category-mistake' entailed in this opposition

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Part II of this final article is meant to bring the discussion of the traditional opposition of individual and society to a conclusion (Strauss, 2002; 2004; 2006a). It continues the analysis by giving an appraisal of the dynamic social field theory of Sztompka, as well as a critical appraisal of the views of Habermas (the dualism between action and order) and Giddens (his theory of structuration). This analysis necessitated a more refined account of the step from modal to typical concepts against the background of the fundamental distinction between typical (structural) principles and the way in which they are continually shaped (given form, i.e. positivized) in the enactment ('structuration') of social forms of life. The systematic considerations articulated in the final section of Part I are also amended at the end of Part II by adding an argument why the opposition between 'individual' and 'society' constitutes a fundamental "category-mistake." In the Conclusion the main thrust of our entire argument, spread over four articles, is summarized in fourteen succinct points.

A critical appraisal of some contemporary theoretical approaches

In an interview Giddens indicated that his theory of structuration must be seen as an attempt to come to terms with its implication for the problem of *individual* and *society* (see Giddens, 1998:75). Rather than starting either with the 'individual' or with 'society' Giddens opts for the *dynamic flow* of "recurrent social practices" – "I wanted to place an emphasis on the active flow of social life" (Giddens, 1998:76).

A dynamic social field theory

Since a similar sentiment is found in the theory of a dynamic social field developed by Sztompka, we start with a brief discussion of his stance, for through this theory he wants to surpass the limitations of the systems model (Sztompka, 1993:9ff.). His aim is to develop a *sociology of social change* that supersedes the doubtful validity of "organic-systemic models of society" as well as the very "dichotomy of social statics and social dynamics" (Sztompka, 1993:9). His aim is to explore Whitehead's "processual image" which claims that "change is inherent in the very nature of things" (Sztompka, 1993:9).

Ontologically speaking, society as a steady state does not and cannot exist. All social reality is pure dynamics, a flow of changes of various speed, intensity, rhythm and tempo. It is not by accident that we often speak of 'social life,' perhaps a more fitting metaphor than the old image of a hide-

bound, reified super-organism. Because life is nothing else but movement, motion and change, when those stop, there is no more life, but an entirely different condition – nothingness, or as we call it death (Sztompka, 1993:9).

Yet Sztompka does not analyze the *primitive meaning* of change. Such an exercise would have cautioned him in his extreme 'dynamistic' approach. Without something *persistent* or *constant* it is impossible to detect any *changes*. He correctly rejects the old dichotomy of "social statics and social dynamics," but he does not see that one cannot avoid the mutual coherence between *constancy* and *change*. Nonetheless, that change pre-supposes something constant is implicitly acknowledged by his introduction of the expression "social field." For example, he distinguishes four levels within(!) the "socio-cultural field" (*ideal, normative, interactional* and *opportunity*) and then affirms that each one of these levels "is undergoing perpetual change" – thus implicitly affirming the *constancy* of each level allowing for the changes taking place *within* them (cf. Sztompka, 1993:10-11). Without constancy (and identity) no meaning could be attached to the word *change*. Sztompka nevertheless still thinks that the only reality this new approach deals with is the dynamic one of *constant* [author's emphasis] changes!

Asserting that life is "nothing but movement, motion and change" is tantamount to a denial of the reality of phenomena stamped by the biotical aspect, i.e. of anything alive. Therefore, "when those stop," to reverse Sztompka's claim, we already have 'nothingness' and 'death'!

Furthermore, if 'life' is really "nothing but" "movement, motion and change" – why not be consistent and say the same about the 'social'? By maintaining the qualifying role of the term *social* in expressions such as the "social field" and "social life," Sztompka implicitly acknowledges the (ontic) *constancy* of the social dimension (aspect) of reality. If the structure of this aspect itself is subject to change (i.e. inherently transient), then its qualifying role has to be substituted by whatever non-social phenomenon it changed to! Such a one-sided emphasis on change cannot but end in insurmountable antinomies.

The dualism between action and system (order)

Habermas distinguishes *three* worlds: "1. The objective world (as the totality of all entities about which true statements are possible); 2. The social world (as the totality of all legitimately regulated interpersonal relations); 3. The subjective world (as the totality of the experiences of the speaker to which she has privileged access" – Habermas 1984:100). The "objective world" is understood in terms of (objective) *entities* while the *social world* and the subjective world respectively are described in terms of *relations* and *experiences*.

Implicit in the ontology of Habermas is therefore that he does not acknowledge *ontic*¹ *modes of being* embracing all three worlds distinguished by him. Therefore he never

1. In Strauss (2002 and 2004) we have employed the term "ontic" to designate that which really exists. Although it is usually restricted to *entitatory existence*, we shall apply this term also to the reality of the fundamental *modes* or *functions* of reality (such as the *quantitative*, the *spatial*, the *kinematical*, the *physical*, the *logical*, the *lingual*, the *social* and so on) which form the basis of our account of elementary and compound basic concepts of sociology as a discipline.

relates the *social relations* acknowledged by him to an ontic social mode of being making possible all the different kinds of social interaction one can distinguish. This observation entails that even what Habermas would recognize as uniquely *human* acts, in addition to their functions within the normative aspects of reality,² in principle also function within the natural sides of reality (his first world). But Habermas's own view is dependent upon his basic *dualism* between *instrumental actions* and *communicative actions*, since this dualism sets apart the domain of *subject-object* relations (being "instrumental") from that of *communicative actions* (restricted to *subject-subject* relations).³

Since Habermas does not have a theory of *modal functions* belonging to a(n) ontic dimension of experiential reality *distinct* from (but intimately cohering with) the dimension of (natural and social)⁴ *entities*, he does not realize that all subject-subject relations are *founded* in subject-object relations and that therefore it is unsound to attempt to separate *instrumental* and *communicative actions*. Furthermore, although he does constantly speak about "social entities," such as tribal societies ('Stammesgesellschaften'), institutions, families, and even societies organized by the state,⁵ his only recourse to a *theory* of social entities is found in a fusion of his theory of communicative action with the system theory of Parsons – keeping in mind that he distinguishes between *system* and *life-world*.⁶

Waters summarizes this move as follows:

Habermas now proceeds to integrate his own arguments about communicative action with Parsonsian system theory. First, he argues that Parsons' 'systems within systems' elaboration is not much more than a semantic exercise. Action is not an environment for society but its content – culture, personality and social interaction are the substance of the lifeworld. Moreover, such constructs as the 'relic system' and 'ultimate values' are abstractions from lifeworld activity. The only 'real' systems are the structural responses to the AGIL imperatives originally proposed by Parsons and Smelser – economy, polity, societal community, and fiduciary. These are now reinterpreted in the terms of the system/lifeworld couplet ... The

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2. In passing we may note that in an amazingly uncritical way he adheres to a metaphysical legacy reaching back to Greek antiquity. In early Greek philosophy, within the school of Parmenides, emphasis was laid upon *unity* and *truth*. Eventually, in the thought of Socrates and Plato, the *beautiful* and the *good* were added, leading to the four transcendental determinations of medieval metaphysics: *unity*, *truth*, *beauty* and *goodness* (supposed to embrace God – as the highest being or *ipsum esse* – and creatures *analogically*). Habermas simply continues three of these, namely the *cognitive*, the *aesthetic* and the *moral* (see for example Habermas, 1995-2:374). The anthropological view that accompanied this heritage looked at the human being as a so-called rational-moral being.
 3. Habermas differentiates *rationality* in two domains: from "one perspective the *telos* inherent in rationality appears to be *instrumental mastery*, from the other *communicative understanding*" (Habermas 1984:11).
 4. Clearly, Habermas excludes 'entities' from the social world, for the latter is characterized by 'relations' only.
 5. "... staatlich organisierten Gesellschaften ..." ["societies organized by the state"] (Habermas, 1995-2:253).
 6. The structural components of the life-world are "culture, society and personality" ("Kultur, Gesellschaft und Persönlichkeit" – Habermas, 1995-2:229).

economy and the polity are steering agencies, focused on system integration and organized along the lines of strategic action. Societal community and fiduciary are the public and private sectors of the lifeworld, focused on social integration and characterized by communicative action. Note that in undertaking this reinterpretation, Habermas moves system integration to A/G from I and renders I/L the shared location for social integration (Waters, 1994:163).

The mere fact that Habermas speaks about "societies organized by the state" reveals the implicitly *totalitarian* consequences of his own affinity to *system theory*. In this frame of mind the functions of society in its totality⁷ are viewed in terms of a differentiation between political and non-political *subsystems* as diverse action systems.⁸ Through the medium of *money* and *money-exchange* the economic function of society as a whole is handed over by the state to the capitalistic economic system which forms the specialized foundation for a subsystem that outgrew the normative context of the state.⁹ From this it clearly follows that Habermas does not acknowledge the *modal universality* of the *economic aspect* of reality.¹⁰ The differentiation of economic life and the emergence of the business enterprise merely *specify* the general modal meaning of the economic aspect – without monopolizing it exclusively, for alongside the non-political spheres of societal life (where each one of these spheres in its own way continues to function within the economic aspect), also the state continues to specify the meaning of the economic mode in a way *typically* different from that of the firm and other societal forms of social life. The striking additional perspective that Habermas wants to advance is that through the medium of money-exchange a whole domain of "norm-free sociality" is institutionalized.¹¹

Although Habermas does react critically to the whole-parts scheme *as such* (see Habermas, 1998:65) he appears not to realize that social system theory indeed also gives shel-

7. "Die gesamtgesellschaftlich relevanten Funktionen" ["Those functions relevant for society in its totality"] (Habermas, 1995-2:255).

8. "... nicht-staatliche subsysteme" ["non-state subsystems"] (Habermas, 1995-2:255).

9. "Die gesamtgesellschaftliche relevanten Funktionen verteilen sich auf verschiedene Handlungssysteme. Mit Verwaltung, Militär und Rechtspflege spezialisiert sich der Staatsapparat darauf, über bindende entscheidungen die kollektiven Ziele zu verwirklichen" ["The functions relevant for society in its totality differentiates into different action systems. Through administration, the military and jurisprudence the state apparatus specializes in the realization of binding decisions and collective aims."] [According to Parsons the 'polity' is also geared towards "collective goal-attainment" – DFMS]. "Andere Funktionen werden entpolitisiert und an *nicht-staatliche Subsysteme* abgegeben. Das kapitalistische Wirtschaftssystem markiert den Durchbruch zu dierseer ebene der Systemdifferenzierung; es verdankt seine entstehung einem neuen Mechanismus, dem Steuerungsmedium Geld. Dieses Medium ist auf die vom Staat abgegebene gesamtgesellschaftliche Funktion des Wirtschaftens spezialisiert und bildet die Grundlage für ein normativen Kontexten entwachsenes Subsystem" ["Other functions are depoliticized and handed over to non-state subsystems. The capitalist economic system signifies the breakthrough to this level of system differentiation; it owes its genesis to a new mechanism, the guiding medium money. This medium specializes in a function of society in its totality delegated to the economy and it constitutes the foundation of a normative context of a separated subsystem."] (Habermas, 1995-2:255-256).

ter to this scheme. The least one can say is that his thought is ambivalent in this regard, because he does not proceed from a strict modal delimitation (what we will designate as the qualifying function below) of the structural task of the state. This explains why he considers it to be the main burden of *law* within modern societies to bring about *social integration* (Habermas, 1998:60). Every societal form of life has to attain its own specific "social integration." The *juridical integration* of a multiplicity of legal interests into a public legal order (within the territory of the state) differs from the *social integration* of changing *fashions*.

There is another subtle 20th century intellectual background practically cutting across all the different sociological schools of thought of this century – and still found (in some or other variant) in the thought of Weber, Maclver, Parsons and Habermas (to mention just a few).¹² In spite of peripheral differences, they all adhere to the transformation which the Kantian dualism between 'Sollen' ('ought') and 'Sein' ('is') acquired in the Baden School of neo-Kantian thought where it resulted in an assessment of society in *factual terms* while *norms, values* and *beliefs* are located within the sphere of 'culture'.¹³ The latter lacks an ontic character, for 'culture' is the result of (autonomous) *human construction*.

The step from modal to typical concepts

By contrast our discussion of *coordinational, communal* and *collective* forms of social interaction consistently wants to acknowledge *ontic normativity* – not only in the context of *modal normative contraries* (such as logical-illogical, economic – un-economic, polite-impolite, legal-illegal, and so on), but also in respect of distinct social 'entities'.¹⁴ The idea of

10. Giddens evinces a more articulated intuition in this regard when he gives a description of the 'economic' closely approximating the modal universality of the economic aspect of reality: "Rather, the sphere of the 'economic' is given by the inherently constitutive role of allocative resources in the structuration of societal totalities" (Giddens, 1986:34). Rephrased in terms of the idea of the many-sided functioning of societal entities, one can say that Giddens uncovered the fact that every societal collectivity has a function within the economic modal aspect.
11. "Die kapitalistische Wirtschaft läßt sich nicht mehr wie der traditionale Staat als institutionelle Ordnung begreifen – institutionalisiert wird das Tauschmedium, während das über dieses Medium ausdifferenzierte Subsystem im ganzen ein Stück normfreier Sozialität darstellt" ["The Capitalist economy cannot be understood as an institutional order like the traditional state. What has been institutionalized is the medium of exchange, while the subsystem embracing this medium manifests an overall piece of sociality free from norms"] (Habermas, 1995-2:256). The phrase "normfreier Sozialität" suggests that economic activities are not subject to economic norms – contradicting the ever-present *normative contrary economic – un-economic*.
12. Compare the remarks made in the first section of the previous article (*Beyond the opposition of individual and society, Part I*).
13. One of the founding philosophers of the Baden school, Heinrich Rickert, did start with *ideal values* having a *timeless validity* (culture originates through relating 'nature' to 'values', i.e.. through 'Wertbeziehung') – but soon the effects of 19th century historicism and the linguistic turn relativized this view (up to contemporary postmodern views where every individual is supposed to choose her own values at will – in their mission formulation contemporary organizations are sometimes prompted to consider the acceptance of "new values").
14. Or, as we shall explain presently, of normative social *structures for* (structural principles for) societal entities.

communal and collective societal structures proceeds from the distinction between modal aspects and the dimension of (natural and social) entities – where the latter are acknowledged in their multi-aspectual existence in the sense that they have a (subject-)function¹⁵ within *each* modal aspect of (ontic) reality. This step transcends the domain of modal (*elementary* and *compound*) basic concepts, for now *type concepts* (including concepts of type laws) are required. In Strauss (2004:172, 174ff.) the distinction between *modal laws* and *type laws* was introduced.¹⁶ The *type laws* for different kinds of entities only hold for a particular *type* of entities. Type laws therefore manifest a *specified form* of universality. The type law for *being a state* (a societal collectivity), for example, has its own universality, for it applies to *all* states, although this universality is *specified* (i.e. *limited*), since not *everything* within the universe is a state – there are also others kinds (types) of (natural and social) entities.¹⁷

In order to differentiate further between societal collectivities, displaying both a solitary unitary character and a durable relation of super- and sub-ordination (such as the state, the firm, the club, the nuclear family, and so on), one has to exceed the confines of the social mode of reality by looking at that specific modal aspect stamping, characterizing or *qualifying* the type law under consideration. This idea of a *qualifying function* rests upon the given *uniqueness* of such a modal function, as well as a continued acknowledgement of the modal universality of every modal function as such. Furthermore, every societal entity also has a *typical foundational function*.¹⁸

In order to distinguish between those collectivities mentioned in the previous paragraph (namely the state, the firm, the club and the nuclear family) one may start by specifying their respective *qualifying functions*. The state, for example, is qualified by the *jural* aspect (it is a public *legal* institution destined to harmonize and balance the multiplicity of legal interests within its jurisdiction on the basis of the monopoly over the “power of the

15. Within every sphere of (a differentiated or undifferentiated) society societal *objects* are found that are *correlated with* societal subject functions – just think about the firm (production and means of production), the school (teachers and pupils on the one hand and textbooks, overhead projectors and school buildings on the other), the state (governmental and subjects and the cultural domain of the state, the Houses of Parliament and jails), etc. etc.
16. We have pointed out that whereas *modal laws* hold *universally* for whatever there is, laws for typically different kinds of entities have a *limited* scope only.
17. The *atomness* of *an* atom is the universal way in which *this* atom evinces the fact that it is conditioned by (subject to) the (universal) law for being-an-atom.
18. Biochemistry discovered many *isomeric forms*, that is, they have identified different *chemical structures* which are constituted by the *same* atoms (viewed purely *numerically*). In other words, the function of these chemical compounds within the arithmetical aspect of reality cannot explain their *chemical* differences, for merely counting their atoms simply affirms their ‘sameness’ and does not reveal anything structurally *distinct* between them. Yet the same *number* of atoms, arranged in different *spatial ways* (*patterns*), yield *chemically distinct* structures. For example, the following 12 atoms – C₄H₄O₄ – may constitute (based upon a different spatial configuration) the following *distinct* chemical structures: CH₃.CH₂.CHO (*maleic acid* – cis) and CH₃.CO.CH₃ (*fumaric acid* – trans). It is evident that the *foundational function* of (physically qualified) chemical compounds is not given in the *quantitative* mode, but that it is rather found in the *spatial aspect* of reality.

sword"¹⁹ within its territory). The firm, by contrast, is qualified by the *economic aspect* while the nuclear family finds its qualifying function in the *moral aspect of love*. Because each of these societal collectivities still functions at once in *all* (other) aspects of reality, the acknowledgement of their respective qualifying functions does not terminate any other modal function they may have.

The universal modal economic principles of frugality address whatever functions within this mode – be it a state, the firm, a university or a church denomination, for in all these cases it is recognized that the *wasting* of money is un-economic (economically anti-normative). Yet, as soon as the respective *type laws* of these societal collectivities are brought into the picture, it becomes clear that the *way* in which they function within the economic mode differs in each case – in the sense that their subject function within the economic mode is 'coloured' by their respective unique type laws (stamped by their distinct qualifying functions). For example, whereas the firm – as an economically qualified social entity – sets out to be *profitable* (without side-stepping its social accountability), the modern state has to budget for its expenses through a complicated tax system. Maintaining a police force or fighting a war is not 'profitable' in the sense of business economics, although by performing these duties a state still has to observe modal economic principles in order to ensure that money is not *wasted*.

From this perspective the inadequacy of the Parsonian system theory is obvious, because (as explained in Strauss 2002:110ff.), the AGIL scheme is constituted as an *ontological design* which is based upon a *four function paradigm* (*adaptation, goal-attainment, integration and latency*) exploring only three elementary basic (i.e. analogical) concepts of sociological theorizing – namely the *spatial* opposition of *inner* and *outer*, the analogy of thermo-dynamical open systems (*physical analogy* – "pattern maintenance") and the *biological analogies* reflected the terms *adaptation, goal-attainment, and integration*. Unfortunately these aspects (modal functions) are shared by *all* communal and collective social entities, making it impossible to differentiate them in this way theoretically. Parsons attempts to solve this problem by speaking about *collective* goal-attainment – regarding the 'polity' – in order to distinguish it from the 'economy' (supposedly concerned with 'adaptation'). But the 'economy' and the 'polity' both have to cope with these two functional problems of adaptation and goal-attainment in their respective *typical* ways – entailing that what is typical about them as societal collectivities is presupposed and cannot be derived from coping with these two problems.

Prior to these shortcomings, system theory has elevated the original *spatial whole-parts relation* in a universalistic way as principle of explanation, such that society as a whole is captured in this reductionistic, holistic scheme. As long as priority is given to such a whole-parts scheme the 'individual' will always be sacrificed to whatever societal reality is chosen as the *encompassing whole*. Therefore, whoever wants to buy into system theory *and* at the same time tries to uphold a theory of agency inevitably ends up in the conflict between atomistic and holistic views of society (cf. Waters, 1994:168ff.).²⁰

Do we find a solution for the tension between *individualism* and *universalism* in the the-

19. Internally the police force and against external threats/attacks the military force (infantry, navy and air force).

ory of *structuration* developed by Giddens?

The theory of structuration

In order to proceed we have to introduce two additional fundamental systematic distinctions, because they relate to the heart of the theory of Giddens. The idea of ontic normativity, i.e. the acknowledgement of underlying principles that are not the result or product of human action but its very *condition*, entails the distinction between a *principle* and its *application* (giving it a positive form, positivizing it). Also Habermas explicitly uses this term, for example where he speaks about "the positivization of law" (Habermas, 1996:71).²¹

As such the concept of a *principle* is also a *complex basic concept* of those scholarly disciplines involved in a study of reality from the perspective of some or other normative aspect – be it the logical-analytical (logic), the cultural-historical (the science of history), the sign mode (semiotics, linguistics and semantics), the social aspect (sociology), the economic function (economics), the aesthetic (aesthetics), the jural (the science of law), the moral (ethics) or the fiduciary (theology or a comparative study of religion).²² This consideration entails that in order to articulate the meaning of a principle one has to employ terms derived from multiple aspects. Consider the social principle of *showing respect*. This principle is *universal* in the sense that there is no single human society in which one does not encounter *some or other* form of respect and at the same time it is *constant* as well.²³ But principles are not *per se* valid (in force), for they need the intervention of human beings *to make them valid*, to *enforce* them (see Derrida, 2002:233ff.). Therefore, a principle is a *universal, constant, starting-point for human action that can only be made valid (enforced) by a competent organ with an accountable (free) will capable of giving a positive shape*

20. Waters remarks: "The intransigent theoretical failures which inhere in the specification of system have generally forced a retreat in the direction of action. In the case of Parsons, the so-called systems theory has an actional foundation. The theoretical prototype of the system, the unit act, precisely specifies a voluntaristic orientation in which purposes are located at the level of the individual. In his middle period (the three-system model) the conditions which constrain such voluntarism disappear from the formula and the governing system, culture, is an analytic abstraction from the concrete orientations of individuals. The pattern variables remain as a classification of human intentions. Only in the later, cybernetic phase does individual intention disappear from the social system entirely, but only, as Habermas expertly shows, by artificially placing intentions in the cultural environment. Alexander's sympathies with Parsons' middle period indicate a similar orientation in his theoretical approach, assertions to the contrary notwithstanding. This brings us to Habermas himself. His arguments about the mediatization and colonization of the lifeworld would tend to suggest a materialistic orientation in which system dominates action. However, the distinction between lifeworld and system is founded on distinctions at the level of action between strategic and communicative practices. The formation of autonomous steering organizations and the transformation of linguistic human relationships into juridified and monetarized forms is not the consequence of ineluctable system requirements. These are merely vehicles for the strategic intentions of individuals. Habermas' fundamental concern is less to do with the rise of the system than with the progressive eclipse of communicative action by strategic action" (Waters, 1994:171-172).

21. Compare Habermas (1998:101) where he discusses "die Positivierung des Rechts" ["the positivization of law"].

to such a starting-point in varying historical circumstances in the light of an appropriate interpretation of the relevant circumstances and resulting in a norm-conformative or antinormative positivization of the underlying principle.²⁴

Against this background a distinction ought to be drawn between the principles norming human activities and the norm-conformative (or: antinormative) ways in which human beings can respond to underlying principles. In the case of societal entities and processes there is always a difference between "structures for" and "structures of." For example, the scope of the structural principle for being a state cuts across all past, present and future states wherever they may be found – whereas any concretely existing state – in its *being a state* – exhibits the reality that it *is* a state. Being a state is the universal way in which *this* state shows that it is subject to the *structure for* being a state. The modern idea of *autonomy* as well as the idea of the *social construction of the world* reified the human freedom to positivize, while denying the existence of universal and constant principles underlying every human act of shaping and form-giving (positivization).

Anthony Giddens wrestled with these issues in his own way when he introduced his theory of *structuration* in order to emphasize the *actuality* of temporal societal processes through which societal structures are produced and reproduced. According to him a "double hermeneutic" is implied in all forms of sociological theorizing because the scholar is participant and analyst at once (see Calhoun *et al.*, 2002:222). The acknowledgement of the "subject-dependency" of societal structures explains why Giddens prefers to speak about 'structuration' instead of merely speaking about 'structure'. Although he alludes to "primitive terms" he does not have a clear understanding of what we have called the indispensable elementary (analogical) basic concepts of sociology as a discipline. In fact his sociological thought shows a remarkable ambiguity towards the use of modal analogies.

On the one hand, for example, he wants to discard altogether any reference to the phrase *social adaptation*, but simultaneously concedes that there may be legitimate usages of this expression – but then he once again fears that such usages may be too *vague* and

22. It should be kept in mind that since every (natural and social) entity or process functions within all modes of reality the scope of each of these disciplines is as wide as the universe itself – it is only the respective *modes of explanation* that differentiate these special sciences from each other – not the (natural and social) entities within the world.

23. Hart explains: "In certain cultures men may express respect by taking off their hat to each other. Let's say that after some time people no longer actually raised the hat all the way, but just lifted it slightly. Still later we see people just touching the hat. In the end all that remains is raising the hand. We can distinguish between a principle (i.e. expressing respect) and actual patterns of behaviour (i.e. various actions with the arm relating to headgear). ... In spite of all that varies, something 'in principle' remains invariant through all this historical development" (Hart, 1984:59). Three pages further he explicitly rejects the extremes of *conservatism* and *chaos*: "Either only lifting one's hat all the way counts as greeting, or anything I choose is greeting. The recognition of 'greeting in principle' makes it possible to avoid both conservatism and chaos."

24. The attentive reader will notice that this circumscription involves the following modal aspects: the numerical (a starting-point); the spatial (universal); the kinematical (constant); the physical (making valid, enforce); the biotical (organ); the sensitive-psychical (will); the logical-analytical (norm-conformative or antinormative); the cultural-historical (shaping, giving form to, positivization); and the sign mode (interpretation). Since these terms are derived from multiple aspects the concept of a principle is a *compound* or *complex* basic concept.

diffuse (Giddens, 1986:233-236, 270-271). In different contexts he simply uses the terms (social) *differentiation* and *integration* without realizing that they reflect the *biotic analogy* within the structure of the social aspect (Giddens, 1986:181ff.). He has a fairly *negative* assessment of the meaning of "social causation" (see Giddens, 1983:80; 1996:65).

In the absence of well-known 'abuses' of modal analogies comparable to those found in 19th century "organic models," the structure of the logical aspect – and its possible analogies within the context of sociological analysis – apparently does not pose a similar threat to Giddens. Consider his treatment of the "concept of contradiction":

It is commonly remarked that the concept of contradiction should remain a logical one rather than being applied to social analysis ... Given that it is used with some care, however, I think the concept to be an indispensable one in social theory (1986:193).

What a *mixed* picture in the thought of one of the leading sociologists of our day regarding the admissibility and status of what we have called the elementary basic concepts of sociology: from *rejection* ("social adaptation"), *hesitance* ("social adaptation"; "social causation") and *unawareness* ("social differentiation and integration") to *positive acceptance* ("social contradiction")! Of course there is no *systematic* treatment of analogical concepts in the sociology of Giddens. Where he does refer to the 'primitive' terms of "social science" only three are lifted out: *meaning*, *norm* and *power*.

Processes of structuration involve an interplay of meanings, norms and power. These three concepts are analytically equivalent as the 'primitive' terms of social science,²⁵ and *are logically implicated both in the notion of intentional action and that of structure*: every cognitive and moral order is at the same time a system of power, involving a 'horizon of legitimacy' (Giddens, 2002:230).

Although the term 'meaning' resides in the sign-mode of reality,²⁶ which, in a modal-functional sense presupposes *choice* and requires *interpretation*,²⁷ it is usually (in modern sociological theory) 'loaded' with connotations that are related to *beliefs*, *values* and *norms*. It

25. In a different context Giddens suggests "that *structure*, *system* and *structuration*, appropriately conceptualized, are all necessary terms in social theory" (Giddens, 1983:62).

26. The phrase "social meaning" in the first place reflects an analogy of the sign-mode within the structure of the social aspect and therefore belongs to the domain of elementary basic concepts of sociology.

27. Animal communication does not refer to the *past* or to the *future*. It refers to the vital *here* and *now*. For this reason animal signs strictly have a single content for every sign. All human utterances, by contrast, can signify a number of different things, depending on the context, intention, or even, in the case of written language, the punctuation. Compare this with the famous dance of the bees which always indicates by means of the (i) tempo, (ii) direction and (iii) angle of the figure eight executed, the (i) distance, (ii) location, and (iii) direction of the source found (see Overhage, 1972:211ff.). Human language, on the other hand, presupposes a *freedom of choice* and the concomitant *multiplicity of meaning*, requiring *interpretation*, which, in turn, requires further interpretation from the addressee (cf. Nida, 1979:203; De Klerk, 1978:6). It presupposes the responsible free activity of the human being, which requires *accountable choices*. Eibl-Eibesfeldt categorically states that that "which, by contrast, regarding animals, is generally designated as 'language', exclusively moves within ... the domain of interjection, of the expression of moods lacking insight" (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 2004:214).

is therefore not surprising that Giddens indeed does relate *meaning* and *norm*. But in doing this he does not realize that whereas the *primitive* sense of the term *meaning* marks an *analogical sociological concept*, the complex nature of the term *norm* represents a complex or compound basic concept of sociology. Furthermore, since the core meaning of the cultural-historical mode of reality is given in *power (control, mastery)*, also the notion of *social power* (social control, social mastery) refers to a modal historical analogy within the structure of the social aspect and therefore it belongs to the domain of *elementary basic concepts* of sociology.

But, as we have pointed out repeatedly, the discipline of sociology is based upon the use of many more elementary basic concepts – such as numerical analogies (social order – the unity in a multiplicity of social norms, correlated with the unity in the multiplicity of social roles assumed by human subjects within human society), spatial analogies (social super- and subordination, social stratification, social distance), kinematic analogies (social constancy, social stability), physical analogies (social dynamics, social causes and effects), biotic analogies (social life, social differentiation, social integration, social growth, social adaptation), sensitive analogies (social awareness, social sensitivity, social desires/will), logical-analytical analogies (social identification – ‘we’ and ‘they’ – social consensus, social conflict, social contradiction, social antinormativity). In addition sociology (implicitly or explicitly) employs complex or compound basic sociological concepts, constituted by peculiar configurations of elementary basic concepts. The only two that we have explicated were those regarding different ways of social interaction (coordinational, communal and collective modes) and the nature of a norm or a principle. In addition the meaning of *social subjects* and *social objects* can also only be accounted for in terms of *complex* basic concepts. In passing it should be noted that Giddens is not consistent with his correct emphasis on the *subject-dependent* nature of (continuously functioning) social entities, for if he was he would have realized that ‘society’ (or any social form of life intended by coordinational, communal and collective relationships) is not a *social object*, for social entities in this sense always function *subjectively*²⁸ within all aspects of reality, including the social aspect.²⁹

Finally, an account of the inevitable *type concepts* used by sociologists requires the typical concept of type laws as well as that of communal and collective subjectivity (where social entities are understood in terms of their typical totality character, distinctly demarcated by their respective *foundational* and *qualifying* functions).³⁰

O'Brien mentions that Giddens wants to avoid the term ‘structure’ and rather articulates the idea of “the ‘structuring properties’ of social interaction” (O'Brien, 1998:10). For Giddens the concept of *structuration* involves what he calls the “*duality of structure*” which,

28. The term ‘subjectively’ does not convey the connotation of *arbitrariness*, but simply refers to one pole of the ever-present *subject-object relation* within human societal interaction.

29. Giddens writes: “According to this conception, the same structural characteristics participate in the subject (the actor) as in the object (society)” (1983:70). *Social objects*, strictly speaking, are those products brought into being through the cultural-formative activities of human beings (think about the furniture of a living room – social objects; test tubes in the laboratory – scientific objects; tools – technical objects; jails – juridical objects, etc.) – always correlated with “societal-human-subjectivity”.

according to him, “relates to the *fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency*” (Giddens, 1983:69):

By the duality of structure I mean that the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems. The theory of structuration, thus formulated, rejects any differentiation of synchrony and diachrony or statics and dynamics. The identification of structure with constraint is also rejected: structure is both enabling and constraining, and it is one of the specific tasks of social theory to study the conditions in the organization of social systems that govern the interconnections between the two. ... Structure forms ‘personality’ and ‘society’ simultaneously – but in neither case exhaustively: because of the significance of unintended consequences of action, and because of unacknowledged conditions of action (Giddens, 1983:69-70).

The analysis of social relations concerns both “the patterning of social relations in time-space involving the reproduction of situated practices” and “a virtual order of ‘modes of structuring’ recursively implicated in such reproduction” (Giddens, 1986:17). Moreover, according to the theory of structuration “the production and reproduction of social action” draw upon “rules and resources” (Giddens, 1986:19). Calhoun remarks:

Giddens defines *structure* as the ‘rules and resources’ that act as common interpretive schemes in a particular social system. Giddens argues that structures are related to practices as language is related to speech – in fact, language is an example of what Giddens means by structure. Structures organize practices, but at the same time, structures are enacted and reproduced by practices. Although we experience structures as forces external to us, they have only a ‘virtual’ existence – they cannot be directly observed except through their effects on practices (Calhoun *et al.*, 2002:223).

These distinctions are close to what we have said about “structures for” and “structures of” – although the main difference is given in our above-mentioned account of (modal and typical) principles in their *ontic givenness*. As universal, constant starting-points of human action, modal and typical principles *make possible* what is ‘structured’ through formative human actions of positivization, of *giving form* and *shape* to the typical principles for diverse coordinational, communal and collective forms of social life within human society. The relative constancy (*stability*) of these forms (which are acknowledged by Giddens)³¹ reflects (in a universal way) that societal entities are *conditioned* by underlying (modal and typical) *principles*.³² The *orderliness* exhibited by the “production and reproduction” of societal practices is a feature of what should be designated as ‘norm-conformative’ *factual* realities, for only that which is subjected to a universal (natural) law or (normative) principle can be

30. We have noted that the state, for example, is qualified by the *jural* aspect of reality. Its foundational function is given in the *cultural-historical aspect of power-formation*. Of course the *type* of power formed by the state *differs* from that found in a firm (power of capital) or the *power of scholarly knowledge* found at a university.

31. Calhoun remarks that Giddens acknowledges stable patterns that are “observable in interactions” and “also suggests that structures are generally quite stable, but they can be changed” (Calhoun, 2002:223).

appreciated as functioning in a 'law-conformative' or 'antinormative' way.

Understood in terms of these distinctions *structuration* coincides with the on-going process of *positivizing* those (modal and typical) principles, making possible all coordinational, communal and collective forms of social life. Unfortunately, since the Renaissance and the rise of modern *nominalism*, the intellectual legacy of the West departed from the idea of *ontic normativity* and implicitly or explicitly adheres to the modern ideal of an *autonomously free personality* – in the spirit of Jean Jacques Rousseau who, as we have briefly noted earlier, describes *freedom* as obedience to a *law that we have prescribed to ourselves* (Rousseau, 1975:247). As a result of the motive of *logical creation* – initially advanced by Hobbes and – as we have pointed out – brought to its ultimate *rationalistic* consequences by Kant in his view of understanding as the (*a priori*) formal law-giver of nature – historicism and the linguistic turn explored the *irrationalistic* side of nominalism by elevating the human subject to be the sole (re-)source of culture and society. At most this constructive capacity of being human is related to *nature* that is transformed into culture. Giddens writes:

Sociology is not concerned with a 'pre-given' universe of objects, but with one which is constituted or produced by the active doings of subjects. Human beings transform nature socially, and by 'humanizing' it they transform themselves; but they do not, of course, produce the natural world, which is constituted as an object-world independently of their existence. If in transforming that world they create history, and thence live in history, they do so because the production and reproduction of society is not 'biologically programmed', as it is among the lower animals (Giddens, 2002:229).

Instead of considering the ontic status of normative principles, a view is developed regarding the transformation of nature into the world of history which is equated with the production and reproduction of *society*! Traditionally it was affirmed that *culture* arises from a transformation of nature, but for Giddens the transformation of nature results in 'society'. Furthermore, if the "production and reproduction of society is not 'biologically programmed', as it is among the lower animals," how do we account for the *normative accountability* of human beings in a way that transcends "biological programming"? Surely, the relationship between a *principle* and its *application* concerns an issue that is totally different from the relationship between 'individual' and 'society'. Yet Giddens believes that the main purpose and outcome of his theory of *structuration* is to resolve the problem of 'action' and 'structure'. Giddens explains:

In the past it was usually seen as a dualism between individual and society, or the actor and the social system. Thinking about this traditional question of the relationship between the individual and society lay at the origin of the idea of structuration (a remark in the interview published by Pierson, 1998:75).

Although there are constructive elements present in the thought of Giddens for effectively

32. In his distinction between *social integration* (face-to-face interaction) and *system integration* (regarding connections between "those who are physically absent in time and space"), Giddens speaks of 'systemness' (Giddens, 1986:28), similar to our earlier example of 'atomness' as the universal side of an atom. See also Strauss, 2006:21ff., 268-270.

resolving the issue of 'individual' and 'society', the absence of an articulated account of the elementary, complex and typical basic concepts of sociology as a discipline prevents him from arriving at an alternative in a satisfactory way.

The category-mistake implied by the opposition of individual and society

At the end of *Part I* we have summarized a number of arguments highlighting crucial shortcomings in the opposition of individual and society. What remains to be explained is what the heading of this paragraph portrays – the *category-mistake* present in this opposition.

As a starting-point for our assessment the familiar opposition of "individual and state/government" is instructive. In this practice the state is identified with the *government* of a state and then opposed to the *individual*. Two serious mistakes are present in this view. The first one is that the state this opposition does acknowledge that the state is constituted by *citizens* and that only within this general category can a distinction be drawn between those citizens elected to function in the *office* of government and those citizens who are *subjects* of the state – in the sense of *being subject* to the power or authority vested in the office of government. Of course there are in all modern states a differentiation of governmental *functions* – of which the best known are the legislative, the judiciary and the executive functions. But even if these functions would have been performed by the same state-organ the requirement would remain that they ought to be *distinguished*. Furthermore, no person occupying a certain office – be it the president of the state, any minister, judge, military general or police authority – solely functions in this capacity. All of them are at once also *subjects* supposed to obey the laws of the state – no one is elevated above the constitution and the laws of the state. In addition we have seen that being a citizen is just *one* amongst a *multiplicity of societal functions* of human beings.

In other words, the correlate of those citizens acting in some or other *governmental capacity* is not an *unspecified* and *undifferentiated* 'individual', but merely *other citizens* in their capacity as subjects to the government of a state. Given the sphere-sovereignty of the state, structurally limited through its qualification by the jural aspect of reality, this entails an all-important *limitation*, for it means that the authority of the government of a state is limited to the function of an individual within a state – and this "state-function" has to be designated as "being a citizen."

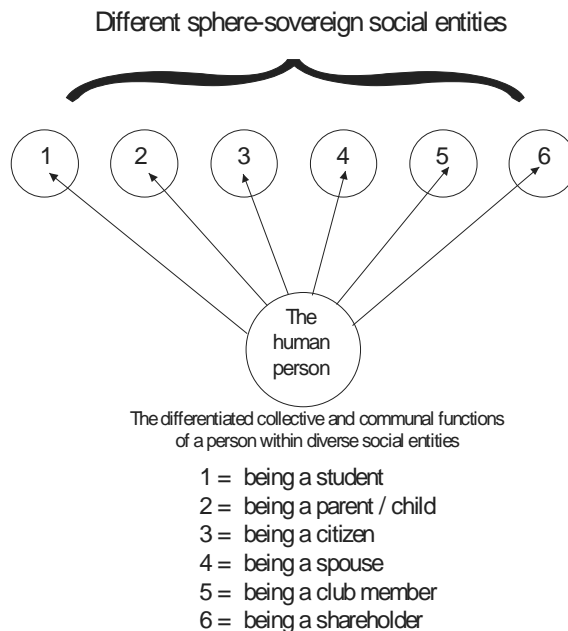
The multiple functions that an individual person has within other social entities, such as within the school, the nuclear family, marriage, a social club or a business enterprise, are falling *outside* the scope and limits of governmental authority. The public legal order of the state is supposed to protect the public legal interest of each citizen in the integrity of its body and possessions – explaining why *theft* and *murder* constitute offences against *public* legal interests. The domain of civil law is a coordinational sphere of law where persons and social entities are functioning *next to* or sometimes in *opposition to each other* (always on *equal footing*) – but it remains qualified by the *jural* aspect and it is dependent upon civil courts and an independent civil jurisprudence capable of administering an impartial system of civil law practices, backed up the *sword power* of the state for the official execution of juridical decisions.

It is only the legal interests involved in participating in non-state spheres of life that are integrated into the public legal order of the state and not those non-political collectivities and communities as such. For that reason there is a fundamental difference between public legal freedoms, civil freedoms and societal freedoms – for all these freedoms ought to be respected by a constitutional state under the rule of law. Yet this very idea of *differentiated spheres of law* within a *differentiated society* entails the insight that the authority of a government is *limited* and does not stretch over or encompass every facet of being human.

However, the moment the state is identified with its government this identification entails that being a citizen is equated with the *undifferentiated* notion of “an individual.” In doing this we have squarely positioned ourselves (possibly against our best intentions!) within the legacy of a *totalitarian* and *absolutist* view of the state. For an *unspecified* and *undifferentiated* notion of the *individual* embraces *every possible societal function* of such a person – implying that the government indeed has authority *over every facet* of such a person’s life.

Once this basic error has been made, namely the error of identifying state and government and the error of viewing as subject to this government not a *citizen* (in its function as subject within the state) but an “undifferentiated individual,” then the ‘individual’ has to commence its battle against the conceded competence of the ‘state’ to rule over every domain (possible societal function) of *being an individual*. The tragic truth is that this struggle is *lost* before it started, because once, by implication, the government has been given *authority over an ‘individual’* understood in an undifferentiated sense, it is no longer possible to revert this totalitarian perspective by whatever measures.

Right at the beginning one has to *differentiate* and *distinguish* between the different societal functions that an individual person may have within diverse, sphere-sovereign, societal entities, of which the state is just *one* amongst many others (see the sketch below).



The same point could be made in respect of the relation between an 'individual' and any other societal collectivity or communal relationship, because in no one of these forms of life within a differentiated society do we encounter 'individuals' – we only find in them *specified typical functions* of an individual – such as those highlighted in the sketch.

Since the term 'society' is usually meant to designate what we have identified as collective and communal societal entities, it must be clear that opposing 'individual' and 'society' boils down to a fundamental *category-mistake*. It is meaningful to distinguish between various social entities precisely because they fall within the same *category* – the category of *social entities*. But the *individual human being* is not a **social entity**. An individual does function within all aspects of reality, and owing to its functioning within the *social aspect* of reality such an individual has a differentiated multiplicity of societal functions within collective, communal and coordinational relationships. But this does not in any sense transform a person into a "social entity" on a par with states, firms, universities of social clubs.

Therefore the entire opposition of 'individual' and 'society' is based upon a category-mistake.

Conclusion: summarizing the main points of our argument

Looking back at all the articles dedicated to the problem of *individual* and *society* the basic thrust may be summarized as follows.

1. The dilemma between individualism and universalism (atomism and holism) dates back to Greek antiquity and is determined by a one-sided answer to the fundamental philosophic question regarding the basic denominator in terms of which the unity and diversity within reality is to be understood.
2. Ultimately these two *ismic* stances take recourse to the elevation of distinct modes of being employed in explaining the entire meaning of reality – respectively oriented to an over-estimation either of the quantitative meaning of the one and the many or of the original spatial meaning of a whole and its parts (sociologically also articulated in terms of the idea of an encompassing *system* – mostly thought of as *society* – and its *subsystems*).
3. Particularly since the Renaissance modern nominalism permeated the intellectual spirit of the West to such an extent that the human being was elevated to the level of rational autonomy (and eventually to a self-constructing autonomous freedom). This attitude has no room for ontic normativity.
4. Some of the most prominent scholars operative in the shaping of sociology during the past two centuries by and large did not succeed in transcending the impasse between atomism and holism – compare our analyses of the positions of sociologists such as Comte, Spencer, Tönnies, Von Wiese, Durkheim, Spann, Weber, Parsons, Sorokin, Maclver, Alexander, Münch, Sztompka, Habermas and Giddens.

5. On the way to an alternative approach attention is required for the uniqueness and irreducibility of the various modal aspects of reality – first of all in respect of the numerical and spatial aspects, because atomism and holism (theoretically) attempted to come to an artificial separation of the two aspects in order to elevate one of them to an encompassing ontological principle of explanation.
6. On the basis of accepting the coherence of multiple irreducible modal aspects also sociological theory is confronted with the necessity and inevitability of employing *analogical* basic concepts – such as social order, social stratification, social constancy and dynamics, social differentiation and integration, social consciousness, social sensitivity, social identification and distinguishing, social power and control and social significance, symbol and interpretation.
7. In addition to these elementary (analogical) basic concepts sociology also has to operate on the basis of complex or compound basic concepts, constituted by alternative configurations of elementary basic concepts resulting in modal totality concepts, such as the concept of a *principle* – a universal, constant starting-point for human action that can only be made valid by a competent organ with an accountable free will capable of giving a (normative or antinormative) positive shape to such a principle in varying socio-cultural circumstances, and the modal totality concepts of coordinational, communal and collective societal relationships.
8. Once the elementary and complex basic concepts are articulated it is possible to move to an explanation of *typical basic concepts* – entailing a specification of the unique foundational and qualifying functions of societal entities (because a full treatment of typical concepts would require a separate study, we had to be satisfied with a few brief hints in this regard).
9. Implicit in all the foregoing considerations lies the basic insight that the existence of an individual human being *transcends* the multiplicity of functional modes conditioning being human, for if individual human beings function in all facets of reality, including the *social aspect*, it entails that no *connection* between *individuals* and *society* is required. One cannot “connect” individuals to that which already is *constitutive* for their existence, namely their **functioning** within the social dimension of reality!³³
10. Giddens is sensitive to the extreme consequences of sociological holism by saying that “societies” are “not necessarily unified collectivities” (Giddens, 1986:24). We may support this cautiousness from a different perspective: “society” could be seen as the *interdependence* of diverse social collectivities and social processes without requiring the supposition that it functions as an all-embracing *totality*. One implication of this alternative is the recognition of the fact that the “unit of comparison” in an analysis of society should never be sought in “individuals” *stripped from their social function*. And as soon as we include the “ontically constituted” *social functionality* of humans in our

33. Without articulating it in terms of basic ontological distinctions, Luckmann and Berger stress the same perspective: “Solitary human being is being on the animal level (which, of course, man shares with other animals). As soon as one observes phenomena that are specifically human, one enters the realm of the social. *Homo sapiens* is always, and in the same measure, *homo socius*” (Luckmann & Berger, 1967:51).

analysis of society, the primary focus becomes the different *social spheres* in which human beings take on different roles.

11. Every one of the different societal functions, societal ties or societal roles of the human person is by definition always *partial* in the sense that it never encompasses *all* the societal activities of a person *totally*. Being a colleague, being a friend, being a citizen, and so on, are simply ways in which we designate the diverse, *differentiated*, societal functions and roles of persons.
12. Since no single individual human person as such is to be seen as a societal collectivity or entity, it is meaningless to compare and juxtapose an *individual* (which is not a societal entity but merely has a social function) with *society* or with any societal entity (such as the state, the firm, the nuclear family, and so on).
13. The implication of the preceding insights is explored by the idea of *integrated* spheres of life with their "own inner laws" which is the equivalent of the idea of sphere-sovereignty. Althusius for the first time realized that one has to acknowledge the limitations of the whole-parts relation in order to arrive at a proper understanding of the nature of a differentiated society – where only *municipalities* and *provinces* are *genuine parts* of the state – and not also every non-state societal collectivity as well (such as business enterprises, schools, families and sport clubs).
14. Ultimately the opposition of *individual* and *society* is therefore a serious "category-mistake." The broader Western heritage tends to identify any societal collectivity with its *office bearers* (for example, the term "state" is frequently simply understood to refer to the "government") without realizing that the state is constituted by the 'public', i.e. by citizens (albeit in the role of *government* or as *subjects*).

As an overall summary we may in conclusion say that since the human person functions in all aspects of reality (including the *social*) and because an individual plays a distinct role in diverse societal entities without being fully absorbed in any modal function or any social role and without being transformed into a "sphere of life" on its own, the distinction between 'individual' and 'society' turned out to be untenable and in fact is burdened by a serious and misleading *category-mistake*.

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